CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Since its publication in 1813, Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* has interested writers, readers and critics alike. Regarding the author's talent, an outstanding writer like Virginia Woolf pointed out that "More than any other novelist, Austen fills every inch of her canvas with observation, fashions every sentence into meaning, stuffs up every chink and cranny of the fabric until each novel is a little living world, from which you cannot break off a scene or even a sentence without bleeding it of some of its life" (Essays 14). The depth and complexity of the fictional worlds created by Austen has turned her works into masterful examples of novels of manners which minutely describe the social, moral and economic values of her time. Her genius as a writer helped her craft novels that faithfully depict the formal civility, the well-established manners and the sexual and social restraints of her time just as her characters lead their lives in the simplicity of the village community or the splendour of stately manor houses. Yet, far from just mirroring the world and a way of life, Austen's novels—and *Pride and Prejudice* in particular—present a delicate observation and reflection about a period in history characterised by female submission to the strictures of the prevailing patriarchal discourse which ruled how women were to live, feel, speak, dress or relate with the opposite sex.

Austen took her first steps as a novelist in an early nineteenth-century England where women scarcely had access to academic education or work. In the man-centred society of her time, she initially published her novels anonymously. This is the reason why the title page of the first edition of *Pride and Prejudice* stated that the three-volume novel had been written by the author of *Sense and Sensibility*, which in turn had been published with the notation "By a Lady". In a letter she wrote to Francis Austen on 25th September 1813, Austen referred to how her brother Henry had revealed that she was the author of *Pride and Prejudice*:

> I was previously aware of what I sh^{d} be laying myself open to—but the truth is that the Secret has spread so far as to be scarcely the Shadow of a secret now—& that I believe whenever the 3rd appears, I shall not even attempt to tell Lies about it. —I shall rather try to make all the Money than all the Mystery I can of it. —People shall pay for their Knowledge if I can make

> them. Henry heard P & P warmly praised in Scotland by Lady Rob Kerr & another Lady, —& what does he do in the warmth of his Brotherly vanity and Love, but immediately tell them who wrote it! —A Thing once set going in that way—one knows how it spreads! (Le Faye 231)

Her identity having been disclosed, Austen decided to publish her third novel—*Mansfield Park*—under her name and profit from it. It is logical to presume that her determination to be a novelist and make a living out of it must have shaken the foundations of the man-oriented society of her days where women were educated to get married and be subservient to men. By becoming a writer, Austen not only exposed but also questioned the secondary role most women had in society. It is not surprising, then, that she should have endowed her heroine Elizabeth Bennet with the determination, individualism and strong spirits that characterized her as a writer. Analyzing Austen's representation of the world would therefore throw some light on the systems of belief circulating at the time and disclose the female stereotypes presented in this novel written in a context of plain gender inequality.

The purpose of this work, then, is to analyze *Pride and Prejudice* as a literary piece that is not only a receptacle of the hegemonic discourses of the time but also an exponent, already in the early nineteenth century, of what Elaine Showalter terms a new female consciousness. To that end, we will focus on how the female characters relate to the different manifestations of the social discourse and, following Margaret Atwood in *Survival*, we intend to identify the type of victim they embody according to whether they adhere or reject such a discourse. The problem to solve will focus on questions like: which are the fundamental themes in *Pride and Prejudice* through which Austen introduces the hegemonic patriarchal discourse? What is the relationship between the social-economic order and the female characters' adherence to or rejection of such a discourse? What definition of 'victim' do the female characters embody? How is 'survival' expressed in the novel? What is the role played by the female characters' language and actions? What are the implications of subverting the social discourse?

In other words, as the story unravels and the characters move in Austen's 'little living world', we aim to analyze how the female characters survive the limitations imposed by the prevailing social discourse. As we explore the emergence of an antagonistic vision

of the world (related mainly to the role women played in society) resulting form the interplay of conservative and subversive discourses, we expect to show how *Pride and Prejudice* is a novel that assimilates and recreates the coexisting discourses while it subverts them to give way to a new female position in society.

CHAPTER 2: BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REVISION

Any revision of the widely varied and insightful criticism that has appeared on *Pride and Prejudice* must begin, we wish to argue, with Austen's own comments on her work. After the publication of the novel, she referred to her book in different letters she addressed to her sister Cassandra. On 4 February 1813, for instance, she wrote:

> I am quite vain enough & well satisfied enough.—The work is rather too light & bright & sparkling, —it wants shade, —it wants to be stretched out here & there with a long Chapter—of sense if it could be had, if not of solemn specious nonsense—about something unconnected with the story; an Essay on Writing, a critique on Walter Scott, or the history of Bonaparte—or anything that would form a contrast &bring the reader with increased delight to the playfulness and Epigrammatism of the general stile. (Le Faye 203)

By describing her novel as 'too light & bright & sparkling', Austen seems to emphasize the entertaining nature of her work. She realized it needed the 'shade' that a serious passage like an essay on writing, a critique of Walter Scott or the history of Bonaparte would add to it. Yet, she was vain enough and satisfied enough with her book, especially as she learned the positive comments it received among her friends, neighbors and even strangers.

The criticism that has been written on *Pride and Prejudice* since its publication is widely varied and plentiful. Within the framework of this thesis paper, however, we will only give evidence of some of the increasingly numerous reviews on Austen's second novel. The early manifestation of the critical reception first appeared in published reviews as well as in private letters. The anonymous comment published under the title "Pride and Prejudice" in *Critical Review*, for example, is mainly devoted to plot summary and to analyzing some of the characters. As this publication emphasized the virtues of decorum and propriety, it was very critical of characters like Mr. and, Mrs. Bennett, or Lydia but found Elizabeth and Jane charming. As we read:

> Though Mr. Bennet finds amusement in absurdity, it is by no means of advantage to his five daughters, who, with the help of their silly mother, are looking out for husbands. Jane, the eldest daughter, is very beautiful and possesses great feeling, good sense, equanimity, cheerfulness, and elegance

> of manners . . . Mary is a female pedant, affecting great wisdom, though saturated with stupidity . . . Kitty is weak-spirited and fearful; but Miss. Lydia . . . is mad after the officers who are quartered at Meryton . . . Although these young ladies claim a great share of the reader's interest and attention, none calls forth our admiration so much as Elizabeth, whose archness and sweetness of manner render her a very attractive object in the family piece . . . We cannot conclude without repeating our approbation of this performance, which rises very superior to any novel we have lately met with in the delineation of domestic scenes. (318-324)

Another important comment on the novel and its characters was made by Anabella Milbanke, Lord Byron's future wife. In a letter she wrote to her mother on 1 May 1813, she emphasized the innovative nature of Austen's style in writing, which made her novel outstanding. By doing without the common resources that novel writers used at that time, Austen created a fictional world which, to Milbanke's mind, appeared 'probable', that is to say, close to reality. Although there was criticism stating that some characters—especially Darcy—were inconsistently crafted, Anabella Milbanke praised them for what they added to the story. Her curiosity as to the gender of the writer gives evidence of the fact that the secret about who the author was had not yet been revealed but there were rumors about it. As Milbanke stated:

> I have finished the Novel called Pride and Prejudice, which I think a very superior work. It depends not on any of the common resources of Novel writers, no drowning, nor conflagrations, nor runaway horses, nor lapdogs & parrots, nor chambermaids & milliners, nor rencontres and disguise. I really think it the *most probable* fiction I have ever read. It is not a crying book, but the interest is very strong, especially for Mr. Darcy. The characters which are not amiable are diverting, and all of them are consistently supported. I wish much to know who is the author or *ess* as I am told. (159)

Very illuminating criticism has come from other novelists proving, as Virginia Woolf noted, that Austen's "chief admirers have always been those who write novels themselves, and from the time of Sir Walter Scott . . . she has been praised with unusual discrimination" (Essays 268). It was precisely Sir Walter Scott who praised her gift for

describing her characters and their feelings. In the entry for 14 March 1826 to his journal, Scott wrote: "Also read again and for the third time at least Miss. Austen's very finely written novel of *Pride and Prejudice*. That young lady had a talent for describing the involvements and feelings and characters of ordinary life which is to me the most wonderful I ever met with" (Anderson 114). Though in general Austen's novel was warmly received by other writers, some, like Charlotte Brontë, found it flat and uninteresting because it simply depicted "An accurate daguerreotyped portrait of a common-place face, a carefully-fenced, highly cultivated garden with neat borders and delicate flowers—but no glace of a bright vivid physiognomy—no open country—no fresh air—no blue hill—no bonny beck" (M. Smith 10). Her criticism got stronger in relationship to the characters as she stated "I should hardly like to live with her ladies and gentlemen in their elegant but confined houses" (M. Smith 10). In the same token, Mark Twain, Austen's most famous detractor, severely criticized her writings—particularly *Pride and Prejudice*—and wrote "Every time I read *Pride and Prejudice* I want to dig her [Austen] up and beat her over the skull with her own skin-bone!" (Mathews 642). On the other hand, a strong defense of Austen's genius as a writer and the fictional worlds she created appeared in Victor S. Prichett's study of the novelist George Meredith, which was published under the title *George Meredith and the English Comedy*. In it, Prichett beautifully refers to Austen in these terms:

> Our perfect novelist of comedy, Jane Austen, is often presented as an example of the felicity of living in a small cozy world, with one's mind firmly withdrawn from the horror outside. This has always seemed to me untrue. I think of her as a war-novelist, formed very much by the Napoleonic wars, knowing directly of prize money, the shortage of men, the economic crisis and change in the value of capital. I have even seen a resemblance of that second visit to Darcy's house as a naval battle; for notice there how the position of the people in the drawing room are made certain, where Elizabeth like a frigate has to run between the lines. Militancy and vigilance are the essence of comedy; it brings the enemies within, into the open: pride means prejudice, sense means sensibility, the interchange is sharp. The end is clarification and . . . it enacts the myth or illusion of a perennial rebirth. (28)

Following Prichett's way of thinking, Virginia Woolf praised the richness of the worlds Austen created as well as her insight into her characters' lives and feelings. Her talent as a writer, notes Woolf, compensated for the narrow life that the patriarchal society of her time imposed on her, and on every woman, for that matter. In *A Room of One's Own*, Woolf stresses the fact that though Austen wrote in secrecy, hiding her manuscript from visitors, her prose was unaffected by this circumstance and even gained in insight. As she puts it:

> One would not have been ashamed to have been caught in the act of writing *Pride and Prejudice.* Yet Austen was glad that a hinge creaked, so that she might hide her manuscript before anyone came in. To Jane Austen there was something discreditable in writing *Pride and Prejudice*. And, I wondered, would *Pride and Prejudice* have been a better novel if Jane Austen had not thought it necessary to hide her manuscript from visitors? I read a page or two to see; but I could not find any signs that her circumstances had harmed her work in the slightest. That, perhaps, was the chief miracle about it. Here was a woman about the year 1800 writing without hate, without bitterness, without fear, without protest, without preaching . . . If Jane Austen suffered in any way from her circumstances it was in the narrowness of life that was imposed on her. It was impossible for a woman to go about alone. She never travelled; she never drove through London in an omnibus or had luncheon in a shop by herself. But perhaps it was the nature of Jane Austen not to want what she had not. Her gift and her circumstances matched each other completely. (101-2, 104)

Modern criticism of Austen's novels is said to have begun with the publication of Mary Lascelles' *Jane Austen and her Art* in 1939. This detailed study of the novelist's work ends with a praising comment on the intimacy that Austen established with her readers: "What distinguishes Jane Austen's manner of inviting us to share in the act of creation but a greater delicacy of intimation? . . . It is implicit in all her dealings with us" (219). This positive view of Austen was soon followed by Denys Wyatt Hardings' "Regulated Hatred: an Aspect of the Work of Jane Austen" where he represented the novelist as an alienated subversive devoted to ridiculing the people she portrayed, many of

whom, Harding points out, resembled her acquaintances and readers. Where previous critics had found comedy and twinkle, Harding recognized her isolation and her anger:

> One of Jane Austen's most successful methods is to offer her readers every excuse for regarding as rather exaggerated figures of fun people whom she herself detests and fears. Mrs. Bennet, according to the Austen tradition, is one of 'our' richly comic characters about whom we can feel superior, condescending, perhaps a trifle sympathetic, and above all heartedly amused and free from care. Everything conspires to make this the natural interpretation once you are willing to overlook Jane Austen's bald and brief statement of her own attitude to her: 'She was a woman of mean understanding, little information, and uncertain temper'. How many women amongst Jane Austen's acquaintances and amongst her most complacent readers to the present day that phrase must describe! . . . Caricature served Jane Austen's purpose perfectly. Under her treatment one can never say where caricature leaves off and the claim to serious portraiture begins. (346-362)

On the other hand, in his Marxist reading of *Pride and Prejudice*, David Daiches describes Austen as a 'Marxist before Marx' because she could clearly see the crucial role economy played in determining the values and practices of her time and in shaping the fate of her female characters, especially the Bennet sisters. As he puts it:

> In fact, if we read Jane Austen carefully enough, we find that she is not an 'escapist' novelist at all: she is the most realistic novelist of her age, and the only English novelist of stature who was in a sense a Marxist before Marx. She exposes the economic basis of social behavior with an ironic smile that is much more effective than the passionate outbursts of the propagandists. There is an iron delicacy about her presentation of social life that is both amusing and disturbing . . . And silly though she is, Mrs. Bennet is realistic enough to know that by hook or by crook her daughters must be properly married off before their looks begin to fade. A genteel upbringing is impossible equipment for life unless you secure a wealthy husband. How

> much more necessary is marriage to the Bennet girls than to their servants! (289-296)

Another quite interesting reading of *Pride and Prejudice* which relates to the idea of the economic power held by men in early nineteenth-century England was written by Nina Auerbach. Her feminist criticism focuses on the idea that in the male-dominated society that Austen describes, life was organized in such a way as to ensure female economic, political, social and artistic subordination to men. To demonstrate the oppressive reality of women's life, Auerbach stresses the idea that women needed the presence of men for their lives to take on some consistency. To support her assertion, she quotes, for instance, Elizabeth's feelings while she waited for Charles Bingley and Darcy for dinner at Longbourn: "Anxious and uneasy, the period which passed in the drawing-room, before the gentlemen came, was wearisome and dull to a degree, that almost made her uncivil. She looked forward to their entrance, as the point on which all her chance of pleasure for the evening must depend" (Austen 329-330). Auerbach pictures women in *Pride and Prejudice* continuously waiting for men to appear and rescue them from the shadows and dullness. This is the reason why she points out that

> The story, the glow, will begin with the opening of the door . . . Waiting for the entrance of the gentlemen, their shared world is a limbo of suspension and suspense, which cannot take shape until it is given one by the opening of the door . . . The unexpressed intensity of this collective waiting for the door to open and a Pygmalion to bring life into limbo defines the female world of *Pride and Prejudice*; its agonized restraint is reflected microcosmically in the smaller community of the Bennet family, and macrocosmically in the larger community of England itself. (38-55)

Totally different is John Wiltshire's approach to Austen's novel since he turns to Freudian psychoanalysis to examine Elizabeth and Darcy's relationship. He claims that neither of them considers the other as a distinct being and they project their shortcomings and wishes onto one another. Elizabeth, for example, fiercely condemns Darcy for his pride and prejudice with her own pride and prejudice against him. As Wiltshire explains,

> Elizabeth disowns parts of herself and bestows them instead on Darcy. For it is plain that Elizabeth, who is 'determined to dislike' Darcy (as she tells

> Charlotte, in half-jest), herself enacts just that 'implacable resentment' she attributes to him—building on that first insult and making everything else she hears from or about him, feed into this original orientation. In a series of encounters, Elizabeth attributes to Darcy the very emotions that are driving her—pride and prejudice among them. Her anger at his words about her family's behavior enables her to forget or displace her own sense of shame; or rather it converts that shame into anger against him. Her hatred of her mother, for example, which Darcy's presence makes her experience most keenly, is naturally projected onto him. Thus this 'Mr. Darcy' is for Elizabeth not someone who is perceived in his own right (so to speak) but someone who plays a role in her psychological life, as receptacle of her own projections and needs. (99-124)

As far as Darcy's relationship to Elizabeth is concerned, Wiltshire states that he ascribes to her the feelings that are coming from him thus displacing his own desires onto Elizabeth. We could infer that the economic vulnerability that explains women's urge to get married contributed to make Darcy bestow his own affection and expectations onto Elizabeth. In Wiltshire's words:

> . . . he attributes his own desires to her, so that up to the proposal, as he later confesses, he believes that she wishes for, and is even 'expecting [his] addresses'. Just as it was taken for granted that a young man in possession of a fortune would seek a wife, Darcy assumes that a young lady in want of a fortune would accept a husband with one; but this is not all. As Elizabeth realizes, listening to him in the proposal scene, she has no real presence to him: he is in effect, though speaking in her company, conducting an inner dialogue with himself. His passion for her contains no element of perception of her as an independently existing being. (99-124)

Another insightful reading of *Pride and Prejudice* was carried out by Douglas Murray. In his essay "Gazing and Avoiding the Gaze", he applied Michel Foucault's ideas about the mechanisms of surveillance and the consequent use of knowledge gained through them to the analysis of Austen's novel. He argues that there exist in the novel highly efficient networks of surveillance which permit Mrs. Bennet and Lady Catherine to keep

track of what happens around them. Regarding the first chapter of Austen's novel, Murray points out:

> In *Pride and Prejudice,* spies are everywhere and news travels fast. By the opening scene, everyone in the vicinity of Netherfield Hall knows much about Charles Bingley . . . Mrs. Bennet is the center of a remarkably efficient network for the sharing of information: her 'solace was visiting and news'—in other words, discovery and dissemination. And, of course, the men are simultaneously conducting their own surveys: Charles Bingley takes Netherfield Hall so that he can hunt game birds *and* find a suitable marriage partner. (44-45)

It is interesting to notice that though Murray recognizes that men also make use of surveillance to gain knowledge about prospective marriage partners, he locates the most powerful information centers in female characters like Mrs. Bennet and Lady Catherine. About the latter, he argues:

> In a novel full of powerful information centers, the most knowledgeable and potentially the most powerful is Lady Catherine de Bourgh, whom I label the 'panoptic center' of the novel. She gathers information first by noticing—in fact, the word 'notice' is often used to accompany her appearance—second, by asking questions—the interrogative is her favoured form of the sentence—and, last, through the use of Rev. William Collins, whose career suggests the upper class's use of the lower orders as spies and manipulators. Her center of intelligence is Rosings, which appropriately features numerous windows expensively glazed. (44-45)

Murray also relates surveillance to Elizabeth's 'fine eyes' to argue that she attracts the male gaze but also returns it. Besides, notes Murray, her capacity to look at others in the eye—be them women or men—shows her strength and independence, qualities that set her apart from the other female characters in the novel. In his words:

> If Lady Catherine is an information center, we should not forget her defeat at the hand of triumphant and independent gazer Elizabeth Bennet, who throughout the novel is symbolically associated with the eye . . . Elizabeth's abilities to attract more than a cursory gaze and to return others' gaze

> indicate her resistance and independence of mind amid powerful forces of conformity. It is this central core of resistance which allows Elizabeth to withstand the powerful gaze of Lady Catherine—or, as the cliché puts it, to look her in the eye. (44-45)

Many critics emphasize that irony is a touchstone in Austen's writings, particularly in *Pride and Prejudice*. Among them, Reuben A. Brower points out that many of the dialogues, especially those between Elizabeth and Darcy, show "the extraordinary richness of ironic texture and the imaginative continuity running through the play of wit . . . how intensely dramatic the dialogue is, dramatic in the sense of defining characters through the way they speak and are spoken about" (65). The implications of their conversations, notes Brower, are complex but make the reading delightful. He comments, for instance on the dialogue in which Sir William Lucas gallantly tries to interest Mr. Darcy in dancing with Elizabeth. Mr. Lucas claims that Mr. Darcy cannot refuse to dance with such a beautiful and desirable partner and, taking Elizabeth's hand, gives it to him. Surprise-stricken, Darcy receives it but Elizabeth immediately draws back. Mr. Darcy feels obliged to ask, with grave propriety, for the honor of her hand but Elizabeth is determined not to dance with him. An insistent Mr. Lucas said:

> "You excel so much in the dance, Miss. Eliza, that it is cruel to deny me the happiness of seeing you; and though this gentleman dislikes the amusement in general, he can have no objection, I am sure, to oblige us for one half hour".
>
> "Mr. Darcy is all politeness" said Elizabeth smiling. (Austen 27)

Brower exemplifies Austen's use of irony by analyzing Elizabeth's last utterance and the variety of meanings that can be attributed to Mr. Darcy's politeness. As he explains:

> Mr. Darcy is polite in the sense indicated by 'grave propriety', that is, he shows the courtesy appropriate to a gentleman—which is the immediate, public meaning of Elizabeth's compliment. But "grave propriety" being a very limited form of politeness, reminds us forcibly of Mr. Darcy's earlier behavior. His gravity at the ball had been 'forbidding and disagreeable'. 'Grave propriety' may also mean the bare civility of 'the proudest, most

> disagreeable man' in the world. So Elizabeth's compliment has an ironic twist: she smiles and looks 'archly'. 'All politeness' has also quite another meaning. Mr. Darcy "was not unwilling to receive" her hand. He is polite in more than the public proper sense: his gesture shows that he is interested in Elizabeth as a person. Her archness and her smile have for the reader an added ironic value: Elizabeth's interpretation of Darcy's manner may be quite wrong. Finally, there is the embracing broadly comic irony of Sir William's action. 'Struck with the notion of doing a very gallant thing', he is pleasantly unconscious of what he is in fact doing and of what Elizabeth's remark may mean to her and to Darcy. (65-66)

What Brower stresses through the analysis of Austen's use of irony is that conversations like the one discussed above are not simply packed with ironic meanings but they are also *jeux d'esprit* whose aim is to provide fun. He adds that

> The small talk is the focus for her keen sense of the variability of character, for her awareness of the possibility that the same remark or action has very different meanings in different relations. What most satisfies us in reading the dialogues in *Pride and Prejudice* is Jane Austen's awareness that it is difficult to know any complex person, that knowledge of a man like Darcy is an interpretation and a construction, not a simple absolute. (68)

Following Brower's view, we may argue that Austen's use of irony masterfully accompanies Elizabeth and Darcy in the process of construing their knowledge of each other. "The conversations", notes Brower, "have been skillfully shaped to prepare us for Elizabeth's revised estimate of Darcy, for her recognition that Darcy regards her differently, and for her consequent 'change of sentiment' towards him" (71). The preparation for Darcy's awareness and acceptance of his love for Elizabeth is also marked by irony in their dialogues.

Despite the many and diverse readings that *Pride and Prejudice* has produced, of which the above mentioned are scarcely some, we could not find a review written from Stephen Greenblatt's New Historicist point of view. This motivated our interest in approaching the novel as a social, historical construction to show how other works—be them conduct books, reviews in mass media, literary and philosophical works or even Fine

Arts—had shaped Austen's novel. By tracing back some of the most outstanding cultural artifacts that inform the novel, we attempt to decode the Social Discourse circulating in early nineteenth-century England. The analysis of such a Social Discourse as exposed in the novel, we believe, will show the conservative and subversive forces at work in society that helped construe the female models Austen so wonderfully depicted. Our ultimate end is to discover to what extent Austen adhered or questioned the hegemonic discourse of her time through her fictional world and her creatures. The different ways her heroine subverts the prevailing system of beliefs proves, we wish to argue, the emergence of a new female consciousness.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Analyzing *Pride and Prejudice* in the light of New Historicism implies considering it a cultural artifact immersed in the complex discursive field that makes up its context. The historical perspective plays a crucial role in this research because it will enable us to disclose how intertextuality and interdiscursiveness inform the novel. Within the scope of this work, however, we shall focus only on how other texts—stemming from such diverse areas as philosophy, painting, conduct books, mass media or literature—shaped Austen's novel as far as its major themes, title, and characters are concerned. In order to reconstruct the Social Discourse prevailing at the time of the novel, we will identify the coexisting cultural artifacts that are recreated or subverted and disclose the ideology they help construe. The comparative analysis will then allow us to determine how the hegemonic discourse is reflected in the female characters' way of speaking and acting, thus revealing the position women held in the society of early nineteenth-century England. The extent to witch the female characters adhere to or separate from the hegemonic Social Discourse will permit us to conclude whether they reinforce or destabilize the prevailing ideology. The analysis of the divergences, we wish to argue, will give evidence of the genesis of a new female consciousness.

Once the theoretical background has been explained, we will proceed to the analysis of the major themes developed in the novel. To this end, extracts from Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Emile, ou de l'Education*, James Fordyce's *Sermons to Young Women*, John Gregory's *A Father's Legacy to his Daughters* and Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* will throw some light on the first theme under analysis: the position of women at the time of the novel. The importance of these texts to validate or question the role women were expected to play in the patriarchal society of Austen's time will be assessed taking into account whether the female characters followed or detracted the system of beliefs these books support.

For the analysis of marriage and courtship, our second major theme, we will resort to Jane Austen's letters to report on the problems single, unmarried women had to face when their parents died. The Law of Primogeniture in early nineteenth-century England will be analyzed as referred to by Adam Smith in his *The Wealth of Nations*. We will also show the crucial implications entails had for the fate of the female characters in the novel.

Conduct books like John Gregory's *A Father's Legacy to his Daughters*, as well as Lady Sarah Pennington's *An unfortunate Mother's Advice for her Absent Daughters*, will inform the type of advice women received on how to find and marry an appropriate husband. An extract from Samuel Richardson's *Sir Charles Grandson*, another interesting example of intertextuality in *Pride and Prejudice*, will be dealt with to show how Elizabeth and Darcy's relationship and feelings mirror those of Richardson's protagonists.

Our third most important theme, education, will focus on the preparation women received to become accomplished and get a spouse. At a time when academic formation was unavailable to women, books advising them what to learn, what to speak about or how to look became mandatory reading. In this regard, Hester Chapone's essay "On the Improvement of the Mind", for instance, which listed the accomplishments that turned a woman eligible for marriage, was followed by William Alexander's *The History of Women from the Earliest Antiquity to the Present Time* in which the author complained about female excessive concern with ornamental accomplishments and women's inability to speak about intellectually important issues. Some extracts from Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women with Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects* will introduce a totally antagonistic view of education since Wollstonecraft proposed educating women for life rather than for marriage so that they could avoid the miseries awaiting single unmarried women. By analyzing the above mentioned cultural artifacts that contributed to shape Austen's novel, we aim to disclose the interplay of conservative and subversive practices related to female education as well as the impact they had on the female characters in general and Elizabeth in particular.

Morals and manners is still another key theme in *Pride and Prejudice*. The notions of politeness, virtue and decorum, crucial to this theme, were subjected to strict codes destined to determine the propriety of all the actions and situations women were involved in. As for the idea of politeness, we will focus mainly on two cultural artifacts, namely Joseph Addison and Richard Steele's *The Spectator* and Joseph Highmore's *Essays, Moral, Religious, and Miscellaneous* in order to reveal how the notions of propriety and politeness were construed and their implications in early nineteenth-century England. On the other hand, the concept of virtue will be explored as it springs from the writings of influential thinkers like Jean-Jacques Rousseau, James Fordyce and John Gregory whereas the

commonly-accepted rules of decorum will be inferred from the characters' dialogues. We will discuss the relevance of restraint, temperance and moderation as indicators of how closely the female characters sided with or broke the strictures established by the codes of social conduct.

The woman-man encounter and the places where it took place will be our following focus in the analysis. Under the title of "Meeting Places", we will mainly deal with the significance of parties as social practices for picking a spouse. Amelia Opie's *Temper, or Domestic Scenes* will provide still another instance of intertextuality in Austen's work since the opening chapters of *Pride and Prejudice* mirror those in Opie's.

Having analyzed the major themes in the novel, we will then focus on the title and revise the conjunction of the terms 'pride and prejudice', a borrowing from Frances Burney's *Cecilia: or Memoirs of an Heiress*. We will introduce the notions of family, filial and brotherly pride as defined by the characters and weigh their importance as a source for prejudice. Samuel Johnson's warning against an excess of pride—a human failing associated to vanity by Mary and Elizabeth Bennet—will throw some light mainly on Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth's way of speaking and acting. The main characters' gradual adjustment of their pride will accompany, we wish to argue, a process of introspection and knowledge of themselves and the others.

Finally, in order to explore Austen's construal of characters we will rely, mainly, on her letters to her sister Cassandra to discover the crucial role that exhibitions played as a source of inspiration for her creatures. Portrait painters like Sir Joshua Reynolds—who is explicitly mentioned in her letters—Jean François Marie Huet-Villers and Charles John Robertson, may well have stirred Austen's imagination as their oil paintings show the grace and sophistication of the landed gentry as well as the charm of simpler women whom Austen depicted in words.

In short, by analyzing some of the major themes, title and characters, our New Historicist reading of *Pride and Prejudice* attempts to show not only the extent to which the novel reproduces the early nineteenth-century Social Discourse characterized by patriarchal hegemony but also how it introduces a destabilizing movement in the discursive filed. The creation of a heroine who questions and subverts the prevailing values and practices, we

believe, gives evidence of the emergence of both a new female consciousness and a new paradigm related to female position in society.

CHAPTER 4: THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The notion of Social Discourse developed by Marc Angenot is of paramount importance for the present work because it will throw some light on the complexities of a novel like *Pride and Prejudice* and its interplay with coexisting texts. According to Angenot, Social Discourse refers to

> everything that is said or written in a given state of society, everything that is printed, or talked about and represented today through electronic media, everything that is narrated or argued, if we assume that narration and argumentation are the two basic kinds of discursiveness. We would regard as 'social discourse' not everything that is empirical, a simultaneous cacophonic redundancy, but rather the cognitive systems, the discursive distributions, the thematic repertory that in a given society organize what is narrated or argued. (69)[1]

From this point of view, then, Social Discourse appears as a complex system made out of a regulated division of coexisting discursive genres and fields (such as the literary, scientific, philosophical, political fields) which admit the emergence of points in common and conflicts and the coexistence of new and old or archaic small signifying units considered acceptable at a given time. Despite the cognitive discrepancies and the conflicting systems of belief proper to every field or genre, there exists, in Angenot's opinion, a transdiscursive hegemony in Social Discourse tending to regulate practices, to impose a thematic repertory and produce arbitrations between conflicting discourses, cognitive discrepancies or the varying signifying units in tension with each other. As he points out, "beyond the diversity of languages, signifying practices, we think it is possible to identify in every state of society a synthetic component, an interdiscurssive field of ways of knowing and representing the known world that is typical of this society, that determines the division of social discourses: that is, what we call hegemony following Antonio Gramsci" (75). Thus, the synthetic component which characterizes a given society is supported and in turn supports coexisting discourses and constitutes the hegemonic system of beliefs distinctive of a society.

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[1] All translations of Angenot's quotations are mine.

Yet, Angenot argues, “there exists, as well, a movement, destabilizations, confrontations, either rather superficial or quite radical” (72). Social Discourse is, then, made out of coexisting signifying practices that are not juxtaposed but rather constitute an organic whole or a regulated antagonism between the instituted and emerging representations or systems of belief. Thus, the general rules governing the sayable and writable, the thematic repertory and a dominant way of knowing and representing the world systematically determine what is doxologically, aesthetically or ethically acceptable and efficient in the discourse of an epoch. Within this generalized synchronic interaction of discourses, “the text appears as a seam, as a patchwork of heterogeneous ‘collages’ of erratic fragments of the social discourse integrated in a specific telos” (Angenot 73). This notion of text accounts for two of its most significant characteristics: intertextuality and interdiscursiveness. Angenot defines the former as “the circulation and transformation of ideograms, that is, of small signifying units endowed with a diffuse acceptance in a given doxa” (74) whereas interdiscursiveness describes “the interaction and axiomatic influences of synchronic discourses” (73). Following Mikhail Bakhtine, he goes on to argue that all languages and social discourse are ideological for they bear the marks of ways of knowing and representing the known world. These ideograms nourish the social values and interests of a given time and even determine the position of a specific discourse in the realm of discourses circulating in a given society.

From this perspective, an immanent approach to the analysis of a literary text seems to be insufficient for it misses the richness in the interaction between such a text and coexisting texts from the literary and/or other fields. A historical retrospection, then, appears as central to this end. In Angenot’s words: “in spite of the pretentions of the literary field, of the ideology of the literary field, with respect to a thematic and formal ‘self-sufficiency’, the historical analysis should, to my mind, reveal the forms of interaction between literature and the discourses, noble or trivial, with which it coexists” (78). This is the reason why we shall rely for the analysis of *Pride and Prejudice* on New Historicism, the school of criticism developed by Stephen J. Greenblatt, which describes how literary texts and their contexts construe each other.

Stephen Greenblatt introduced the term New Historicism in a special issue of the magazine *Genre* which appeared in 1982. He claimed that history can not be reduced to a

static decorative setting to texts, or as he puts it: "history can not simply be set against literary texts as their stable antithesis or stable background, and the protective isolation of those texts gives way to a sense of their interaction with other texts and hence to the permeability of their boundaries" ("Shakespeare"). This new historicism differs from older historicism mainly because it conceives both history and literature as 'textual', that is made up by particular texts which he defines as "fields of force, places of dissension and shifting interests, occasions for the jostling of orthodox and subversive impulses" (Power 6). His new view of history highlights, then, the notion that texts do not exist in isolation but rather in constant relationship with other texts in their context. In his *Critical Theory Today. A User-friendly Guide,* Lois Tyson recreates Greenblatt's ideas when she states that literary texts are

> cultural artefacts that can tell us something about the interplay of discourses, the web of social meanings, operating in the time and place in which the text was written. And they can do so because the literary text is, itself, part of the interplay of discourses, a thread in the dynamic web of social meaning … text (the literary work) and context (the historical conditions that produced it) are mutually constructive: they create each other. (288-289)

In other words, literary texts help to construe meaning and to reinforce or subvert the dominant ideology of a period. Tracing back the interplay of discourses that shaped a literary text can throw some light on the different forms of representing the known world, the systems of belief, the legitimate views, tastes, opinions and thematic repertory that characterize the regulated antagonisms of a given society at a given time. A New Historicist's approach to *Pride and Prejudice*, therefore, would imply reading between the lines of the text to disclose some of the many threads that make up such dynamic web of social meaning in an attempt to determine what stand the female characters take when faced with the conflicting ideograms circulating in nineteenth century England. An analysis of their views and positioning in society will reveal, we wish to argue, whether they were victimized by or could cope with the patriarchal society of the time. The female characters' capacity or inability to face society and its obstacles can be related to four 'victim' positions, as identified by Canadian writer Margaret Atwood in her *Survival*. In an attempt to define a symbol that best characterizes Canada, or as she puts it, "a system of beliefs

which holds the country together and helps the people in it to cooperate for common ends" (31), she thoroughly analyzed English and French Canadian literature to conclude that the symbol which identifies Canada is 'survival'. She explains that in earlier writers, the obstacles to survival were mainly external (the land or the climate, for instance) while later writers dealt with "obstacles to what we may call spiritual survival, to life as anything more than a minimally human being" (31). As far as Canada is concerned, Atwood remarks: "For French Canada after the English took over, it became cultural 'survival', hanging on as a people, retaining a religion and a language under an alien government" (32). Survival implies, then, obstacles to overcome as well as victims and victimisers. When faced with such obstacles, a victimized country, minority group or individual may take any of four basic victim positions, namely: to deny the fact that they are victims (Position one); to acknowledge that they are victims and attribute that to Fate, God's will, economy, the dictates of Biology or any other powerful idea (Position two); to acknowledge they are victims but refuse to accept that as inevitable (Position three); and to be creative non-victims (Position four).

According to Atwood, Victims in Position One are usually those who are "a little better off than the others in that group . . . they are forced to account somehow for the disadvantages suffered by the rest of the people in the group by disparaging them" (36). On the other hand, Victims in Position Two can not be blamed or expected to do anything about their situation. In Atwood's opinion, "you can be resigned and long-suffering or you can kick against the pricks and make a fuss; in the latter case your rebellion will be deemed foolish or evil even by you, and you will expect to lose and be punished, for who can fight Fate (or the will of God, or Biology)?" (37). Position Three is dynamic rather than static for Victims in this group are able to identify the cause of oppression, rebel against it and channel their energy into constructive action to change their situation. As Atwood explains, "from it you can move on to Position Four, but if you become locked into your anger and fail to change your situation, you might well find yourself back in Position Two" (38). Finally, ex-victims or those who have never been victims at all are grouped in Position Four. As Atwood claims, Position Four includes "those who have been able to move into it from Position Three because the external and/or internal causes of victimization have been

removed" (38). Creative activity of all kinds becomes possible for those who belong to this Victim type.

Yet, victims require victimizers. In *Pride and Prejudice*, a deeply rooted, long-standing patriarchal society supported by the privileges of social status and noble origin obliged women—be them from a high or low social station—to comply with firmly anchored roles and practices. Their capacity or inability to cope with such organization of society relates, we believe, to the four victim positions described here above and throws some light on the female characters' conformity to the dominant system of beliefs or their search for a new identity. In this regard, we could claim that the process of developing a new female consciousness resembles the development of a female literary tradition in the English novel described by Elaine Showalter in her *A Literature of their Own*. To her mind, English women writers went through three major phases when developing a literary tradition that was separate from the male mainstream and could be called female. The first stage was a 'phase of imitation' that implied an internalization not only of the prevailing standards of art but also of the social roles assigned to women and men by tradition. The second period, the 'phase of protest' against the established standards and values, involved, as well, a cry for minority rights and values. Finally, the 'phase of self-discovery' meant a search for identity. By virtue of these three phases, Showalter asserts, the development of women writing can be termed as feminine, feminist, female respectively. As she herself puts it:

> First there is a prolonged phase of *imitation* of the prevailing modes of the dominant tradition, and *internalization* of its standards of art and its views on social roles. Second there is a phase of *protest* against these standards and values, and *advocacy* of minority rights and values including a demand for autonomy. Finally there is a phase of *self-discovery*, a turning inward freed from some of the dependency of opposition, a search for identity. An appropriate terminology for women writers is to call these stages: *Feminine*, *Feminist* and *Female*. (13)

Likewise, in the search for a female consciousness, Austen's female characters may well be considered to have gone through similar stages, as we will endeavour to show in this thesis paper.

In short, departing from the assumption that literary texts are immersed in a complex web of social meaning made up of a variety of threads from different types of discourses, we will try to trace back some of the texts that contributed to shaping *Pride and Prejudice*—that is, we will endeavour to work with intertextuality—in order to disclose its interaction with other synchronic discourses—that is, its interdiscursiveness. Our aim is to reveal the dominant systems of belief that defined the prevailing ideology of the early nineteenth century, as far as the title and most important themes of the novel are concerned. The position of the female characters in their patriarchal society will be compared to Margaret Atwood's basic Victim Types and related, in turn, to Elaine Showalter's views on the development of a female literary tradition. As a result, we expect this New Historicist approach to the reading of *Pride and Prejudice* will throw some light on the female characters' search for identity and the emergence of a new female consciousness.

CHAPTER 5: THEMES

THE POSITION OF WOMEN AT THE TIME OF THE NOVEL

The position of women in Austen's times is an important thread in the web of social meaning reflected in *Pride and Prejudice* for it has a direct impact on themes such as marriage, love, and female education. A New Historicist's reading of this literary piece discloses at least four outstanding texts that permeate the novel with regards to the role women were expected to play: Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Emile, ou de l'Education*, James Fordyce's *Sermons to Young Women*, John Gregory's *A Father's Legacy to his Daughters* and Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman.*

Rousseau's *Emile, ou de l'Education* is one of the most relevant books which interacted with Austen's work. This 1762 educational treaty informs the novel throughout and proves that early nineteenth-century patriarchal society was deeply rooted in the notion of the naturally grounded social order inherited from the eighteenth century. The belief that women and men had different natures dictated separate and different gender roles. Rousseau's view of women as creatures born to please men, as beings that use their beauty and charm in their search for power, is at the core of the novel and explains, we wish to argue, the characters' actions and reactions in relationship to the dominant system of beliefs circulating at the time. When referring to marriage, Rousseau makes the difference between male and female roles explicit and clear. As he puts it:

> In the union of the sexes each contributes equally to the common aim, but not in the same way . . . One ought to be active and strong, the other passive and weak. One must necessarily will and be able; it suffices that the other put up little resistance.
>
> Once this principle is established, it follows that a woman is made specially to please man. If man ought to please her in turn, it is due to a less direct necessity. His merit is in his power; he pleases by the sole fact of his strength. This is not the law of love, I agree. But it is that of nature, prior to love itself.

> If woman is made to please and to be subjugated, she ought to make herself agreeable to man instead of arousing him. Her own violence is in her charms. It is by these that she ought to constrain him to find his strength and make use of it. The surest art for animating that strength is to make it necessary by resistance. Then *amour-propre* unites with desire, and the one triumphs in the victory that the other has made him win. From this there arises attack and defence, the audacity of one sex and the timidity of the other, and finally the modesty and the shame with which nature armed the weak in order to enslave the strong . . . the whole education of women ought to relate to men. To please men, to be useful to them, to make herself loved and honoured by them, to raise them when young, to care for them when grown, to counsel them, to console them, to make their lives agreeable and sweet—these are the duties of women at all times, and they ought to be taught from childhood. So long as one does not return to this principle, one will deviate from the goal, and all the precepts taught to women will be of no use for their happiness or for ours. (358-365)

It is interesting to note that for Rousseau, the sharply-marked differences between women and men are established by Nature, and determine how each must contribute to the common goal of marriage. On the grounds of the iniquitous distribution of strengths and talents, women needed to appear weak, passive, timid, and modest if they wanted to be chosen as marital partners. Their urge to marry so as to avoid economic vulnerability reinforced this asymmetrical relationship and explains why they had to always please and be agreeable to men. Such an urge, however, affected the aristocrats and the gentry alike. Thus, although they had better economic prospects and a safer life, Caroline Bingley and Lady Catherine de Bourgh's daughter were as compelled to marry as gentry women like the Bennet sisters. Men's need to find a wife, on the other hand, was rooted in "a less direct necessity", as Rousseau states. Commenting on this issue in her *Women, Power and Subversion: Social Strategies in British Fiction,* Judith Newton points out that men in Austen's novel "may 'want' or desire wives, as it turns out, but they do not 'need' to want them as women must want husbands. Men in 'Pride and Prejudice', therefore, are conscious of having the power to choose and they are fond of dwelling on it, of impressing it upon

women" (64). This may well explain why women had to be extremely careful to subjugate men by using their charms, to arouse men's interest and putting up resistance when faced with their advances. The delicate interplay of strength and charms—the male and female manifestations of power respectively—is characterized as artful by Rousseau and underlies the rules governing courtship. An enthusiastic Mr. Collins pleasantly approves Elizabeth's refusal of his marriage proposal because he considers it an expected female response. As he says, "I know it to be the established custom of your sex to reject a man on the first application, and perhaps, you have even now said as much to encourage my suit as would be consistent with the true delicacy of the female character" (Austen 107-108). Furthermore, later on he claims "I shall choose to attribute it [her rejection] to your wish of increasing my love by suspense, according to the usual practice of elegant females" (Austen 108). Far from feeling pleased with the fact that Mr. Collins considers her an elegant woman, Elizabeth insists on being treated as a rational being endowed with the capacity to take decisions by herself. In fact, she urges him "Do not consider me now as an elegant female intending to plague you, but as a rational creature speaking the truth from her heart" (Austen 108). Elizabeth thus defies Rousseau's deterministic ideas on female inferiority and shows that women can have a say in critical issues such as whom to marry, quite an astonishing turn to take in early nineteenth-century patriarchal society.

With the publication of James Fordyce's *Sermons to Young Women* five years later, Rousseau's ideas were reinforced and turned into this conduct book. In it, Fordyce warned about the dangers witty women represent for the ease men expect to find at home and instructed women about proper attitudes to develop so as to become attractive marital partners. To be eligible, women were expected not only to be gentle and meek but also to show dependence on men and ignorance of important issues which may raise dispute. Because the books women read were not to develop their intellect but to teach them how to behave, what to say and what to silence, conduct books like Fordyce's were of paramount importance at the time. This is precisely the book Mr. Collins reads aloud to the Bennet sisters "with very monotonous solemnity" (Austen 69). The importance of Fordyce's contribution to *Pride and Prejudice* becomes clear in the following quotation from his *Sermons to Young Women*:

> When I speak on this subject, need I tell you that men of the best sense have been usually averse to the thought of marrying a witty woman? You will probably tell me, they were afraid of being outshone; and some of them perhaps might be so. But I am apt to believe, that many of them acted on different motives. Men who understand the science of domestic happiness, know that its very principle is ease. Of that indeed we grow fonder, in whatever condition, as we advance in life and as the heat of youth abates. But we cannot be easy, where we are not safe. We are never safe in the company of a critic; and almost every wit is a critic by profession. In such company we are not at liberty to unbend ourselves . . . Where the heart may not expand and open itself with freedom, farewell to real friendship, farewell to convivial delight! But to suffer this restraints at home, what misery! From the brandishings of wit in the hand of ill nature, of imperious passion, or of unbounded vanity, who would not flee? But when the weapon is pointed at a husband, is it to be wondered if from his own house he takes shelter in the tavern? He sought a soft friend; he expected to be happy in a reasonable companion. He has found a perpetual satirist, or a self sufficient prattler. How have I pitied such a man, when I have seen him in continual fear on his own account, and that of his friends, and for the poor lady herself; lest, in the run of her discourse, she should be guilty of some petulance, or some indiscretion, that would expose her and hurt them all! But take the matter at the best; there is still all the difference in the world between the entertainer of an evening, and a partner for life. Of the latter a sober mind, steady attachment, and gentle manners, joined to a good understanding will ever be the chief recommendations: whereas the qualities that sparkle will be often sufficient for the former. (192-4)

Interestingly enough, Fordyce admits that women are endowed with wit and may even outshine some men; yet, he associates such wit to a deviation from nature, to vanity, passion, petulance and indiscretion, qualities that can only be admitted in women who are 'the entertainment of an evening' rather than the partners for life. On the other hand, prospective wives had to show meekness and a sober mind, qualities that perfectly

characterize Charlotte Lucas. When visiting the Collins, "Elizabeth, in the solitude of her chamber, had to meditate upon Charlotte's degree of contentment, to understand her address in guiding and composure in bearing with her husband, and to acknowledge that it was all done very well" (Austen 157). It is evident that Charlotte has become a prudent and respectable vicar's wife who has brought favour to him in his community and manages his home competently. She has also learnt to turn a deaf ear to some of her husband's improper comments or, as the narrator puts it in the novel, "when Mr. Collins said any thing of which his wife might reasonably be ashamed . . . Charlotte wisely did not hear" (Austen 156). She could, thus, keep silent and avoid the indiscretion that could have turned her into a critic. As a result, Charlotte was able to ensure the 'ease' that, in Fordyce's opinion, guarantees domestic happiness.

Though this representation of women was dominant in early nineteenth century, Austen preferred to depict a voiced heroine who is ready to get engaged in battles of wits with men. By the same token, she made Darcy upturn Fordyce's view that witty women are rejected by sensible men. This is demonstrated when Elizabeth and Darcy verbally spar about character failings. She unfolds her wit and cunning to comment on his pride and resentment for everybody while Darcy criticizes her incapacity to read character. Far from being afraid of her wit, Darcy finds her attractive precisely because of it:

> "Mr Darcy is not to be laughed at" cried Elizabeth. "That is an uncommon advantage and uncommon I hope it will continue for it will be a great loss to *me* to have many such acquaintance. I dearly love a laugh."
> "Miss Bingley", said he. "has given me credit for more that can be. The wisest and best of men,—nay, the wisest and best of their actions,—may be rendered ridiculous by a person whose first object in life is a joke."
> "Certainly", replied Elizabeth, "there are such people, but I hope I am not one of *them*. I hope I never ridicule what is wise or good. Follies and nonsense, whims and inconsistencies, *do* divert me, I own, and I laugh at them whenever I can. But these, I suppose, are what you are without"
> "Perhaps this is not possible for anyone. But it has been the study of my life to avoid those weaknesses which often expose a strong understanding to ridicule."

> "Such as vanity and pride"
>
> "Yes, vanity is a weakness indeed. But pride—where there is a real superiority of mind—pride will be always under good regulation."
>
> Elizabeth turned away to hide a smile . . .
>
> "My temper would perhaps be called resentful. My good opinion once lost is lost for ever."
>
> "*That* is a failing indeed!" cried Elizabeth. Implacable resentment is a shade in a character¨. You have chosen your fault well. I really cannot *laugh* at it. You are safe from me."
>
> "There is, I believe, in every disposition a tendency to some particular evil, a natural defect, which not even the best education can overcome."
>
> "And your defect is a propensity to hate everybody."
>
> "And yours", he replied, with a smile, "is wilfully to misunderstand them." (Austen 57-8)

As the above quotation exemplifies, Elizabeth is neither passive nor weak or ready to please and be agreeable to Darcy, as Rousseau instructs. Instead of being solicitous like Caroline Bingley, she freely voices her thoughts to criticize Darcy. When he, in turn, answers back, he addresses her in symmetrical terms because he recognizes that she is intelligent and quick minded, qualities that lure Darcy so much that "He began to feel the danger of paying Elizabeth too much attention" (Austen 58). The danger does not lie in the possibility of her disturbing his ease, as Fordyce warns, but rather in his being attracted by her wits and charm. When further on in the story he tells her "I am not afraid of you" (Austen 173), it becomes clear that Austen's representation of Elizabeth and Darcy collides with Fordyce's views and exemplifies the antagonism between the instituted and the emerging representations or systems of belief. Not only does Elizabeth show she has a strong mind but Darcy upturns the hegemonic view that women should only endeavour to develop their charms and neglect their minds.

Rousseau's and Fordyce's statements match John Gregory's when he claimed that

> there is inequality in the sexes; and for the better economy of the world, the men, who were to be the lawgivers, had the larger share of reason bestowed upon them . . . But if you happen to have any learning, keep it in a profound

> secret, especially from the men, who generally look with a jealous and malignant eye on a woman of great parts, and a cultivated understanding. (qtd. in Monaghan 105)

Like Rousseau, Gregory admits there are dissimilarities between men and women which point to the latter's inferiority to men in matters of intellect; likewise, he sides with Fordyce in the view that women must hide any knowledge they may have acquired. A cultivated mind does not seem to match the stereotype of moderation, sobriety and servility associated to the ideal marital partner. Learning what to say in a given situation was, therefore, as important as silencing what may have been considered inappropriate by a man. The introduction of characters like Charlotte Lucas (who adjusts to the hegemonic social discourse) and Elizabeth Bennet (who upturns it and gives room for the emergence of new paradigms) reveals the confrontations that there exist in the thematic repertory social discourse is made up.

Rousseau's discourse on women and their position and role in life found in Mary Wollstonecraft's ideas a perfect counterargument. In her 1792 *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, she urges women to cultivate their minds more than they do their bodies for here lies the secret to construe a new self determined, independent being, not inferior but equal to men. As she puts it:

> My own sex, I hope, will excuse me, if I treat them like rational creatures, instead of flattering their *fascinating graces,* and viewing them as if they were in a state of perpetual childhood, unable to stand alone. I earnestly wish to point out in what true dignity and human happiness consists—I wish to persuade women to endeavour to acquire strength, both of mind and body, and to convince them that the soft phrases, susceptibility of heart, delicacy of sentiment, and refinement of taste, are almost synonymous with epithets of weakness, and that those beings who are only the objects of pity and that kind of love, which has been termed its sister, will soon become objects of contempt.
>
> Dismissing then those pretty feminine phrases, which the men condescendingly use to soften our slavish dependence, and despising that weak elegancy of mind, exquisite sensibility, and sweet docility of manners,

> supposed to be the sexual characteristics of the weaker vessel, I wish to show that elegance is inferior to virtue, that the first object of laudable ambition is to obtain a character as a human being, regardless of the distinction of sex.
>
> I may be criticized of arrogance; still I must declare what I firmly believe, that all the writers who have written on the subject of female education and thinkers from Rousseau to Dr. Gregory, have contributed to render women more artificial, weak characters than they would otherwise have been; and, consequently, more useless members of society. I might have expressed this conviction in a lower key; but I am afraid it would have been the whine of affectation, and not the faithful explanation of my feelings, of the clear result, which experience and reflection have led me to draw. (Works 75, 91, 92-3)

It is evident that Wollstonecraft's argument strongly opposes the notion of a naturally grounded social order so fiercely defended by Rousseau and Gregory. In fact, she bluntly blames them for supporting and encouraging the notion that women are weak and useless counterparts to man. She considers women to be rational beings who can aspire to be independent and virtuous provided they do not surrender to the mere cultivation of their charms. The strength of mind she encourages women to develop will enable them to attain happiness by doing without the perpetual state of childhood—and therefore slavish dependence—that springs from weak, uncultivated minds. Therefore, the sweet docility of manners, exquisite sensibility and elegancy of mind which turn a woman into an accomplished marital partner will, in the end, change her into an object of contempt if such accomplishments replace the development of a character as a human being. Wollstonecraft's contribution to the emergence of a new female consciousness lies, we believe, in having deviated women's attention from men to themselves; that is, instead of focusing in preparing themselves to please men, they should endeavour to develop a character of their own and be independent. Jane Austen echoed this idea in her heroine, a strong-willed woman who is ready to stand on her own feet. If to charm and beauty may some female characters in the novel owe their recognition as 'accomplished women', it is to her wit and strength of mind and temperament that Elizabeth owes her right to happiness

next to Darcy. It is precisely in this heroine's human traits where Austen's voice sounds as the rightful undercurrent to Rousseau, Fordyce and Gregory's discourse, thus proposing a redefinition of the female role no longer bearing the stigma of an inferior creature. In this sense, Richard Handler and Daniel Segal argue: "Austen's texts generate voices that question apparently unquestioned (and unquestionable) cultural rules, she teaches us that such rules are not determinative but fictive, not natural objects but creations made and remade by people" (11). By permeating the novel with voices like Rousseau's, Fordyce's, Gregory's and Wollstonecraft's, Austen gives evidence of the 'jostling of orthodox and subversive impulses' that Greenblatt identified as part of any text and which is masterfully depicted in Austen's novel.

MARRIAGE AND COURTSHIP

The opening lines to *Pride and Prejudice* point to a core theme in the novel: marriage. When Austen writes "It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife … this truth is so well fixed in the minds of the surrounding families, that he is considered the rightful property of some one or other of their daughters" (5), she throws light on the importance that spouse picking had at that time. To fully understand the significance of marriage for women like the Bennet sisters—and for that matter, for any woman in early nineteenth century—, it is important to keep in mind that at the time of the novel, marriage meant primarily a joining of families (and families' fortunes) to provide women with financial security and an escape from the miseries of spinsterhood. Austen gives evidence of the problems undergone by single women on the death of their parents in a letter addressed to her niece Fanny Knight which is included in Le Faye's *Jane Austen's Letters*. In it, she refers to a Miss Milles whose mother died leaving very little property: "I am sorry and surprised that you speak of her as having so little to leave, and must feel for Miss Milles . . . if a material loss of income is to attend her other loss. Single women have a dreadful propensity for being poor, which is a very strong argument in favour of Matrimony" (332).

Closely linked to single women's urge to marry, therefore, are the economic restrictions they are subject to in terms of inheritance and fortune. The Law of Primogeniture, which determined that the eldest son in the family was the rightful heir to his father's property, was mostly responsible for the impoverishment awaiting single women after their father's death. In case there was no male heir, the family's property was usually entailed in favour of a male relative. Though entailment was a well established practice in early nineteenth-century England, some voices rose against it. Such was the case of Adam Smith who criticized it on the grounds that it condemned single women to legal and economic vulnerability. In his *The Wealth of Nations,* we read:

> In the present state of Europe, the proprietor of a single acre of land is as perfectly secure of his possession as the proprietor of a hundred thousand. The right of primogeniture, however, still continues to be respected, and as of all institutions it is the fittest to support the pride of family distinctions, it is still likely to endure for many centuries. In every other respect, nothing can be more contrary to the real interest of a numerous family, than a right which, in order to enrich one, beggars all the rest of the children.
>
> Entails are the natural consequences of the law of primogeniture. They were introduced to preserve a certain lineal succession, of which the law of primogeniture first gave the idea, and to hinder any part of the original estate from being carried out from the proposed line, either by gift, or devise, or alienation; either by the folly, or by the misfortunate of any of its successive women [. . .] They are founded upon the most absurd of all suppositions, the supposition that every successive generation of men have not an equal right to the earth, and to all that it possesses; but that the property of the present generation should be restrained and regulated according to the fancy of those who died perhaps five hundred years ago. Entails, however, are still respected through the greater part of Europe. (383-4)

As Mr. Bennet's property is entailed in default of a son on Mr Collins, a distant cousin, marriage appears as the only way for his daughters to avoid destitution and helplessness after his death. On learning about Mr Collins' prospective visit to the house, Mrs. Bennet reveals her fears about being impoverished and echoes Smith's arguments

against the entailment: “I do think it is the hardest thing in the world, that your estate should be entailed away from your own children; and I am sure, if I had been you, I should have tried long ago to do something or other about it” (Austen 62). She was well aware of the hardships awaiting her and her single daughters because her husband had done nothing to break the entailment and recover the property nor had he saved money out of his annual income to provide for his wife and daughters after his death. Mrs. Bennet’s worries over the entailment set on their property are counterbalanced by Elizabeth, who entirely disregards its implications. Unlike most of the female characters, who are willing to accept any man as a candidate for fear of remaining single, Elizabeth Bennet rejects both Mr Collins’ and Darcy’s marriage proposals, quite a brave action to take in view of the consequences and the instituted codes of courtship and marriage. Though we can initially recognize her as a Victim in position Three (she knows she is likely to undergo severe hardships if she remains single), her determination to endure whatever may come in her life as a spinster makes her shift into Position Four, that is the position of an ex-victim.

The codes that governed courtship and marriage in Austen’s time were grounded on several texts circulating at that time. Already in 1789, John Gregory had written his *A Father’s Legacy to his Daughters*, a conduct book in which he associated marriage to gratitude rather than to love:

> What is commonly called love among you, is rather gratitude, and a partiality to the man who prefers you to the rest of your sex; and such a man you often marry, with little of either personal esteem or affection. Indeed, without an unusual share of natural sensibility, and very peculiar good fortune, a woman in this country has very little probability of marrying for love.
>
> It is a maxim laid down among you, and a very prudent one it is, that love is not to begin on your part, but is entirely to be the consequence of our attachment to you. Now, supposing a woman to have sense and taste, she will not find many men to whom she can possibly be supposed to bear any considerable share of esteem. Among these few, it is a very great chance if any of them distinguishes her particularly. Love, at least with us, is exceedingly capricious, and will not always fix where Reason says it should.

> But supposing one of them should become particularly attached to her, it is still extremely improbable that he should be the man in the world her heart most approved of.
>
> As, therefore, Nature has not given you that unlimited range in your choice which we enjoy, she has wisely and benevolently assigned to you a greater flexibility of taste on this subject. Some agreeable qualities recommend a gentleman to your common good liking and friendship. In the course of his acquaintance, he contracts an attachment to you. When you perceive it, it excites your gratitude; this gratitude rises into a preference and this preference perhaps at last advances to some degree of attachment, especially if it meets with crosses and difficulties; for these, and a state of suspense, are very great incitements to attachment, and are the food of love in both sexes. If attachment was not excited in your sex in this manner, there is not one of a million of you that could ever marry with any degree of love. (91-95)

This quotation reveals that courtship was established on the basis of asymmetrical relationships according to which women were not expected to choose but to be chosen and be grateful about it. He emphasizes that love grows from gratitude, 'especially if it meets with crosses and difficulties' and that happiness is based on the notion of marriage as the joining of compatible individuals. What is more, 'the state of suspense' he refers to implies that a woman should not reveal the depth of her feelings for a man so as to excite his attachment to her and have more chances of marrying for love. The fact that Austen adhered to Gregory's view on love and gratitude becomes clear when Elizabeth tries to make out her true feelings for Darcy and realizes her gratitude is a crucial step in her growing attachment to him. As the narrator says:

> But above all, above respect and esteem, there was a motive within her of good-will which could not be overlooked. 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 258)

Elizabeth's gratitude is the result of her growth, of her acceptance and adjusting of her vanity and insensible way of thinking based till then on first impressions. Having

undergone this process of introspection, she can value Darcy's love and feel attached to him, just as he does to her. Elizabeth and Darcy have grown to like each other, have met difficulties related mostly to their pride and prejudices, have become attached and have thus complied with the steps leading, in Gregory's views, to a marriage for love.

Quite different is the gratitude Charlotte Lucas feels for Mr Collins. If we consider the bleak future awaiting her after her father's death and her age (she is already 27 years old), we may well understand why she accepts, with relief, Mr Collins as a husband. Financial security, a home of her own and a respectable position in the community are enough reasons for her to accept his proposal. She does not mind that their marriage will not be based on love for it will give her, instead, protection from want. As the narrator comments:

> 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 young women of small fortune, and however uncertain of giving happiness, must be their pleasantest preservative from want. (Austen 122)

Charlotte's goal in life is thus accomplished at the expense of happiness because, as she admits, "Happiness in marriage is entirely a matter of chance" (Austen 24). Mr. Collins is far from being the man in the world her heart most approved of, yet, he appears to be one of her last opportunities to marry and avoid impoverishment. In a conversation with Elizabeth, Charlotte admits: "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 125).

If we consider, with Gregory, that initial esteem or affection is essential for attachment to grow into love, we may gather that there are very few possibilities for love to develop between Charlotte and Mr. Collins. Besides, Charlotte did not create the feeling of 'suspense' or put up the crosses and difficulties Gregory regards as incitements to attachment; rather, she was encouraging. When the Bennets went to dine at the Lucas' after

Elizabeth rejected Mr. Collins, Elizabeth thanked Charlotte for being kind to him. Little could Elizabeth suspect at that time that "Charlotte's kindness extended farther than Elizabeth had any conception of:—its object was nothing less than to secure her from any returns of Mr. Collins's addresses, by engaging them towards herself. Such was Miss. Lucas's scheme" (Austen 121). Charlotte represents a clear picture of how far a woman would go to avoid the fate of spinsterhood in the early nineteenth century. She fits into Victim in Position Two because she is well aware that her rebellion against her situation will be deemed foolish and will only bring about the punishment of remaining a destitute spinster. Furthermore, Charlotte adheres to the idea that it is useless to fight Fate and makes her best effort to achieve her goal even if it implies marrying for convenience instead of for love.

Another book which interacts with *Pride and Prejudice* and advises young women how to find and marry an appropriate husband is Lady Sarah Pennington's *An unfortunate Mother's Advice for her Absent Daughters.* Lady Pennington addresses this conduct book to her daughters, who were taken from her by her husband when he separated from her. Probably as a consequence of her own personal experience, she thinks it important to warn her daughters against the danger s of marrying an ill-natured man. She makes a clear distinction between good nature and good humour, a difference which proves particularly adequate to the study of Darcy and Wickham as represented by Austen. She defines good nature as "true benevolence which partakes the felicity of mankind . . . and which, in the private scene of life, will shine conspicuous in the dutiful son, in the affectionate husband, the indulgent father, the faithful friend and in the compassionate master both to man and beast" (220-224); whereas good humour is "nothing more than a cheerful, pleasing deportment arising either from a natural gaiety of mind, or from an affectation of popularity, joined to an affability of behaviour" (220-224). What is more, she advices her daughters to avoid judging men on 'outward appearances, which are often fallacious' and pay attention to their actions in the domestic sphere because it is there, she stresses, where a man's true character is revealed. She points out the importance of considering the opinion of those who work for him and have a daily treatment with him. Further on in her letter, we read:

> if a man is equally respected, esteemed, and beloved by his tenants, by his dependants and domestics—from the substantial farmer to the laborious peasant—from the proud steward to the submissive wretch, who thankful for the employment, humbly obeys the menial tribe;—you may justly conclude he has, that true good nature, that real benevolence which delights in communicating felicity and enjoys the satisfaction it diffuses. (220-224)

These pieces of advice seem to have guided Austen in her representation of Darcy. Though he appears ill-humoured in the Meryton ball, at Pemberley, his home, he is a kind and caring master who has gained a high opinion among his dependants. Mrs. Reynolds, his housekeeper, states that "If I were to go through the world, I could not meet with a better [master]. But I have always observed, that they who are good-natured when children, are good-natured when they grow up; and he was always the sweetest-tempered, most generous-hearted boy in the world" (Austen 242). Mrs. Reynolds' commendation of her master will first make Elizabeth wonder whether she is actually describing Mr. Darcy. She has judged him as an ill-tempered, proud man from his behaviour in public, an opinion based on her hasty first impression which her pride in judging character has supported. She can only think that her opinion may be mistaken and come to an understanding of his real nature when she realizes his housekeeper loves him and respects him dearly.

The difference between good-nature and good-humour becomes clearer when Mrs. Reynolds, still commenting on Darcy, points out:

> "He is the best landlord, and the best master", said she, "that ever lived. Not like the wild young men now-a-days, who think of nothing but themselves. There is not one of his tenant or servants but what will give him a good name. Some people call him proud; but I am sure I never saw any thing of it. To my fancy, it is only because he does not rattle away like other young men." (Austen 243)

Elizabeth first judges Wickham as good-humoured and interesting to be with and refuses to accept Miss. Bingley's advice not to believe all his assertions—especially those directed against Darcy— on the grounds that he is really ill-natured. It is not until she receives Darcy's letter explaining both why he had detached Mr. Bingley from her sister Jane and Mr. Wickham's true character, that Elizabeth can admit Wickham's ill-nature.

Though at first she read the letter "with a strong prejudice against everything he might say" (Austen 201), later on "Astonishment, apprehension, and even horror, oppressed her" (Austen 201). Elizabeth's awareness of her misjudgement of Darcy and Wickham's nature is an important event in the story because it triggers a process of introspection which, in turn, will make her grow as a character. She recognizes she has been vane in boasting her discernment to judge character and too prejudiced to allow room for any adjustments in her firmly-held opinions. But above all, she has not formed her opinions in the light of reason. Mortified by such realization, Elizabeth comes to understand herself for the first time:

> She grew absolutely ashamed of herself. Of neither Darcy nor Wickham could she think, without feeling that she had been blind, partial, prejudiced, absurd.
>
> "How despicably have I acted" she cried. "I who have prided myself on my discernment! I who have valued myself on my abilities! Who have often disdained the generous candour of my sister, and gratified my vanity in useless or blameable distrust. How humiliating is this discovery! Yet, how just a humiliation! Had I been in love, I could not have been more wretchedly blind. But vanity, not love, has been my folly. Pleased with the preference of one, and offended by the neglect of the other, on the very beginning of our acquaintance, I have courted prepossession and ignorance, and driven reason away where either were concerned. Till this moment, I never knew myself!" (Austen 204-5)

From this moment in the story on, Elizabeth begins to make adjustments in her pride and revise her prejudices, but most importantly, she lets reason guide her thoughts. Her growth in character will gradually permit her to get to know Darcy's true nature and begin to feel affection for him. Following John Gregory's argument, we can state that their relationship has met 'crosses and difficulties' and has even been guided by "a feeling of suspense", conditions which are incitements to the attachment leading to a marriage for love. Elizabeth and Darcy's marriage, then, stands as the counterpart of Charlotte and Mr. Collins's union for convenience. Their chances of being happy are grounded on their true knowledge of each other and their nature. Having done without the economic motive for marriage and starting their courting on the basis of knowledge and respect, Elizabeth and

Darcy headed for a successful married life. They thus proved Samuel Johnson's warning that the customary rituals of courting along with the original reasons for marriage were responsible for much of the misunderstandings and unneeded pain inflicted on the spouses who were initially obliged to hide their true nature in order to get a suitor. As he explains:

> . . . the whole endeavour of both parties, during the time of courtship, is to hinder themselves from being known, and to disguise their natural temper, and real desires, in a hypocritical imitation, studied compliance, and continual affectation. From the time that their love is avowed, neither sees the other but in a mask, and the cheat is managed often on both sides with so much art, and discovered afterwards with so much abruptness, that each has reason to suspect that some transformation has happened on the wedding night, and that by a strange imposture, one has been courted, and another married. (Number 45 243-247)

Jane Austen, a single woman herself, was well aware of the hardships involved in spinsterhood. After her own father died, she depended for housing on her brother Edward, who provided her, her sister Cassandra and her mother with a cottage within his Hampshire estate. The fact that Elizabeth rejected Mr Collins' and later Mr. Darcy's proposal may be regarded as impractical, insensible or even quite an astonishing thing to do at that time. Yet, it shows Austen's concern with an alternative view on marriage based on love and self determination, a counterargument to Gregory's discourse. Likewise, Elizabeth's marriage to Darcy may reveal Austen's choice to upturn the conventions imposed by social rank regarding marriage. As Carol Howard points out in the introduction to *Pride and Prejudice*: "In the society of this novel, talent and manners—that is, truly good breeding , rather than affectation—ultimately triumph birth and social connections" (Austen xxxi). On the other hand, it is interesting to note that neither Mr. Collins nor Darcy could ever imagine Elizabeth would turn down their proposal. Their astonishment at being rejected proves they expected her to be grateful for being chosen as a prospective wife and even interpret her refusal as the 'crosses and difficulties' men meet when proposing to a woman. Little could they think that for Elizabeth love and affection outweighed the economic security provided by marriage.

In a world where the economic pressure imposed on single women by the law of entailment accounts for their urge to get married, there seems to be no room for rejection of suitors. However, this is precisely what Elizabeth does with Mr. Darcy's first marriage proposal as well as with Mr. Collins's. In this regard, Samuel Richardson's *Sir Charles Grandson* provides another interesting example of intertextuality in *Pride and Prejudice*. Early in this epistolary novel, a wealthy and dishonourable Sir Hargrave Pollexfen tries to get the love of an attractive and accomplished Harriet Byron who repeatedly rejects him. The scene in which Harriet rejects Sir Hargrave Pollexfen's proposal mirrors Mr. Collins and Darcy's rebuffs by a spirited Elizabeth. Contradicting the code of what was considered appropriate for a lady to do, Harriet prefers to decline his addresses openly and plainly. Like Elizabeth, she wants to be considered sincere and divorced from the playful strategy of putting up resistance to encourage him. This is why she dares to answer him:

> To seem to question the sincerity of such professions as you make, Sir Hargrave, might appear to you as if I wanted to be assured. But be pleased to know that you are directing your discourse to one of the plainest-hearted women in England; and you may therefore expect from me nothing but the simplest truth. I thank you, Sir, for your good opinion of me; but I cannot encourage your addresses. (Richardson 83)

The passage describing Sir Hargrave Pollexfen's reaction to her unexpected rebuff reveals the rigidity of the code Harriet was breaking as well as the undeniable weight that society imposed on women by forcing them give up individual preference for economic convenience in marriage. To Sir Pollexfen's mind, class, a prosperous future as Mrs. Pollexfen and an escape from bleak spinsterhood should have been enough reasons for Harriet to accept his marriage proposal. The only possible excuse for her rejection was that she loved somebody else. As he puts it:

> You *cannot*, madam, *encourage my addresses!* And express yourself so seriously! [He stood silent a minute or two, looking upon me and upon himself, as if he had said, foolish girl! Knows she whom she refuses?]. I have been assured, madam, recovering a little from his surprise, that your affections are not engaged. But surely it must be a mistake. (Richardson 83)

Harriet's bold independence and insistence on being true to her mind and feelings is revealed when she spiritedly answers: "Is it, interrupted I, a necessary consequence, that the woman who cannot receive the addresses of Sir Hargrave Pollexfen, must be engaged?" (Richardson 83). Like Austen's Elizabeth Bennet, Harriet privileges personal fulfilment rather than compliance with social conventions, quite a daring turn to take at the time of the novel. On the other hand, both Darcy and Sir Pollexfen are astonished at being rejected and demand an explanation. Darcy's "I might, perhaps, wish to be informed why, with so little *endeavour* at civility, I am thus rejected" (Austen 189) echoes Sir Pollexfen's urge for Harriet to clarify her decision. As we read:

> Why, madam—As to that—I know not what to say—But a man of my fortune, and I hope, not *absolutely* disagreeable either in person or temper; of some rank in life—He paused; then resuming—What, madam, if you are as much in earnest as you seem, can be your objection? Be so good as to name it, that I may know, whether I cannot be so happy as to get over it? (Richardson 83)

In the last part of their dialogue, Harriet fully unfolds her independent spirit and her determined heart to justify herself and her choice. Like Elizabeth does with Mr. Collins and later on with Mr. Darcy, Harriet plainly and sincerely admits she does not fancy Sir Pollexfen as a suitor. It is evident that by doing so, Harriet sets a new paradigm regarding the reasons for marriage: she displaces the economic motive and gives room to individual preference or even affection as a motivation. Harriet's emphasis on individuality over social conventions can also be perceived in Austen's heroine, which provides another example of the extent to which Samuel Richardson's novel shaped *Pride and Prejudice*. Harriet's argument in favour of her right to take her own decisions exemplifies the movement of destabilization or confrontation also at work in the Social Discourse prevailing at the time of the novel. The beauty and force of such an argument is included here below:

> We do not, we *cannot*, all like the same person. Women, I have heard say, are very capricious. Perhaps I am so. But there is a *something* (we cannot always say what) that attracts or disgusts us . . . You, Sir, may have more merit, than perhaps the man I may happen to approve of better¸ but—*shall* I

> say? (Pardon me, Sir). You do not—you do not, hesitated I, hit my fancy—Pardon me, Sir . . . I told you, Sir, that you must not expect anything from me but the simplest truth. You do me an honour in your good opinion; and if my own heart were not, in this case, a very determined one, I would answer you with more politeness. But, Sir, on such an occasion as this, I think it would not be honourable, it would not be just, to keep a man in an hour's suspense, when I am in none myself. (Richardson 83-4)

Furthermore, the surprise and incredulity which struck Sir Pollexfen on hearing Harriet's rejection springs from the belief that women were expected to be thankful for being chosen as spouses, a notion rooted in Rousseau's views on women and marriage. However, plain-hearted Harriet is not afraid of voicing her thoughts and rejecting this wealthy man on the grounds that he did not hit her fancy. Likewise, when Mr. Collins proposes to Elizabeth, he is convinced she will accept him and feel relief for marrying the man who is to inherit her house on her father's death. Yet, Elizabeth answers: "I am very sensible of the honour of your proposals, but it is impossible for me to do otherwise than decline them" (Austen 106). Influenced as he was by Rousseau's ideas that women should put up a little resistance to men's advances, Mr Collins interprets Elizabeth's rejection as encouragement. To convince him, Elizabeth insists: "I am perfectly serious in my refusal. You could not make 'me' happy, and I am convinced that I am the last woman in the world who would make 'you' so" (Austen 107). After this second refusal, Mr. Collins reveals, as Sir Pollexfen does, his amazement at being rebuffed especially because he is a wealthy, well-established candidate:

> You must give me leave to flatter myself, my dear cousin, that your refusal of my addresses are merely words of course. My reasons for believing it are briefly these: —it does not appear to me that my hand is unworthy your acceptance, or that the establishment I can offer would be any other than highly desirable. My situation in life, my connections with the family of De Bourgh, and my relationship to your own, are circumstances highly in my favour; and you should take it into further consideration that, in spite of your manifold attractions, it is by no means certain that another offer of marriage be ever made you. Your portion is unhappily so small, that it will in all

> likelihood undo the effects of your loveliness and amiable qualifications. As I must, therefore, conclude that you are not serious in your rejection of me, I shall choose to attribute it to your wish of increasing my love by suspense, according to the usual practise of elegant women." (Austen 108)

Elizabeth's refusal hurt Mr. Collins's pride so deeply that he preferred to deceive himself as to the seriousness of her repeated rejections. As a result, Elizabeth decided to apply to her father to make Mr. Collins take her refusals as serious. After all, Elizabeth thought, her father's behaviour "could not be mistaken for the affectation and coquetry of an elegant female" (Austen 109).

Similarly, when Darcy declared his love for Elizabeth, she was so amazed that she could only stare, blush and keep silent. Darcy considered this sufficient encouragement and went on speaking about his love. To Darcy's mind, Elizabeth was behaving as she was expected to. Yet, far from expressing a sense of obligation and thankfulness for his sentiments, she turned his marriage proposal down. Angry and disturbed, Mr. Darcy claimed in forced calmness: "And this is all the reply which I am to have the honour of expecting! I might, perhaps, wish to be informed why with so little 'endeavour' at civility I am thus rejected" (Austen 189). Just like Mr. Collins, Mr. Darcy could never have imagined Elizabeth would turn down his marriage proposal. Just like Harriet, Elizabeth felt free and spirited enough to reject the wealthy man who would have chased away her bleak future as a spinster. Once again, Austen's heroine destabilizes the prevailing practices of early nineteenth century Social Discourse which subordinated women to men in the economic, educational and sentimental fields. Such confrontation of customary practices exemplifies the emerging representations or systems of belief that coexisted with the instituted discourse. In this sense, the asymmetrical relationship between women and men is being questioned as women exercise the right to decide when and who to marry or not, regardless of the consequences. In Mary Wollstonecraft's words, Elizabeth is developing the strength of mind necessary to do without the perpetual state of childhood—and therefore slavish dependence—that prevents women from attaining happiness.

EDUCATION

Education plays an important role in the making up of the dynamic web of Social Discourse depicted in *Pride and Prejudice*. In early nineteenth century England, the formal education a child received depended, among other things, on the family's social and financial status and, most importantly, on the child's gender. The higher the family's social station, the more possibilities a child had of being educated at prestigious schools and even attending university. Yet, these benefits did not apply to boys and girls alike. Whereas men from the aristocracy or the upper gentry were generally educated at important schools (such as Eaton) and even trained at university for a profession, women had no highly regarded schools they could go to and were not admitted at university because of their gender. A woman's education, therefore, was less academic and less important than a man's, even if she belonged to the higher classes. Women of the gentry, such as the Bennet sisters or Charlotte Lucas, were often educated at home by their mother or a governess. Women of the lower gentry, on the other hand, were trained in housekeeping so that they could be good servants or suitable companions for men of little income.

It is evident that Rousseau's view of women as inferior creatures destined to please men had a strong impact on female education—or rather, preparation—in early nineteenth century. The role women were to play in life—that of being accomplished spouses—determined, then, the quality and quantity of their education. Since women had to prepare themselves for marriage as a life commitment, becoming eligible partners was more important than cultivating their intellect. As Debra Teachman points out in her *Understanding* Pride and Prejudice*: A Student Casebook to Issues, Sources and Historical Documents*:

> Guidance about moral behaviour, proper attitudes, proper dress, and prospective marriage partners was part of a young woman's 'education'. What books she read to help her develop into an attractive marital partner was of more importance to many people than what books she read to develop her intellect. Dancing, drawing and musical performance were considered more useful than the development of critical thinking skills and common sense in the young woman; the expectation was that the former would more

> readily attract eligible young men. Learning to enhance one's beauty to lure as many potential suitors as possible was thought more important than learning skills that might enable a woman of the gentry or aristocracy to support herself financially in the future. (110)

The thread that connects gender, education and marriage in the construction of the web of social meaning becomes evident if we consider, following Teachman, that education of young women seemed to focus on their need to either prepare themselves for marriage or learn how to be marriageable. What constituted the appropriate education for these models differed significantly. A woman's preparation for marriage involved learning the household chores, such as cooking and cleaning as well as growing and purchasing food or keeping tabs on the household accounts. Because of this practical type of training, a woman became a helpful companion to her husband in running the house. On the other hand, a woman whose education focused mainly on being marriageable would be expected to be 'accomplished', that is to say, beautiful to be looked at and interesting to be with. Thus, developing some conversational skills, playing the piano, singing, dancing and painting would render a woman popular among prospective marital suitors.

In late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century England, many writers dealt with women's education in terms of issues of practicality, spirituality and morality. In her essay "On the Improvement of the Mind", for example, Hester Chapone echoed Rousseau's views that women were to learn what could be useful to them as future wives and mothers. To her mind, developing practical household skills involved learning economy because it would enable women to govern a family. As she put it, "Economy is so important a part of a woman's character, so necessary to her own happiness, and so essential to her performing properly the duties of a wife and of a mother, that it ought to have the precedence of all other accomplishments, and take its rank next to the first duties of life" (88-89).

The relevance of this quotation becomes clear if we consider the Bennets' financial situation, especially at the time of Lydia's elopement with and hasty marriage to Wickham. Since Mr. Bennet had regularly spent all his income and saved no money for the better future of his daughters and prospective widow, he was forced to rely on his brother-in-law for the economic arrangements of Lydia's wedding. Though he admitted his irresponsibility as a father and husband, he partly blamed Mrs. Bennet for her incapacity to manage the

house efficiently. With five daughters and no son to cut off the entail on his property, "it was too late to be saving. Mrs. Bennet had no turn for economy; and her husband's love of independence had alone prevented their exceeding their income" (Austen 298). Chapone also suggested pursuing some accomplishments such as dancing and reading, which she considered entertaining and useful respectively, the former because it formed and strengthened the body and the second because it was a source of entertainment and improvement for the mind. She recommended reading history to get information for conversation and poetry to foster virtue, generosity and tenderness. She warned women against reading fictional stories because, she argued, they stirred passions and corrupted female hearts. In her words:

> With regard to accomplishments, the chief of these is a competent share of reading, well chosen and properly regulated . . . Dancing and the knowledge of the French tongue, are now so universal that they cannot be dispensed with in the education of a gentlewoman; and indeed, they are both useful as well as ornamental . . . The principal study I would recommend is *history*. I know of nothing equally proper to entertain and improve at the same time, or that is so likely to form and strengthen your judgement . . . The faculty in which women usually most excel is that of imagination . . . Nothing you can read will so much contribute to the improvement of this faculty as *poetry* . . . I would by no means exclude the kind of reading which young people are naturally the most fond of: though I think the greatest care should be taken in the choice of those fictitious stories that so enchant the mind; most of which tend to inflame the passions of youth, whilst the chief purpose of education should be to moderate and restrain them . . . the indiscriminate reading of such kind of books corrupts more female hearts than any other cause whatsoever. (109-113, 116-119)

Interestingly, Chapone did not limit women's education to the economics of homemaking and ornamental accomplishments. She also recommended them to cultivate their minds, mainly through reading. Austen seems to have sided with this idea for she depicted female characters that are fond of reading, an activity Mr. Bennet associated to the development of a clear mind. In a conversation about whether a fortnight is enough to know

a man, he asked Mary for an opinion arguing "What say you, Mary? For you are a young lady of deep reflection, I know, and read great books, and make extracts" (Austen 9). What is more, Elizabeth was also keen on books. During her short stay at Netherfield to visit her sick sister Jane, she was invited to play cards with Mr. Darcy and the Bingleys but "she declined it, and making her sister the excuse, said she would amuse herself, for the short time she could stay below, with a book. Mr. Hurst looked at her with astonishment" (Austen 38). Elizabeth preferred to find amusement in a book rather than in a game, a choice that amazed Mr. Hurst, probably because he considered it improper.

Fordyce's notion that female intellectual development—such as that acquired through reading—might turn a woman into the critic who disturbs man's ease was reinforced by Chapone's view that excessive cultivation of the mind turns a woman less womanly. As she stated, "The danger of pedantry and presumption in a woman—of her exciting envy in one sex, and jealousy in the other—of her exchanging the graces of imagination for the severity and preciseness of a scholar, would be, I own, sufficient to frighten me from the ambition of seeing my girl remarkable for learning" (109).

As we can gather, intellectual development and the knowledge it provides was considered a male privilege rather than a female right. Elizabeth's wit and judgement must have been enriched by her extensive reading as well as her capacity to take part in conversations and give clever and quick answers to questions. In this sense, Austen's heroine may be considered competitive with men and beyond the patriarchal female stereotype that prevailed in early nineteenth century England. It is worth noticing that Austen also upturns this social construction through Mr. Darcy when, talking about female accomplishments, he mentioned the importance of "the improvement of her mind through extensive reading" (Austen 40). Darcy's opinion that reading would add "something more substantial" (Austen 40) to a woman's preparation for marriage may be signalling men's need to have a qualified spouse rather than just a beauty next to him. In fact, in *The History of Women from the Earliest Antiquity to the Present Time,* William Alexander wrote about the complaints many men made about women's excessive concern with ornamental accomplishments, about their lack of knowledge or ability to talk about issues of intellectual depth, and about their inability to run a house efficiently. As he put it:

> Almost every man is full of complaints about the sex . . . He who considers women only as objects of his love, and of his pleasure, complains that in his connections with them, he finds them inconstant, unfaithful, and even open to flattery and seduction. The philosopher, who would wish to mingle the joys of friendship and of conversation with those of love, complains that they are destitute of every idea, but those that flow from gallantry and self-admiration; and consequently incapable of giving or receiving any of the more refined and intellectual pleasures. The man of business complains that they are giddy and thoughtless, and want the plodding head and the saving hand, so necessary towards thriving in the world. And almost every man complains about their idleness, extravagance, disregard to every kind of admonition, and neglect of the duties of domestic and social life. (1-3)

In short, Alexander referred to the negative effect of an overemphasis on ornamental accomplishments. In order to interest men—and be considered marriageable—women had to develop their mind as well, an idea that seems to support Mr. Darcy's definition of an accomplished woman. Interestingly enough, Alexander did not blame women for their inabilities or excessive superficiality. Instead, he found the education they were encouraged to have faulty and men guilty of being mainly attracted to women of ornamental accomplishments instead of a cultivated mind. He admits that "we should act a much better and more becoming part in trying to amend their faults by a more judicious instruction than to leave them ignorant, and complain that they are so; or teach them folly, and railed at them for having learned what we taught them" (1-3). In short, Chapone's and Alexander's antagonistic arguments concerning the education of women exemplify coexisting signifying practices that made up the Social Discourse at the time of the novel. The fact that Elizabeth and Darcy cultivated their minds points to Austen's concern with equality between women and men in terms of academic education, an idea that upturns the hegemonic system of beliefs of the time.

Though cultivating the mind was important, a lot of time and dedication went into the development of ornamental accomplishments—such as dancing and singing—that could be displayed at social meetings. If we take into account that balls were frequent in the upper social circles like that of Lady Catherine de Bourgh's, we can understand why she

considered them an essential part in a woman's education. During a visit to Rosings, for example, Elizabeth is insistently asked by the host about such accomplishments:

> "Do you play and sing, Miss Bennet?"
>
> "A little."
>
> "Oh, then—some time or other we shall be happy to hear you . . . Do your sisters play and sing?"
>
> "One of them does."
>
> "Why did not you all learn? You ought all to have learned. The Miss. Webbs all play, and their father has not so good an income as yours. Do you draw?"
>
> "No, not at all."
>
> "What, none of you?"
>
> "Not one"
>
> "That is very strange. But I suppose you had no opportunities. Your mother should have taken you to town every spring for the benefit of masters."
>
> "My mother would have no objections but my father hates London."
>
> "Has your governess left you?"
>
> "We never had any governess."
>
> "No governess! How was that possible? Five daughters brought up at home without a governess! I never heard of such a thing. Your mother might have been quite a slave to your education." (Austen 163, 164)

It is evident that for Lady Catherine, developing ornamental accomplishments was of paramount importance. To that end, hiring a good governess would guarantee that the young woman would receive steady and regular instruction. Little could Lady de Bourgh have imagined that Elizabeth would underestimate the role of a governess and boast that "such of us as wished to learn never wanted the means. We were always encouraged to read, and had all the masters that were necessary" (Austen 164).

In their need to please men and be chosen as spouses, women were aware that they had to be nice to be looked at and interesting to be with. Early in the novel, Caroline Bingley claims an accomplished woman "must have a thorough knowledge of music, singing, drawing, dancing, and the modern languages, to deserve the word; and, besides all this, she must possess a certain something in her air and manner of walking, the tone of her

voice, her address and expressions, or the word will be but half deserved". (Austen 40). Whereas Miss Bingley and Georgiana Darcy would perfectly fit such depiction, Elizabeth Bennet fails to meet such qualities. On first meeting her, Mr. Darcy would say "She is tolerable, but not handsome enough to tempt *me*" (Austen 13). Yet, by saying that to good looks and grace women should "add something more substantial" (Austen 40), he implied that intellectual abilities were as desirable in a woman as in a man. It is not surprising that he should have set eyes on Elizabeth and fallen in love with her: he was seduced by her defiant unconventionality, lack of artificiality and her quick mind.

A woman who only learned to run a house but did not develop any ornamental accomplishments might turn dull if her husband was also interested in some gentility. In the same token, a woman whose preparation for marriage focused mainly on enhancing her beauty and developing ornamental accomplishments might look as an impractical mate to her husband as far as household activities were concerned. Mrs. Bennet's inability to manage the house efficiently, for example, contributed to the family's state of bankruptcy at the time of Lydia's marriage and added to Mr. Bennet's disappointment with her. Having initially been attracted by her beauty and light heartedness, as time passed Mr. Bennet came to regret marrying this woman of "mean understanding, little information and uncertain temper" (Austen 7) whom he sometimes ridiculed in front of her own daughters. The relationship Mrs. And Mr. Bennet had was a model for their children of what married life could be like. Commenting on Elizabeth's ideas about marriage, the narrator states:

> Had Elizabeth's opinion been all drawn from her own family, she could not have formed a very pleasing picture of conjugal felicity or domestic comfort. Her father, captivated by youth and beauty, and that appearance of good humour which youth and beauty generally give, had married a woman whose weak understanding and illiberal mind had, very early in their marriage, put an end to all real affection for her. Respect, esteem, and confidence had vanished for ever; and all his views of domestic happiness were overthrown. He was fond of the country and of books; and from these tastes had arisen his principal enjoyments. To his wife he was very little otherwise indebted, than as her ignorance and folly had contributed to his amusement. This is not the sort of happiness which a man would in general wish to owe to his wife;

> but where other powers of entertainment are wanting, the true philosopher will derive benefit from such as are given. (Austen 231)

Dissatisfied as he was, Mr. Bennet took refuge in his outings to the countryside and in reading. He avoided spending time with his wife whenever possible because, to his mind, her ignorance and foolishness had rendered her an unsuitable wife and a laughing stock. Both Chapone's insistence on economy and Alexander's assertion that women also cultivate their mind to avoid men's complaints give shape to Mr. Bennet's discontentment and, in turn, to Mrs. Bennets' failure as a wife.

The social training women received responded to a pressing social reality: women were to get married. Education was so closely interwoven to marriage that everything women learned was oriented to the role they were to play as wives and mothers. As we mentioned before, writers like Mary Wollstonecraft blamed Rousseau and Dr. Gregory for encouraging this type of education which "contributed to render women more artificial, weak characters than they would otherwise have been; and, consequently, more useless members of society" (Works 75, 91- 93). As a consequence, women were enslaved to men both when they were single (their goal in life was to be accomplished so as to get a husband) and when they were married (they were expected to be helpful mates and do everything to please men and make them feel at ease at home). Women of little or no fortune who were not lucky enough to get a husband were hardly ever prepared to lead their lives as spinsters and earn a living because their education had failed to train them to do so. Their fate, then, was to take jobs such as those of a companion, a teacher, or a governess. In *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters* (1787), Mary Wollstonecraft outlined the fate awaiting unmarried women:

> Few are the modes of earning a subsistence, and those very humiliating. Perhaps to be a humble companion to some rich old cousin, or what is still worse, to live with strangers, who are so intolerably tyrannical, that none of their own relations can bear to live with them, though they should even expect a fortune in reversion. It is impossible to enumerate the many hours of anguish such a person must spend. Above the servants, yet considered by them as a spy, and even reminded of her inferiority when in conversation with the superiors. If she cannot condescend to mean flattery, she has not a

> chance of being a favourite; and should any of the visitors take notice of her, and she for a moment forget her subordinate state, she is sure to be reminded of it.
>
> Painfully sensible of unkindness, she is alive to everything, and many sarcasms reach her, which were perhaps directed another way. She is alone, shut out from equality and confidence, and the concealed anxiety impairs her constitution: for she must wear a cheerful face, or be dismissed. The being dependent on the caprice of a fellow-creature, though certainly very necessary in this state of discipline, is yet a very bitter corrective which we would fain shrink from.
>
> A teacher at a school is only a kind of upper servant who has more work than the menial ones.
>
> A governess to young ladies is equally disagreeable. It is ten to one if they meet with a reasonable mother; and if she is not so she will be continually finding fault to prove she is not ignorant, and be displeased if her pupils do not improve, but angry if the proper methods are taken to make them do so [. . .]. The few trades which are left are now gradually falling into the hands of the men, and certainly they are not very respectable. (25-26)

The bleak future awaiting spinsters shows, we wish to argue, the key role education played in preparing women appropriately for marriage and for being marriageable rather than for life as independent beings. Mrs. Bennet, who was aware that her girls would have no income from inheritance, knew pretty well that the “business of her life was to get her daughters married” (Austen 7).The same pressing social reality led Charlotte Lucas to accept, with relief, Mr. Collin’s marriage proposal despite the fact that he was not the sort of man a woman may have felt attracted to. We may assume that widows who were not left any income by their late husbands were doomed to face impoverishment unless their children took care of them. Such would have been Mrs. Bennet’s fate if her daughters had not married so advantageously. In *Pride and Prejudice*, the hardships faced by women who were obliged to earn their living are exemplified through Mrs. Jenkinson, Miss. de Bourgh’s governess. In charge of educating Lady Catherine’s daughter and preparing her to be a suitable wife, she was also to take care of her weak health. Not being entitled to take

part in conversations during social gatherings, "she was chiefly employed in watching how little Miss. De Bourgh ate, pressing her to try some other dish and fearing she was indisposed" (Austen 163), a miserable destiny for a woman that was educated for marriage but not prepared for life.

In 1792 Mary Wollstonecraft published her women's rights manifesto under the title *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman with Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects.* In it, she insisted that women should be educated for life rather than for marriage so that unmarried women could avoid the morally or physically dangerous situations they were exposed to while they earned their living. Instead of developing skills to attract and amuse men, Wollstonecraft argued, women should focus on acquiring skills that would enable them to support themselves respectably and profitably. She was very critical of a beauty-centered preparation for marriage since it rendered, she argued, weak creatures that were fully dependent on men. In her words:

> Proud of their weakness, however, they must always be protected, guarded from care, and all the rough toils that dignify the mind. If this be the fat of fate, if they will make themselves insignificant and contemptible, sweetly to waste "life away", let them not expect to be valued when their beauty fades, for it is the fate of the fairest flowers to be admired and pulled to pieces by the careless hand that plucked them.
>
> . . . Would men but generously snap our chains, and be content with rational fellowship instead of slavish obedience, they would find us more observant daughters, more affectionate sisters, more faithful wives, more reasonable mothers—in a word, better citizens. We should then love them with true affection, because we should learn to respect ourselves. (258-262)

This argument, which certainly sets Wollstonecraft away from Rousseau, was very important because it displaced the focus from man to pave the way to female rights. Educating women for life implied preparing them to stand on their own feet and to care for themselves, should they remain unmarried. The shift from accomplishments to the cultivation of the mind, in turn, was crucial for it turned women into useful citizens. Commenting on Wollstonecraft's ideas, Teachman points out "In writing about the need to

educate women for independent lives, she was extending the century's focus from the right of the individual man to that of the individual human being" (97).

In general, Austen's female characters were conditioned through education to learn what was necessary to become good wives and mothers. They simply did what was expected from them as far as a preparation to be marriageable was concerned. They were consequently enslaved both to men (because women depended entirely on them for support) and by men (because men praised beauty and delicacy and in so doing shaped the type of education women were to receive). The women in *Pride and Prejudice* did not question the type of education they received and can be considered victims in Position two because they attributed their fate to the dictates of Biology. Elizabeth, however, refused to accept that as inevitable, what turns her into a Victim in Position Three. Regarding her musical skills, for example, Elizabeth could not play the piano very well. Yet, far from being embarrassed about this, she simply explained:

> "My fingers," said Elizabeth, "do not move over this instrument in the masterly manner I see so many women's do. They have not the same force or rapidity, and do not produce the same expression. But then I have always supposed it to be my own fault—because I would not take the trouble of practicing. It is not that I do not believe *my* fingers as capable as any other women's of superior execution." (Austen 174)

It is evident that Elizabeth was not interested in developing such a skill which was a must among the other female characters. Surprisingly, a male character, Mr. Darcy, is supportive of her choice as he commented "You are perfectly right. You have employed your time much better. No one admitted to the privilege of hearing you can think any thing wanting" (Austen 174). Elizabeth's and Darcy's comments point to the emergence of a new paradigm defying the hegemonic views on education that enslaved women to men in early nineteenth century England. By making her protagonists adhere to and voice a more liberal view on academic instruction, Jane Austen foregrounds the importance of equality of education for both women and men as a way to better prepare them for their roles in society.

MANNERS AND MORALS

Politeness

Tightly interwoven at the heart of *Pride and Prejudice* are the ideals of decorum, gentility and deference which permeated the way of life in eighteenth and early nineteenth-century England. Even a daily news sheet such as Joseph Addison and Richard Steele's *The Spectator* contributed to developing such a sense of good manners, propriety and respectability. This publication claimed its objective was to "Cultivate and Polish Human Life, by promoting Virtue and Knowledge, and by recommending whatsoever may be either Useful or Ornamental to Society" (174). The idea of cultivating the mind, acquiring knowledge and being useful to society seems to have been as important as polishing manners, being virtuous and even 'ornamental' to society. Although the first endeavour can easily be associated to men, and the latter is mainly linked to women's role in life, both women and men shared the responsibility of improving life and, in turn, society. As David Monaghan explains in his "Jane Austen and the Position of Women":

> The conservative vision sprang from the assumption that society is a divine creation in which things are so beautifully ordered that each person living in it is a microcosm of the whole. Thus, although some have larger roles to play than others, the conduct of every member has a direct bearing on the heath of the total organism. Consequently, we find in the eighteenth century a great interest in the individual's moral performance, which, since this was a very formal society, frequently manifested itself ritually in a display of manners. By behaving politely, the individual was considered to be carrying out the single most important social function of demonstrating an awareness of, and an ability to serve the needs of others. (110)

What Monaghan claims to be the role every individual played in the eighteenth century in the preservation of the *status quo* also applies, we wish to argue, to the early years in nineteenth century England when the novel takes place. To attain the goals of cultivating and polishing human life, it was essential to combat any manifestation of intolerance (religious or political, for example) as well as anything that was mean, inelegant or brash. So central was politeness in this regard that conduct-book writers made it a

central issue in their writing. Such is the case of Joseph Highmore who, in his *Essays, Moral, Religious, and Miscellaneous,* defined politeness as

> . . . a habit of saying and doing obliging things, or an apparent endeavour to give pleasure, and to avoid giving pain; with a particular attention to the taste and inclination of others, in which the manner is as significant as the matter, and will be as visible in little circumstances as in greater; but does nor necessarily include in it an indiscriminate subjection to the caprice of all, who may without reasonable ground expect it, or an unlimited deference even to such who may have just pretensions to proper regards; for in this, as in all other cases, there must be bounds, otherwise one virtue would exclude all the rest . . . Politeness, in the sense here exhibited, is to be industriously cultivated, as conducive to the liberty, ease, pleasure, and mutual satisfaction of society. (47-8, 52)

The role the language played, not only as the herald of matter destined to give pleasure but also as a sign of educability and gentility, is unquestionable. The characters in *Pride and Prejudice* endorse the idea that 'manner is as important as matter' and speak accordingly. When Elizabeth rejects Mr. Collins' marriage proposal, for instance, she makes a big effort to be and sound polite to him. Having overcome her initial amazement at his proposal, Elizabeth tries to discourage him by making his happiness the excuse or justification for her rejection. In a clever turn, she tells him "I wish you very happy and very rich, and by refusing your hand, do all in my power to prevent your being otherwise" (Austen 107). Though the matter of her message is a plain refusal, the manner makes it appear polite and even considerate. Elizabeth is not ready to say obliging things to her suitor or give pleasure with her words, yet, she is not interested in causing him pain either. This is what she later on acknowledges to an insistent Mr. Collins: "I do assure you, sir, that I have no pretentions whatever to that kind of elegance which consists in tormenting a respectable man" (Austen 108). Austen, however, endowed Elizabeth Bennet with the capacity to go against such conventions as politeness and to privilege her need to be true to herself. Mr. Collins' perseverance in confusing her rejection with female gentility makes Elizabeth grow annoyed and she begins to gradually dissociate manner from form. Austen's heroine is ready to run the risk of remaining single, homeless and penniless after her

father's death and claims the right to take her own decisions. She takes special care of her speech when she politely but firmly turns the proposal down once again:

> Indeed, Mr Collins, all praise of me will be unnecessary. You must give me leave to judge for myself, and pay me the compliment of believing what I say . . . In making me the offer, you must have satisfied the delicacy of your feelings with regard to my family, and may take possession of Longbourn estate whenever it falls, without any self reproach. This matter may be considered, therefore, as finally settled . . . I thank you again and again for the honour you have done me in your proposals, but to accept them is absolutely impossible. My feelings in every respect forbid it. (Austen 107-108)

What is more, Austen endorsed Highmore's argument that politeness did not imply 'indiscriminate subjection' to the caprice of those who claim it without reasonable grounds or those who expect 'unlimited deference'. When Lady Catherine went to Longbourn to enquire about the rumours of a possible marriage between Elizabeth and Darcy, for example, Elizabeth was not willing to submit to her demands and thus told her "*You* may ask questions which *I* shall not choose to answer" (Austen 343). Yet, Mrs. De Bourgh considered her social position and the power it involved entitled her to 'unlimited deference', and defiantly answered: "This is not to be borne. Miss Bennet, I insist on being satisfied . . . Miss. Bennet, do you know who I am? I have not been accustomed to such language as this" (Austen 343). The whimsical nature of her demands on Elizabeth is reinforced further on in their conversation when she claims "You are to understand, Miss Bennet, that I came here with the determined resolution of carrying my purpose; nor will I be dissuaded from it. I have not been used to submit to any person's whims. I have not been in the habit of brooking disappointment" (Austen 344). Besides, Lady Catherine's arguments for discouraging Mr. Darcy's unevenly-weighed marriage to Elizabeth in favour of her daughter are not reasonable. The tacit engagement between Miss. De Bourgh and Mr. Darcy had been arranged by his mother and aunt when the prospective spouses were still children and Lady Catherine was determined not to let "a young woman of inferior birth, of no importance in the world, and wholly unallied to the family" (Austen 344) interfere with it. It is evident that Mrs. De Bourgh did not abide by the principle of

politeness oriented to saying obliging things and to avoid giving pain. The notion that 'manner is as important as matter', therefore, did not appear to be relevant to her. This is why, she even dared to ask Elizabeth "Are you lost to every feeling of propriety and delicacy? (Austen 344) when faced with the young lady's reluctance to deny a possible marriage proposal from Mr. Darcy. Lady Catherine found in her social status and the deference she had always received from her environment the foundations for her obstinate demands. Elizabeth, on the other hand, disregarded her comments on the impropriety of a marriage between two people from different social spheres and boasted "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" (Austen 343). Elizabeth is true to her mind and feelings, introspective, determined but, above all, able to know when to give up her tactfulness and politeness in favour of her convictions. In the climax of the conversation with Lady Catherine, Elizabeth claimed: "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 interferences, I can not tell; but you have certainly no right to concern yourself in mine. I must beg, therefore, to be importuned no farther on the subject" (Austen346). This is how she was able to restore the bounds to politeness which Lady Catherine insistently disrupted. Austen and her heroine, thus, understand politeness may be sacrificed if true happiness is at stake, what constitutes undoubtedly a counter argument to the Social Discourse prevailing in the author's time.

Monaghan refers to the larger implications of manners by analyzing the symbolic aspects of Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy's relationship. To his mind, the differences that keep them apart have social roots and are expressed through bad manners. While he regards middle-class people as unworthy and acts arrogantly towards them, she considers the aristocracy snobbish and is rude towards Mr. Darcy. The bad manners they display only contribute to widen the gap between them and, symbolically, to threaten the structure of English society. In Monaghan's views, "The union of ranks necessary for the continuing health of society is achieved only after Darcy and Elizabeth come to understand the worth of each other's groups and correct their manners" (116). To this end, Elizabeth's experiences at Pemberley and the gentlemanly behaviour of the tradesman, Mr. Gardiner, are crucial because both Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy learn respect for the other's social group

and change their manners. “Such proper manners guarantee”, claims Monaghan, “that society will flourish, and the harmonious relationship between the ranks is represented symbolically by the marriage between Elizabeth and Darcy” (116).

Virtue

Unlike the codes of politeness, which involved both women and men in the cultivation and polishing of society, the concept of virtue was mostly associated to women. Any attempt at defining female virtue in early nineteenth century England is informed by the writings of thinkers like Rousseau, Fordyce and Gregory. To the former’s emphasis on the timidity, modesty and shame with which nature had ‘armed’ women, Fordyce added the importance of concealing wit and suppressing both imperious passion and unbounded vanity, whereas Gregory contributed his warning against a ‘woman of great parts, and a cultivated understanding’. As a result, the prevailing attitude of the time was to regard women as inferior creatures who were to be subservient to their husbands. Undoubtedly, this patriarchal distribution of roles underlies the idea that early nineteenth-century women had to cultivate and show meekness and respectability to be considered virtuous. Since female education fostered the recognition of women’s inherent inferiority and the concealment of any abilities they might posses which might disturb men’s sense of intellectual superiority, it is not surprising that most female characters in *Pride and Prejudice* should abide by these dictates of culture and be submissive. Urged by their need to get married and avoid bleak spinsterhood, women regarded the development of meekness and a sober mind as integral parts of their preparation for marriage. Charlotte Lucas, for instance, embodies the typical nineteenth century female who followed the strictures imposed by culture and achieved her goal. Once married, she surprised Elizabeth because she showed composure in bearing with Mr. Collins and avoided indiscretion by pretending not to hear her husband’s improper comments. It is worth pointing out that while meekness and a sober mind made women more marriageable, they also encouraged female dependence on men and reinforced male predominance in the intellectual field. Meekness, thus, guaranteed the ‘ease’ men expected to find at home as it silenced witty women with the excuse of turning them into attractive marital partners.

Though most female characters fail to express discontent at the restricted role they were to play in society and their subordination to men, Elizabeth stands out because of her self-assertion and her refusal to be meek. She insisted on being considered a rational being and on speaking plainly about her lack of love for Mr. Collins, for example, attitudes which certainly went against society's feminine stereotypes in early nineteenth century England. The strength of her reluctance to be submissive also becomes clear when she rejected Mr. Darcy's first marriage proposal. She knew that she was expected to be meek and thankful for such a big honour, still, she answered: "It is natural that obligation should be felt, and if I could *feel* gratitude, I would now thank you. But I cannot" (Austen 189). So stricken by anger and surprise was Mr. Darcy that "He was struggling for the appearance of composure, and would not open his lips" (Austen 189). Elizabeth showed her unwillingness to be subservient to him and to give up her dignity in favour of being conveniently married. In a display of her self-assertion, she declined his proposal and questioned: "why, with so evident a design of offending and insulting me, you choose 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 189). Elizabeth was obviously out of tune with the spirit of the age, which held women in low esteem. Instead, she concentrated her energy into becoming a confident woman who was hostile to the view that considered meekness a valuable female virtue. Her worth as a woman relies precisely on being self-assertive and, as discussed earlier in this work, on rejecting indiscriminate subjection and unlimited deference, two important pillars of the Social Discourse circulating in early nineteenth century.

The ability to show a sober mind and a soft temperament also contributed to female worth. Such qualities were, according to David Monaghan, "marks of feminine excellence in an age which advised women to conceal any mental accomplishments" (107). In his *Sermons to Young Women*, Fordyce associated a sober mind to the restraint, temperance and moderation which also ensured man's ease at home. What he defined as a man's 'partner for life' was, therefore, unthinkable without a good understanding. To attain it, women had to handle the clash between reason and passions so as to be guided by the former while disciplining and controlling the latter. Austen used Lydia to show the many consequences of being ruled by passions instead of a sober mind. Elizabeth understands the

evils that Lydia's hasty elopement with Wickham may bring about and consequently warns her father: "Our importance, our responsibility in the world must be affected by the wild volatility, the assurance and disdain of all restraint which marks Lydia's character" (Austen 226). Lydia lacks fine judgement and self-control; her mind is far from sober and her actions are guided by her uncontrolled and exuberant spirits. By running away with Wickham, Elizabeth points out, she risks becoming "A flirt, too, in the worst and meanest degree of flirtation; without any attraction beyond youth and a tolerable person: and from the ignorance and emptiness of her mind, wholly unable to guard off any portion of that universal contempt which her rage for admiration will excite" (Austen 226). Totally devoid of a sober mind, Lydia proves to be closer to Fordyce's depiction of 'the entertainer of a night' than to 'a partner for life'.

Another virtue that made a woman worthy and therefore eligible for marriage was a soft temperament. No other female character in *Pride and Prejudice* embodies it like Jane Bennet. As Elizabeth tells her:

> . . . you are a great deal too apt, you know, to like people in general. You never see a fault in any body. All the world are good and agreeable in your eyes. I never heard you speak ill of a human being in my life . . . Affectation of candour is common enough; one meets with it every where. But, to be candid without ostentation or design,—to take the good of everybody's character and make it still better, and say nothing of the bad,—belongs to you alone. (Austen 16, 17)

Jane has a yielding nature and a benevolent outlook on life and people. This is why, when Caroline Bingley sent her a letter commenting on her brother's great admiration for and attraction to Georgiana Darcy, Jane did not accept Elizabeth's argument that Caroline had invented all that to separate her from Charles Bingley. Instead, Jane said: "If we thought alike of Miss. Bingley," replied Jane, "your representation of all this might make me quite easy. But I know the foundation is unjust. Caroline is incapable of wilfully deceiving anyone; and all that I can hope in this case is that she is deceived herself" (Austen 119). Guided by her kind nature and ingenuity, little could Jane imagine that Elizabeth's interpretation was totally right. Her soft temperament may have cheated her but it was highly regarded by men seeking a wife.

Moral conduct was of paramount importance when judging how virtuous women were in early nineteenth century England. Guidance about moral behaviour was part of women's 'education' and a central issue in conduct books. Women who engaged or were suspected of having engaged in sexual activity before marriage were unlikely to ever get married or work as governesses, teachers or paid companions. After such an unhappy event as Lydia's elopement with Wickham, Mary Bennet drew the conclusion that "loss of virtue in a female is irretrievable, that one false step involves her in endless ruin, that her reputation is no less brittle than it is beautiful, and that she cannot be too much guarded in her behaviour towards the undeserving of the other sex" (Austen 280). Mary's observation on the serious consequences of Lydia's relationship out of the wedlock is made even clearer in Mr. Collins' letter of sympathy to Mr. Bennet. His moralizing goes so far as to tell Mr. Bennet that "The death of your daughter would have been a blessing" (Austen 286) compared to the family's 'bitter distress' and 'severe misfortune'. Since at the time of the novel marriage was the only way of getting out of parental home honorably, the social consequences of Lydia's extramarital affair affects the whole family. As Mr. Collins puts it, "this false step in one daughter will be injurious to the fortunes of all the others; for who, as Lady Catherine herself condescendingly says, will connect themselves with such a family?" (Austen 287). All the weight of his moral judgment against Lydia is expressed in the closing lines of his letter: "Let me advise you, then, my dear Sir . . . to throw off your unworthy child from your affection for ever, and leave her to reap the fruits of her own heinous offence" (Austen 287). An economic arrangement between Wickham, Mr. Darcy and Mr. Gardiner and a hasty marriage were needed to partly restore Lydia's respectability. For Lady Catherine, however, Lydia's loss of virtue is irretrievable and is an argument to further discourage Elizabeth's marriage to Mr. Darcy: "And is *such* a girl to become my nephew's sister? And *her* husband, who is the son of his late father's steward, to be his brother? Heaven and earth! . . . Are the shades of Pemberley to be thus polluted?" (Austen 346). It is important to point out that moral virtue was so crucial to marriage that even if Lydia's name was apparently cleaned with her wedding to Wickham, connubial felicity was not assured for them. Lydia was closer to Fordyce's 'entertainer of an evening' than to 'a partner for life' and would be punished for her unrestrained passions even as a married woman. As Elizabeth sees it "how little of permanent happiness could belong to a couple

who were only brought together because their passions were stronger than their virtue, she could easily conjecture" (Austen 302).

Decorum

The rules of decorum were strict in early nineteenth century England and were to be observed by both women and men. The implications of respecting such rules were different for both genders as decorum added either to men's civility and gentlemanliness or to female respectability and worth. When Elizabeth first rejected Darcy, for example, he made a big effort of self-control not to lose civility and become impolite. We are informed that "His complexion became pale with anger, and the disturbance of his mind was visible in every feature. He was struggling for the appearance of composure, and would not open his lips, till he believed himself to have attained it" (Austen 189). Only after a lengthy pause could he pretend to be calm and ask for an explanation for being rejected. Thus, his determination to keep to good manners outweighed his mingled feelings of anger and incredulity. However demanding on men such codes may have been, greater emphasis was put on women's conduct mainly, we wish to argue, because it contributed to determining how eligible for marriage they were. In the patriarchal society depicted in the novel, women were looked at and listened to and their manners were scrutinized by those who were to rescue them from bleak spinsterhood. For their behaviour to be considered proper, therefore, women had to learn how to move around, dress, look or talk.

Aristocrats like Caroline Bingley and Mrs. Hurst, for example, gave much importance to decorum and were, therefore, very critical of Elizabeth during her visit to Netherfield. In a conversation between Miss. Bingley and Mrs. Hurst, "Her [Elizabeth's] manners were pronounced to be very bad indeed,—a mixture of pride and impertinence: she had no conversation, no style, no taste, no beauty" (Austen 36). The pride and impertinence Caroline perceived in Elizabeth were divorced from the idea of meekness expected in women and clashed against correctness. Yet, Elizabeth was not afraid of being indifferent to decorum and "walk three miles, or four miles, or five miles, or whatever it is, above her ankles in dirt, and alone, quite alone!" (Austen 37). Elizabeth's conduct was judged as improper because she disregarded her looks and dared to move about unaccompanied. A shocked Miss. Bingley refered to this challenging conduct of hers as "an

abominable sort of conceited independence, a most country-town indifference to decorum" (Austen 37). Yet, it is Austen's determination to make her heroine free and independent in her paradoxically enslaving context what best exemplifies her character's subversive stand as far as conventions are concerned.

Still another rule of acceptable conduct had to do with how unmarried young women moved about places. When not at home, they were expected to be seen in the company of a family member and even to refrain from travelling on public coaches unescorted. This is the reason why Lady Catherine insists that Elizabeth and Maria Lucas be escorted in their way back home from Hunsford. After failing to convince Elizabeth to stay for another fortnight, she urges Charlotte: "you must send a servant with them . . . I cannot bear the idea of two young women travelling post by themselves. It is highly improper. You must contrive to send somebody . . . Young women should always be properly guarded and attended, according to their situation in life" (Austen 208). Interestingly, she had also taken care of Georgiana's trip to Ramsgate and arranged for two servants to go with her niece and Lady Anne because, she firmly explained, they "could not have appeared with propriety in a different manner. I am excessively attentive to all those things. You must send John with the young ladies, Mrs. Collins. I am glad it occurred to me to mention it; for it would really be discreditable to you to let them go alone" (Austen 209). Probably because of their different 'situation in life', she had asked for two people to accompany Georgiana and Lady Anne while she thought that only one servant would suffice for Elizabeth and Maria. Whichever her social status, however, a woman's respectability seems to have been at stake if she moved about unescorted.

Social gatherings were also an important setting for the display of etiquette. As far as balls were concerned, for instance, it was considered improper for a woman to refuse a man's invitation to dance even if she did not like him at all. Declining the invitation meant a violation of etiquette, something totally unacceptable from a lady. This is the reason why, when Mr. Collins engaged Elizabeth for the first two dances at Netherfield, she was forced to accept him although she had looked forward to dancing with Wickham instead. The rules of decorum fell heavily on her and she pretended to be pleased for there was no way of avoiding such rules: "Elizabeth felt herself completely taken in. She had fully proposed being engaged by Wickham for those two very dances; and to have Mr. Collins instead!—

her liveliness had never been worse timed. There was no help for it, however" (Austen 88). While dancing, Elizabeth hid her feeling of distress and let her sense of duty guide her actions. It is clear that as "they were dances of mortification . . . The moment of her release from him was ecstasy" (Austen 91). No matter how displeased she was by Mr. Collins' invitation, Elizabeth would not allow herself such a breach of decorum as rejecting it.

MEETING PLACES

No event proved more effective for a woman and a man to meet than a social gathering. Balls not only provided the environment for single men and women to socialize but were also the arena where compulsory spouse hunting took place. While showing their civility and gallantry, men observed and assessed the worth of prospective marital partners. The fruits of proper female education , therefore, were nowhere better judged than in these social encounters because they created the conditions for the display of female accomplishments and good manners, as well as the observance of decorum and politeness. As Monaghan points out when referring to Austen's female characters: "Essentially they are engaged in receiving an education in manners, the subtleties of which can be fully explored only in the context of the formal social occasion, and are thus being prepared for their role as arbiters of manners and preservers of morals" (117).

The opening chapters of *Pride and Prejudice*, which introduce the marriage plot as one of the main concerns in the novel, reach a climax in the Meryton assembly, where Elizabeth and Darcy first meet. The worries arisen among the girls in town that Charles Bingley might bring twelve ladies and only seven gentlemen with him to the gathering shows the extent to which the assembly was the context where prospective husbands could be met. As we read, "The girls grieved over such a number of ladies; but were comforted the day before the ball by hearing that instead of twelve, he had brought only six with him from London, his five sisters and a cousin" (Austen 12).

The relevance of parties as social practices for spouse-picking had also been dealt with by Amelia Opie, in her *Temper, or Domestic Scenes*, a literary 'artefact' which informs the masterful first chapters in Austen's novel. Agatha, the protagonist in Opie's work, suffers the pressures imposed on women by the rules of propriety and feels forced to dance with someone who is not of her liking. The old and honourable son of the viscount

who solicited her hand for the first two dances is gladly approved of by her mother, a scene which closely mirrors Mrs. Bennet's satisfaction at seeing Elizabeth dance with Mr. Collins at the Netherfield ball. As we read in Opie's novel:

> Agatha had not been long in the ballroom before her hand for the first two dances was solicited by the eldest son of a viscount, and she began the ball with a partner such as her mother would have most cordially approved. But as her partner was neither young nor handsome, Agatha resolved that, having done homage to pride and propriety in her first choice, she would either dance no more that evening, or dance with one more calculated to please than the right honourable partner whom she had just quitted. (20-22)

Only after having complied with the duties imposed by propriety and parental expectations could Agatha take the decision not to dance anymore unless invited by someone she liked. The man who called her attention, Mr. Danvers, closely resembles Austen's Mr. Darcy, as far as looks and attitude towards the others are concerned. Opie describes Agatha and Danvers' encounter as follows:

> At this minute her attention was directed to a very handsome young man, who apparently uninterested in anything that was going forward, was leaning against the wall and seemingly on looking on vacancy.
>
> 'Look, Miss. Torringtom, look! That is the handsome Danvers', said the young lady on whose arm Agatha was leaning: 'There he is in a reverie as usual! And though almost all the women in the room are dying to dance with him, the insensible creature looks at no one and dances with no one; but after exhibiting his fine person for an hour, he will lounge home for bed'.
>
> 'Perhaps', said Agatha, 'the poor man is in love with an absent lady, and thence his indifference to those who are present. He is very handsome'.
>
> 'Yes, and very agreeable too, I am told. When he pleases; but he is so proud and fastidious (for he is not in love, they say) that he does not think any lady in this part of the world worth the trouble of pleasing'.
>
> 'Who is he?' asked Agatha; 'and where does he come?' (Opie 20-2)

Danvers' vacant look shows his lack of interest in the party, the ladies or anything that may have been going on there. Similarly, Mr. Darcy's indifference to the people

gathered at the Meryton assembly was such that all he had seen was "a collection of people in whom there was little beauty and no fashion, for none of whom he had felt the smallest interest, and from none received either attention or pleasure" (Austen 18). Like Danvers, Darcy also refuses to dance and explains to Charles Bingley: "At such an assembly as this, it would be insupportable. Your sisters are engaged, and there is not another woman in the room whom it would not be a punishment to me to stand up with" (Austen 13). What is more, Austen tailored Darcy's temperament in accordance with Opie's hero. Thus, Danvers is depicted as 'proud and fastidious' while Darcy is described as "haughty, reserved and fastidious" (Austen 18). People at the party associate his being reserved with his being proud and classy, character traits which by the end of the novel Mr. Darcy admits. Yet, we are to learn that these flaws spring from his incapacity to socialize with strangers. As he acknowledges: "I certainly have not the talent which some people possess . . . of conversing easily with those I have never seen before. I cannot catch their tone of conversation, or appear interested in their concerns, as I often see done" (Austen 174).

Despite their pride and disdain for the ladies at the party, both Darcy and Danvers embody the ideal man and therefore become the centre of attention at the ball. Mirroring Opie's depiction of Danvers, Austen wrote "Mr. Darcy soon drew the attention of the room by his fine, tall person, handsome features, noble mien, and the report, which was in general circulation within five minutes after his entrance, of his having ten thousand a year" (Austen 12). In a context designed for spouse-picking, Darcy and Danvers outstood as the perfect husbands any woman could dream of because they were handsome and had a position in life which could guarantee a woman a prosperous married life.

Outings were ruled by strict conventions which affected women in terms of when to go out, how to behave when faced with men, what to speak about and what to silence. The importance of conventions related to social gatherings becomes clear if we consider Lady Catherine's response at learning that all of the Bennet sisters had been out together. Surprise-stricken at this breach of propriety, she said: "All! What, all five out at once? Very odd! And you only the second. The younger ones out before the elder are married!" (Austen 165). It is evident that in early nineteenth-century England a young woman could be introduced to society only after her elder sisters had been out and, if possible, got a husband. Though Elizabeth acknowledges sixteen may be too early an age to be out, she

does not necessarily associate outings and spouse picking. Rather, she considers it unfair for younger sisters to miss the enjoyment that parties provide because their elder sisters are not married. As she explains to a stunned Lady Catherine:

> Yes, my younger sister is not sixteen. Perhaps *she* is full young to be much in company. But really, ma'am, I think it would be very hard upon younger sisters that they should not have their share of society and amusement because the elder may not have the means or inclination to marry early. The last born has as good a right to the pleasures of youth as the first. And to be kept back on *such* a motive! I think it would not be very likely to promote sisterly affection or delicacy of mind. (Austen 165)

Elizabeth openly questions the conventions that prevent a young woman to be 'in company' if she is not of age or her older sisters are unmarried. She is brave enough to defend the female rights to 'the pleasures of youth' as she criticizes the obligations imposed by outings in terms of propriety. On the other hand, Mrs. Bennet, for whom "The business of her life was to get her daughters married" (Austen 7), looks forward to gatherings as the perfect context where her girls can get a husband. After the scheme which enabled Jane to spend some days at Netherfield and get better acquainted with Charles Bingley, for instance, Mrs. Bennet received the prospects of the Netherfield ball in high spirits and was even inclined to think that "it was given in compliment of her eldest daughter" (Austen 87). The ball met Mrs. Bennet's expectations because Mr. Bingley and Jane reinforced their fondness of each other, an affectionate inclination that after some time ended up in an advantageous marriage.

Observation played an important role whenever men and women met. Either in small gatherings or in larger social events, women watched the available suitors and tried to call the attention of the one they preferred, while men looked at women and selected that one who, because of her beauty and accomplishments, appeared as the most suitable partner for the evening, and, eventually, for life. A small gathering of six people at Netherfield was, then, as important a context for the exchange of looks to take place as the Meryton assembly or the Netherfield ball. During Elizabeth's stay at Netherfield to visit her sick sister Jane, for example, Caroline Bingley's "attention was quite as much engaged in watching Mr. Darcy's progress through *his* book, as in reading her own; and she was

perpetually either making some enquiry, or looking at his page" (Austen 55). Yet, she was unable to distract him from his reading and, in an attempt to become the centre of his attention, felt forced to tell Elizabeth: "Miss. Eliza Bennet, let me persuade you to follow my example, and take a turn around the room. I assure you it is very refreshing after sitting so long in one attitude" (Austen 56). Mr. Darcy, who understood the rules of that game, refused to join them in the walk up and down the room arguing there could only be two motives for them to do so: "You either choose this method of passing the evening because you are in each other's confidence, and have secret affairs to discuss, or because you are conscious that your figures appear to the greatest advantage in walking: if the first, I should be completely in your way; and if the second, I can admire you much better as I sit by the fire" (Austen 56). Looking at and being looked at was, we wish to argue, an important first step in the meeting process.

The type of conversation a woman and a man were to engage in at social gatherings was also regulated. In a dialogue between Elizabeth and Darcy at the Netherfield ball, for instance, the tenets and restrictions governing exchanges are fully disclosed. When Darcy approached her to claim her hand, they stood in silence for some time but "fancying that it would be the greater punishment to oblige him to talk, she made some slight observation on the dance" (Austen 92). As he replied but remained silent again, Elizabeth explained to him how their conversation was supposed to go on. As we read:

> "It is *your* turn to say something now, Mr. Darcy. *I* talked about the dance, and *you* ought to make some kind of remark on the size of the room, or on the number of couples".
>
> He smiled, and assured her that whatever she wished him to say should be said.
>
> "Very well, that reply will do for the present. Perhaps, by and by, I may observe that private balls are much pleasanter than public ones; but *now* we may be silent".
>
> "Do you talk by rule, then while you are dancing?"
>
> "Sometimes. One must speak a little, you know. It would look odd to be entirely silent for half an hour together." (Austen 92)

As shown by the above quotation, silence rather that talk seems to have been common between dancers. The focus of attention was, then, on the dance itself, a fact Caroline Bingley criticizes when gathered with her brother, Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth at Netherfield: “I should like balls infinitely better”, she replied, “if they were carried on in a different manner; but there is something insufferably tedious in the usual process of such a meeting. It would surely be much more rational if conversation instead of dancing made the order of the day” (Austen 55). Given the restrictions that governed what women could speak about, it is only logical that the merriment of a physical activity like dancing should have prevailed over the rationality of sound conversation. The association between balls and dancing was unquestionable, as it is made clear in Charles Bingley’s answer to his sister: “Much more rational, my dear Caroline, I dare say; but it would not be near so much like a ball” (Austen 56). Given ‘the process of such a meeting’, the skill a woman showed at dancing proved she had pursued that ornamental accomplishment which strongly attracted spouse-seeking men. Yet, were interactions to occur, they would be arranged and related to impersonal issues like the dance, the size of the room or the number of couples. Socializing, then, merely meant being able to be in company of a man and displaying proper manners and accomplishments.

Playing the piano was another acquired accomplishment intended not only to entertain people at social gatherings but also to attract marriageable men. Consequently, most conduct books—such as Hester Chapone’s—recommended women to pursue music as part of their education. Unlike her sister Mary, Elizabeth was not really interested in learning to play the piano and this is why her performance is described as “pleasing, though by no means capital” (Austen 25). What is more, she is not really worried about not playing proficiently—as Georgiana does or Anne de Bourgh would have done if she had not been sick—and simply acknowledges “I would not take the trouble of practising” (Austen 174). In her “Jane Austen and the Problem of Leisure”, Jane Nardin analyzes Austen’s heroine and points out: “Elizabeth plays for pleasure, not for show, and since her interest in music is not consuming, she has not tried to achieve excellence” (126). Thus, Elizabeth once again disregards conventions for pleasure, quite a brave stand to take at the time of the novel. Interestingly enough, however, Mr. Darcy approves her decision not to be constrained by strict conventions and devote her free time to reading. He thus supports

his conviction that an accomplished woman should cultivate her mind through reading because intellectual growth outweighs ornamental accomplishments like playing the piano. Besides, Darcy rejects the idea of performing for show which underlies the exhibition of talents and accomplishments typical of social gatherings. His assertion "We neither of us perform to strangers" (Austen 174) points to a different way of socializing based on truly getting to know someone rather than on being guided by superficial impressions.

Since balls provided the setting where women expected to be chosen as future wives, it is only logical that they should have tried not only to call single men's attention through their ornamental accomplishments but also to please them as much as they could. The efficiency of female upbringing and education had in social gatherings the biggest trial. Interestingly, however, Elizabeth attracted Darcy precisely because she was different from the rest of the women at the balls. In a conversation between them, Elizabeth acknowledges character traits that were unacceptable from a woman seeking a spouse: "My beauty you had early withstood, and as for my manners—my behaviour to *you* was at least always bordering on the uncivil, and I never spoke to you without rather wishing to give you pain than not" (Austen 367). Austen's heroine's manners were far from those of a genteel woman's and she was therefore not interested in pleasing men for the sake of being eligible for marriage. Mr. Darcy, however, went beyond her ornamental accomplishments, decorum and politeness to discover her true self. When Elizabeth asked him if he admired her for her impertinence, he replied "For the liveliness of your mind I did" (Austen 367), thus sketching a different type of ideal woman from the one circulating in early nineteenth-century England. Elizabeth shows her pride in being different when she answers him: "You may as well call it impertinence at once. It was very little less. The fact is, that you were sick of civility, of deference, of officious attention. You were disgusted with the women who were always speaking, and looking, and thinking for *your* approbation alone. I roused and interested you because I was so unlike *them*" (Austen 367). Elizabeth's distance from the female stereotype that constituted the ideal woman in early nineteenth-century England is made clear through her criticism of the subservient attitude women displayed in front of Mr. Darcy. What is more, this passage wonderfully exemplifies Austen's disapproval of the patriarchal society of her days that supported female submission to men mainly on the grounds of prospective economic stability.

CHAPTER 6: THE TITLE: A NOTION OF PRIDE

A clear example of how the historical context shaped this novel relates to its title. This literary piece, which is a reworking of Austen's earlier *First Impressions*, was published in 1813 as *Pride and Prejudice.* The conjunction of the terms 'pride and prejudice' was not original and had already appeared in Frances Burney's *Cecilia: or Memoirs of an Heiress.* Kenneth Moler argues "the most famous precursory instance of the phrase occurs towards the close of 'Cecilia' and draws the moral of the tale" (qtd. in Chapman 408-409). This novel tells the story of Cecilia Beverly, a woman who would inherit her uncle's large fortune on condition that her prospective husband took her last name. She fell in love with a young man called Mortimer, who was the last of his line and therefore refused to take her surname. As a consequence, Cecilia gave up her fortune to marry for love. An explanation of the main characters' initial misfortunes and how their mishaps relate to the conjunction of pride and prejudice comes, as Moler claims, in the closing lines of such a novel:

> The whole of this unfortunate business, said Dr. Lyster, has been the result of pride and prejudice. Your uncle, the Dean, began it, by his arbitrary will, as if an ordinance of his own could arrest the course of nature! And as if *he* had power to keep alive, by the loan of a name, a family in the male branch already extinct. Your father, Mr Mortimer, continued it with the same self-partiality, preferring the wretched gratification of tickling his ear with a favourite sound, to the solid happiness of his son with a rich and deserving wife. Yet this, however, remember; if to pride and prejudice you owe your miseries, so wonderfully is good and evil balanced, that to pride and prejudice you will also owe their termination. (Burney 930)

The above quotation shows the importance of male heirs as preservers of the family name and fortune, an idea that informs the Law of Primogeniture and explains entailment. Inheriting a house meant becoming responsible for the protection of the estate—and therefore of the family name—through time. As Teachman explains, "One's house was not merely the building in which one lived or even a collection of buildings one owned; instead, one's house included lineage (ancestry and descent) and collateral relations (cousins, nephews, etc.) as well as the estate or estates belonging to that lineage" (27).

Compelled by his pride in lineage and his prejudice against leaving the possession of his estate to someone not bearing his surname, Cecilia's uncle meant to force her husband to take her last name. It was only because of love that Cecilia could overcome the pressures she was under, give up her inheritance and get married to the man she truly loved.

An admirer of Burney herself, Austen responded to her concern with the implications that pride and prejudice may have on people's lives and made these flaws the title of the novel and central to her plot. From a New Historicist's point of view, we could claim Austen's literary piece interacts with Burney's since it shares the view that pride and prejudice are not totally unfavourable qualities. They can, as Burney points out, bring about our miseries but also their termination. As Carol Howard puts it in her introduction to the 2003 edition of *Pride and Prejudice*, "pride and prejudice are not flaws for Elizabeth and Darcy to overcome but character traits that require minor adjustments before the couple can recognize each other's merits and live happily together" (XXIII). This is why, after Elizabeth realizes that her prejudice against Darcy is grounded on her hasty first impressions and in her pride in reading character, she can face and accept her own flaws and learn to love him dearly. Likewise, the moment Mr. Darcy acknowledges that his excessive pride in class and refinement has rendered him arrogant and prejudiced against those he considers his social inferiors, he is able to adjust these qualities and admit his deep love for a woman from a lower social class. Though initially responsible for Elizabeth and Darcy's misfortunes, pride and prejudice are redefined to allow for the characters' growth and fulfilment. Austen's originality lies in endowing her heroine with the capacity to do so, quite a subversive turn in a man-centred society, all of which turns Elizabeth into Atwood's creative non-victim of her pride.

It is interesting to notice that the ideas that informed the concepts of pride and prejudice at the time the novel was published were also inherited from information circulating in the mass media in eighteenth-century England. In a twice-weekly column for a periodical called *The Rambler*, for example, Samuel Johnson warns his readers against an 'exuberance of pride' and instructs them in piety and wisdom. On the second page of Number 56 of such a periodical, Johnson writes:

> Some, indeed, there are, for whom the excuse of ignorance or negligence cannot be alleged, because it is apparent that they are not only careless of

> pleasing, but studious to offend; that they contrive to make all approaches to them difficult and vexatious, and imagine that they aggrandize themselves by wasting the time of others in useless attendance, by mortifying them with slights, and teasing them with affronts.
>
> Men of this kind, are generally found to be among those that have not mingled much in general conversation, but spent their lives amidst the obsequiousness of dependants, and the flattery of parasites; and by long consulting only their own inclination, have forgotten that others have a claim to the same deference.
>
> Tyranny thus avowed, is indeed an exuberance of pride. (302)

An 'exuberance of pride' certainly characterizes Mr. Darcy's behaviour when he first meets Elizabeth at the Meryton ball. Though he is recognized as a handsome, fine man, "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" (Austen 12). Not only does he reject being introduced to the ladies at the assembly but also spends most of the evening walking about the room, scarcely sparking to anyone unless he is one of his intimate acquaintances. When pressed by his friend Bingley to invite Elizabeth to dance, Mr. Darcy declines and, disregarding the fact that she could overhear their conversation, coldly explains: "She is tolerable: but not handsome enough to tempt *me*, and I am in no humour at present to give consequence to young ladies who are slighted by other men" (Austen 13-14). His rejection of Elizabeth on the grounds that she was not beautiful enough to dance with 'him' reveals he was both 'careless of pleasing' and 'studious to offend'.

Surprisingly, in the society depicted in the novel, pride could eventually be justified by the privileges acquired through a fine upbringing, a good education or a fortune. When Johnson points out that proud men are those 'for whom the excuse of ignorance or negligence cannot be alleged', he gives evidence of the relationship between pride and education. Furthermore, he implies that pride was a male trait for formal education at highly regarded schools was, mainly, a prerogative for men of the aristocracy and upper gentry. This should explain why, when referring to Mr. Darcy's pride, Charlotte Lucas asserts: "His pride", said Miss Lucas, "does not offend me so much as pride often does, because there is an excuse for it. One can not wonder that so very fine a young man with

family fortune, everything in his favour, should think highly of himself. If I may so express it, he has a *right* to be proud" (Austen 21). What Charlotte could not perceive is that Mr. Darcy embodies what Johnson calls an exuberance of pride; he is arrogant and does not care for the feelings of others, especially if they do not belong to his social class. Elizabeth rejects his marriage proposal precisely on these grounds: "From the very beginning, from the first moment, I may almost say, of my acquaintance with you, your manners impressing me with the fullest belief of your arrogance, your conceit and your selfish disdain of the feelings of others, were such as to form the groundwork of disapprobation, on which succeeding events have built so immovable a dislike" (Austen 191-192).

Though Elizabeth agrees with Charlotte's comment that lineage and fortune may be an excuse for pride, she takes offence when Mr. Darcy rejects her as a dance partner at the Meryton assembly because he thinks that she is not handsome enough for him. As she admits, "I could easily forgive *his* pride, if he had not mortified *mine*" (Austen 21). Her hurt pride will further on inform her prejudice against him. It will take time and suffering for Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy to review and adjust their pride and prejudice so as to be happy together.

The right to be proud is also associated to some women such as Mr. Bingley's sisters on the basis of their beauty, education and money. That they think highly of themselves and little of others who do not belong to their aristocratic circle is revealed by their behaviour at the Meryton ball. Elizabeth, whose pride springs from her ability to read character, distrusts her sister's opinion that they are pleasing women. She refers to them in the following terms:

> . . . their behaviour at the assembly had not been calculated to please in general; and with more quickness of observation and less pliancy of temper than her sister, and with a judgement too, unassailed by any attention to herself, she was very little disposed to approve them. They were, in fact, very fine ladies; not deficient in good humour when they were pleased, nor in the power of being agreeable where they chose it; but proud and conceited. They were rather handsome; had been educated in one of the first private seminaries in town; had a fortune of twenty thousand pounds; were in the habit of spending more than they ought, and of associating with people of

> rank; and were, therefore, in every respect entitled to think well of themselves, and meanly of others. (Austen 17)

As it occurred with male characters, the Bingley sisters' right to pride is grounded on external assets or the benefits they imply rather than on intrinsic qualities. Austen seems to have reserved the capacity to revise the negative side of pride for Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy as a condition for them to be happy together.

Austen devoted much effort to depicting the painful process Elizabeth and Darcy had to go through to adjust their pride and prejudice. Early in the novel, Mary Bennet defines pride and compares it to vanity:

> Pride . . . is a very common failing, I believe. By all that I have ever read, I am convinced that it is very common indeed, that human nature is particularly prone to it, and that there are very few of us who do not cherish a feeling of self-complacency on the score of some quality or other, real or imaginary. Vanity and pride are very different things, though the words are often used synonymously. A person may be proud without being vain. Pride relates more to our opinion of ourselves; vanity to what we would have others think of us. (21)

To Austen's mind, pride seems to be quite a common character trait rooted in a feeling of satisfaction with one's qualities, be them real or imaginary. Thus, Mr. Darcy's feeling of self-importance springs from his real situation in life—he is a cultured aristocrat from a family with a lineage and fortune. He fails, however, to moderate his excessive pride, which turns him prejudiced against those below him in class. On the other hand, Elizabeth's high opinion of herself is supported by her imaginary talent to read character. Yet, she fails to notice that she is many times guided by first impressions rather than by common sense. In a witty conversation at Netherfield, Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy first face each other's flaws in character as voiced by the counterpart. Crucial as this conversation may be for the process of adjustment of character traits, Elizabeth and Darcy are still too prejudiced against each other to start changing. As we read:

> "There is, I believe, in every disposition a tendency to some particular evil, a natural defect, which not even the best educated can overcome."
>
> "And *your* defect is a propensity to hate everybody"

> "And yours", he replied with a smile, "is wilfully to misunderstand them." (Austen 58)

Though criticism falls heavily on Darcy's excessive pride and on Elizabeth's hasty judgment of others, Austen makes clear that pride is not always noxious. Devoid of the pressures posed by fortune or class, filial and brotherly pride are depicted as valuable traits in the aristocracy and gentry alike. In a conversation about Mr. Darcy between Elizabeth and Wickham, we read:

> "Can such abominable pride as his have ever done him good?"
>
> "Yes, it has often led him to be liberal and generous to give his money freely, to display hospitality, to assist his tenants, and relieve the poor. Family pride, and *filial* pride, for he is very proud of what his father was, have done this. Not to appear to disgrace his family, to degenerate from the popular qualities, or lose the influence of the Pemberley House, is a powerful motive. He has also *brotherly* love, which, with *some* brotherly affection, makes him a very kind and careful guardian of his sister; and you will hear him generally cried up as the most attentive and best of brothers." (Austen 82)

Though Wickham explains Mr. Darcy's generosity in terms of interest and underrates his affection for his sister Georgiana, Mr. Darcy's true value as a master and brother will be revealed by Mrs. Reynolds, his housekeeper. Both his filial and brotherly pride appear as assets that help Elizabeth start to revise the validity of her talent to read character and, in turn, her opinion about him. On the other hand, Elizabeth displays her filial pride in a confrontation with Lady Catherine about a possible marriage between Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy. To Mrs. De Bourgh's claim that her daughter Anne and Mr. Darcy "are destined for each other by the voice of every member of their respective houses; and what is to divide them?—the upstart pretensions of a young woman without family, connections, or fortune!" (Austen 345), Elizabeth shows her filial pride and answers "He is a gentleman; I am a gentleman's daughter; so far we are equal" (Austen 345). Regardless of class and fortune, filial and brotherly pride are associated to the sense of belonging to a family and the affection everybody feels for its fellow members.

Whereas pride may have a positive side, vanity is depicted as an intrinsically negative character trait. As Mary Bennet points out, it relates to the image we construe of ourselves for the others and it is often responsible for misunderstandings. Jane Bennet, for example, is very critical of herself for believing Mr. Bingley's admiration for her meant much more than it did and admits that "It is very often nothing but our own vanity that deceives us" (Austen 136).

Mr. Darcy's development as a character becomes clear when he proposes to Elizabeth. Though his excessive pride and his over consciousness of class had initially prevented him from admitting his love for her, he could no longer resist "the strength of that attachment which, in spite of all his endeavours, he had found impossible to conquer" (Austen 187). By admitting he had tried in vain to repress his love on the grounds of her inferiority and his duties to his family and name, Mr. Darcy hurt Elizabeth's pride once again. Yet, the struggle he went through to overcome his prejudices shows the depth of his feelings for her and his willingness to adjust his pride. Elizabeth, however, is initially overpowered by her hurt pride and is unable to appreciate the change in his character. Instead, she rejects his proposal and thus hurts his pride. Besides, she accuses him of separating Jane from Bingley and causing Wickham's misfortune, offences which, Mr. Darcy points out, were in fact outweighed by her hurt pride. As he puts it:

> . . . these offences might have been overlooked, had not your pride been hurt by my honest confession of the scruples that had long prevented my forming any serious design. These bitter accusations might have been suppressed, had I, with greater policy, concealed my struggles, and flattered you into the belief of my being impelled by unqualified, unalloyed inclination; by reason, by reflection, by every thing. (Austen 191)

It would take Elizabeth some time and thinking to understand how big an effort he had made to overcome his scruples on order to be with her. The importance that the society of the time gave to a noble birth, the duties to a name and family and the expectations set on male heirs is made clear when, by the end of the novel, Darcy revealed part of his process of introspection regarding his character traits:

> I have been a selfish being all my life, in practice, though not in principle. As a child I was taught what was *right*, but I was not taught to correct my

> temper. I was given good principles, but left to follow them in pride and conceit. Unfortunately an only son (for many years an only *child*), I was spoiled by my parents, who . . . allowed, encouraged, almost taught me to be selfish and overbearing, to care for none beyond my own family circle, to think meanly of all the rest of the world, to wish at least to think meanly of their sense and worth compared with my own . . . You taught me a lesson, hard indeed at first, but most advantageous. By you, I was properly humbled. I came to you without a doubt of your reception. You showed me how insufficient were all my pretensions to please a woman worthy of being pleased. (Austen 357)

Elizabeth's growth as a character starts when she recognizes her weaknesses in temperament after receiving Mr. Darcy's letter in which he explains his behaviour towards Wickham and his interference with Jane and Bingley's relationship. Elizabeth realizes her prejudice against Mr. Darcy was nourished by her excessive pride in herself. As she admits, "How despicably have I acted! . . . I who have prided myself on my discernment! I who have valued myself on my abilities! who have often disdained the generous candour of my sister, and gratified my vanity in useless or blameable distrust! . . . Had I been in love I could not have been more wretchedly blind. But vanity, not love, has been my folly" (Austen 205). Elizabeth's painful process of adjusting her pride—or as she admits, her vanity—and consequently removing her prejudices reaches a climax during her visit at Pemberley, where she gets a clearer picture of Mr. Darcy as a son, brother and landlord. The woman who once told Mr. Darcy that he was the last man in the world whom she could ever marry, is now ready to comprehend that

> he was exactly the man who, in disposition and talents, would most suit her. His understanding and temper, though unlike her own, would have answered all her wishes. It was an union that must have been to the advantage of both: by her ease and liveliness, his mind might have been softened, his manners, improved; and from his judgement, information, and knowledge of the world, she must have received benefit of greater importance. (Austen 301-302)

Having overcome their flaws, Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy are now ready to gain knowledge of each other and be happy together. In the process of adjusting their pride, Elizabeth learned to rely more on her common sense than on first impressions while Darcy revised his notion of family pride and its prerogatives. What they risked losing as individuals and as a couple points to the danger of prejudice whose foundation is excessive pride or vanity.

To sum up, by introducing the phrase 'pride and prejudice' in the title of the novel, Austen not only echoes eighteenth-century writers like Frances Burney but also calls our attention to two flaws in human nature which continued to be important in her time. Pride, as developed in the novel, seems to be an unquestionable right for the wealthy, the educated and the heirs to family tradition, be them men or women. Its significance, then, does not lie in the characters' intrinsic qualities but rather in the privileges acquired by noble birth, private education and a large fortune. What is more, following Samuel Johnson, Austen warns us about the dangers of an exuberance of pride for it may bring about prejudices or contempt against others. It was this excessive pride which initially nourished Mr. Darcy's prejudice against those he considered socially or culturally inferior and Elizabeth's against Mr. Darcy for considering her unworthy of a dance by virtue of her looks. However, Austen goes a step further and redefines pride as a quality that admits being adjusted and overcome. Austen's originality lies in turning her heroine into a woman who, very unlike her fellow women, can use her reasoning capacity to become aware of her flaws and redress them. At the end of the novel, then, we find Elizabeth has become an ex-victim of her pride for she was able to overcome the obstacles such a flaw posed to her happiness, understand Mr. Darcy and surrender to her dear love for him.

CHAPTER 7: THE CONSTRUAL OF CHARACTERS

Many writers have praised Jane Austen's talent for depicting characters. William Somerset Maugham, for example, claimed that the novel owes its readability to the fact that Austen "was so immensely interested in her characters and what happened to them and because she profoundly believed in them" (104). This, he argues, explains why readers eagerly turn the pages of the novel to learn what will happen next, even if it is not their first reading. Similarly, Virginia Woolf highly valued Austen's gift for depicting creatures that are "so rounded and substantial that they have the power to move out of the scenes in which she placed them into other moods and circumstances" (Essays 12). Regarding her heroine, for instance, Austen told her sister Cassandra in a letter dated 29 January 1813: "I must confess that *I* think her as delightful a creature as ever appeared in print, & how I shall be able to tolerate those who do not like *her* at least, I do not know" (Le Faye 201). The use of italics in *her* implies, we wish to argue, that Austen considered Elizabeth her best crafted character and was proud of her delightful creature.

Though her characters' stories sprang from her imagination, Austen drew inspiration for their faces and looks in the exhibitions of London portrait painters, thus providing another instance of how the historical context—this time through artistic painting—shaped the witting of *Pride and Prejudice.* A letter Austen wrote to her sister Cassandra on 24th May 1813 throws light on the importance that exhibitions had in her search for her characters' faces. As we read:

> Henry and I went to an Exhibition in Spring Gardens. It is not thought a good collection, but I was very well pleased—particularly (pray tell Fanny) with a small portrait of M$^{rs.}$ Bingley, excessively like her. I went in hopes of seeing one of her Sister, but there was no M$^{rs.}$ Darcy,—perhaps however, I may find her in the Great Exhibition which we shall go to, if we have time; —I have no chance in the collection of Sir Joshua Reynolds' Paintings which is now showing in Pall Mall, & which we are also to visit, —M$^{rs.}$ Bingley's is exactly herself, size, shaped face features & sweetness, there never was a greater likeness. She is dressed in a white gown, with green ornaments, which convinces me of what I had always supposed; the green was a favourite colour with her. I dare say M$^{rs.}$ D. will be in Yellow . . .

> *Monday even*—We have both been to the Exhibition & Sir J. Reynolds', —and I am disappointed for there was nothing like M[rs.] D at either, —I can only imagine that M[r] D. prizes any picture of her too much to like it should be exposed to the public eye. —I can imagine he w[d] have that sort [of *omitted*] feeling—that mixture of Love, Pride & Delicacy. (Le Faye 212-213)

In the notes to the letters, La Faye states that apart from Joshua Reynolds, who is explicitly referred to in the above letter to Cassandra, Jean François Marie. Huet-Villers and Charles John Robertson may have influenced Austen for the description of her characters. The small portrait which Austen associates to Mrs. Bingley, for instance, appears to be a picture of Mrs. Harriet Quentin known as *Portrait of a Lady* by Huet-Villers (416-417). The reference Austen makes to Mrs. Bingley's attire—a white dress with green ornaments—can be appreciated in Huet-Villers' picture included here below:

Huet-Villers. *Portrait of a Lady.* Web. 31 Mar. 2013. http://www.grosvenorprints.com/stock.php?artist=Huet-Villiers%2C+Jean+Fran%E7ois+Marie&WADbSearch1=Submit

Le Faye also points out that three miniatures by Charles John Robertson may have inspired Austen as well for her Mrs. Bingley. These three pictures, which were exhibited

under catalogue numbers 246, 15 and 116 respectively, relate to a portrait of Lady Nelthorpe, her sister-in-law Lady Anderson and Mrs. Clarke of Welton Place (416-417).

As for Mrs. Darcy's face, Austen looked forward to finding an inspiring portrait at the Great Exhibition that the British Academy organised as a tribute to Sir Joshua Reynolds. Opening on 3 May, the exhibition included one hundred and thirty of Reynolds' performances but did not finally provide Austen with Mrs. Darcy's face. The extent to which Austen considered her characters truly human becomes clear when she refers to Darcy's love, pride and delicacy to explain why there were no pictures of Mrs. Darcy at the exhibition. Though her portrait was not among Reynolds' pictures, the Great Exhibition is very likely to have been an important source of inspiration for Austen. Just as the landed gentry Reynolds portrayed may have provided her with perfect models for Charles Bingley, Mr. Darcy, and their refined sisters, his pictures of women from a lower social station may have inspired characters such as the Bennet sisters. Appendix 1 shows only some of the many pictures by Reynolds depicting the grace and sophistication of the aristocrats as well as the charm of simpler women whom Austen so masterfully described through words.

In short, as far as the construal of characters is concerned, Jean François Marie Huet-Villers', Charles John Robertson‘s and Sir Joshua Reynolds' portraits may have stirred the author's imagination providing excellent examples of nineteenth century aristocratic stereotypes. Though Austen's well-off creatures closely mirror the grace and elegance exhibited by these painters' models, the writer has made Elizabeth Bennet outstand and overshadow her accomplished, rich, female counterparts simply with her big brown eyes, lack of decorum but unequalled quickness of mind. Despite the fact that Darcy had scarcely considered her pretty at first, he soon found himself meditating on "the very great pleasure which a pair of fine eyes in the face of a pretty woman can bestow" (Austen 28).The young woman who, in Caroline Bingley's opinion, had “no conversation, no style, no taste, no beauty” (Austen 36) bewitched Darcy like no other woman had ever done. He was caught by the expression of her dark eyes, her light figure and easy playfulness. The subversive connotation of turning an apparently plain woman into the heroine of the novel is a true challenge to the nineteenth century hegemonic notion of female beauty.

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION

Far from exhausting the multiple readings that *Pride and Prejudice* is open to, this New Historicist approach to the novel has aimed to disclose how the context permeated the text in a dynamic interplay between conservative and subversive forces. Crucial to this end was the notion of text not only as a patchwork of heterogeneous fragments that stem from coexisting signifying practices in tension with each other but also as a synthetic exponent of the cognitive systems and thematic repertory that are typical of a given society at a given time. This complex system through which society organizes what is argued or narrated—or in other words, what it considers doxologically, aesthetically or ethically acceptable in the discourse of an epoch—was termed Social Discourse by Marc Angenot. Despite the diverse and conflicting ways of knowing and representing the world, there is, notes Angenot, a transdiscursive hegemony or dominant system of beliefs that regulates the social practices distinctive of a society. Yet, this instituted discourse, adds Angenot, coexists with emerging representations or systems of belief which generate a destabilizing movement, that is, the tension between conservative and subversive forces. The analysis of the novel's themes, title and construal of characters has revealed that *Pride and Prejudice* drew on different cultural artefacts from such diverse discursive fields as the news bulletin, philosophical writings, painting, and other literary pieces which either supported or disrupted the Social Discourse prevailing in early nineteenth century England.

In order to unravel the synthetic component that was at the core of the Social Discourse in Austen's time, we focused firstly on the position of women at the time of the novel. To understand how the role women were expected to play in society was construed, we analyzed four outstanding texts, namely Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Emile, ou de l'Education*, James Fordyce's *Sermons to Young Women*, John Gregory's *A Father's Legacy to his Daughters* and Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman.*

Rousseau explained the different gender roles he attributed to women and men on the grounds of their different nature. To his mind, women, as men's inferior counterparts, were born to please their male partners and make their lives agreeable and sweet. This asymmetrical distribution of strengths and talents constitutes the foundation of the patriarchal society that is faithfully depicted in *Pride and Prejudice*. The urge to please and be chosen as marriage partners affected the aristocrats and the gentry alike, though in the

latter case it played a more decisive role for marriage was the means to avoid economic vulnerability.

James Fordyce's *Sermons to Young Women*, the book Mr. Collins reads to the Bennet sisters, is another important thread in the web of social meaning which reinforced Rousseau's views concerning female inferiority and, thus, helped consolidate patriarchal hegemony. Although Fordyce admitted that women could be witty and even outshine some men, he strongly discouraged them from revealing their talents so as not to disturb men's ease. Concealing whatever aptitude or knowledge women could have was, therefore, an important piece of advice not only in Fordyce's conduct book but also in John Gregory's *A Father's Legacy to his Daughters*. As these ideas informed women's education—or rather, their preparation for marriage—a sober mind, gentle manners and meekness were highly valued virtues that made women attractive to spouse-seeking men and, consequently, any deviation from these precepts was attributed to women's ill-nature, indiscretion and vanity.

Yet, the Social Discourse of an epoch stems from the interplay of coexisting antagonistic ways of knowing and representing the world. In 1792, Mary Wollstonecraft was to confront the patriarchal hegemonic discourse with the publication of her *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman.* Her ideas that women had to cultivate themselves so as to construe a new self, independent and equal to men, brought about the destabilizing movement typical of an emerging system of beliefs. She questioned the early nineteenth-century emphasis on ornamental accomplishments for they only paved the way to slavish dependence.

Analyzed with Margaret Atwood's types of victim in mind, we could conclude that the women in *Pride and Prejudice*, be them from the aristocracy or the gentry, can be considered Victims in Position Two since their role in the patriarchal society of the novel is determined by their alleged inferiority to men, a condition they accept as a dictate of Biology and economics. Mrs. Bennet's endeavour to get her daughters married, Charlotte's resigned but relieved acceptance of Mr. Collins' marriage proposal, and Caroline Bingley's attempts to seduce a distant Mr. Darcy, for instance, give evidence of the female readiness to accept their secondary role in society and their dependence on men. Elizabeth, on the other hand, acknowledges she is a victim of the strictures imposed by the man-cantered world but refuses to accept that as an inevitable fate. This is the reason why she even risks

remaining single and being doomed to a spinster's bleak future rather than surrender her individuality, her right to take her own decisions and choose her spouse. She both represents the undercurrent to the prevailing Social Discourse that supports and is supported by the social practices of her time and announces the emergence of a new female consciousness that empowers women with the capacity and right to decision-taking. Elizabeth Bennet embodies, in short, a new image of woman: a rational and strong being worthy of respect and deference for her intelligence and common sense rather than for her beauty and charms. In creating such a heroine, Austen both undermines Rousseau, Fordyce and Gregory's ideas and encourages women to develop a new consciousness as human beings.

The economic restrictions affecting women in terms of inheritance and fortune in early nineteenth-century England further reinforced the secondary role women played in society and had important implications as far as marriage and courtship—the second theme dealt with in this paper—are concerned. The Law of Primogeniture, which underlies the entailment depriving the Bennet sisters of their family's property, explains the female characters' urge to get married and thus avoid destitution and helplessness. Although entailment was a well-established practice, opposing voices like Adam Smith's condemned the economic and legal vulnerability it brought about for unmarried women. It is interesting to point out that Jane Austen echoed such claims through Mrs. Bennet's arguments against entailment, and, in a daring turn of her imagination, Austen even made her heroine reject two marriage proposals before finally accepting Mr. Darcy's.

Since marriage was women's inevitable and desirable fate, conduct books instructing women on marriage, courtship, or how to choose a spouse were of paramount importance in early nineteenth century England. In his *A Father's Legacy to his Daughters*, for example, John Gregory associated marriage to gratitude rather than to love. The uneven distribution of gender roles typical of the patriarchal society depicted in *Pride and Prejudice* forced women to play a passive role in the process of getting to know and seduce a man. What is more, as a woman was not expected to chose but to be chosen, she had to conceal any initial attraction or feelings and put up resistance to her prospective husband's advances so as to excite his attachment to her. Mr. Collins' interpretation of Elizabeth's rejection of his marriage proposal and his insistence reveal how deeply rooted

the codes of courtship were in his mind and how convinced he was that the proposal was following the expected steps. Little could he have imagined that Elizabeth's rebuff sprang from conviction and self-determination rather than from her approval of the established social practices related to courtship.

To Gregory's description of marriage and courtship, Lady Sarah Pennington contributed advice on the qualities that make up a good husband. In her *An unfortunate Mother's Advice for her Absent Daughters*, she warns women against judging men on outward appearances and strongly recommends them to pay attention to how they behave in the domestic sphere since it is there, she argues, where their true character is revealed. She regards good nature as the most desirable quality in men. Lady Sarah Pennington's advice proves useful and illuminating to Elizabeth when judging Mr. Darcy and Wickham's characters. The moment she realizes that Wickham is good-humoured but ill-natured whereas Mr. Darcy is truly good at heart—a quality his housekeeper confirms—, Elizabeth starts to understand and acknowledge her true feelings for the latter.

Austen sided with Gregory's view on marriage and gratitude, as this is the feeling both Charlotte and Elizabeth experience towards Mr. Collins and Mr. Darcy respectively. The difference between these two relationships, however, lies in the fact that only Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy seem to have a real chance to be happy in their marriage. After their relationship went through the 'crosses and difficulties' that led to their growth as individuals, they discovered their true affection for each other, a crucial condition for the attachment to grow into love. In this regard, Elizabeth's shifts in Victim Types are worth pointing out. Initially a Victim in position two—that is to say destined by Biology and economic reasons to marry anyone—, she refuses to accept the determinism of such an inevitable fate that suppresses her individuality and will and thus shifts into a Victim in Position Three. Furthermore, by rejecting Mr. Collins' and Mr. Darcy's first marriage proposals, she reaches the category of ex-victim because she chooses to endure the hardships of spinsterhood rather than to give up her right to make her own decision concerning her life. On the other hand, by presenting an alternative view on marriage based on love and self-determination rather than convenience, Austen provides a counterargument to the prevailing practices and system of beliefs that tightly ruled female conduct at the time of the novel.

The importance of marriage in women's life, the rigidity of the prevailing codes ruling marriage and courtship, the richness and complexity of characters like Austen's heroine and Mr. Darcy found in Samuel Richardson's *Sir Charles Grandson* an inspiring source. Just like Harriet, Elizabeth questions the asymmetrical distribution of gender roles and privileges personal fulfilment instead of compliance with social conventions when choosing whom to marry. Just like Sir Hargrave Pollexfen, both Mr. Collins and Mr. Darcy expect gratitude instead of a rebuff of their marriage proposals and demand an explanation. Both Elizabeth and Harriet displace the economic motive as a reason for marriage because it only reinforces female slavish dependence and they introduce the notion of individual preference and true affection. Undoubtedly, Richardson's epistolary novel was a very important coexisting cultural artefact that Austen drew on when crafting her *Pride and Prejudice.*

Analyzing the kind of academic preparation or practical training a woman received in early nineteenth-century England reveals, we wish to argue, that the prevailing Social Discourse at that time was deeply rooted in Rousseau's view of women as men's inferior counterparts. The intricate link between gender and marriage, thus, determined the quality and quantity of education a woman was to receive. Since getting married and contributing to her husband's ease were the ultimate goals in a woman's life, being accomplished was as important as getting prepared to help her husband run the house. This should explain why Hester Chapone's "On the Improvement of the Mind" stressed the importance of developing skills that turned a woman both useful and attractive. Just as some knowledge of economy qualified a woman to govern a family, she pointed out, dancing and reading history or poetry made her interesting to be and speak with. The female mind, however, could not be excessively cultivated for fear that women would become less womanly and therefore unattractive to men. The destabilizing force to Chapone's discourse was expressed by William Alexander in *The History of Women from the Earliest Antiquity to the Present Time*. In it, he blamed men not only for overemphasizing the importance of ornamental accomplishments but also for thus promoting the female superficial intellectual preparation they so much complained about. In the same token, Mary Wollstonecraft's *Thoughts on the Education of Daughter* warned that this type of education—or preparation—fostered female slavish dependence on men as it did not prepare women to

earn a living in case they were to face the bleak fate of spinsterhood. With the publication of her *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman with Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects*, the relevance of educating women for life rather than for marriage was further emphasized. Rousseau's and Fordyce's assertions about female inferiority were thus being strongly questioned as the cultivation of the mind displaced ornamental accomplishments.

The female characters in *Pride and Prejudice* accept the type of education they receive as a natural part of their development as women, that is to say, as an unquestionable dictate of Biology. This is the reason why they can be considered Victims in Position Two. Elizabeth, however, questions the validity of the mandatory kind of instruction reserved for women and neglects ornamental accomplishments like playing the piano as well as an excessive concern with looks. Besides, her interest in cultivating her mind through reading is genuine rather than a compliance with Chapone's dictates. Austen's heroine thus embodies a Victim in Position Three who questions the kind of education that enslaved women to men. Austen reinforces such a view by displacing the focus from looks and marriage and by favoring a more integral academic instruction that considers other female roles in society than simply those of wives and mothers.

Under "Manners and Morals", our fourth theme, we explored the relevance of politeness, virtue and decorum as social practices that contributed to polish human life in early nineteenth-century England. In this regard, Joseph Addison and Richard Steele's *The Spectator* stressed the significance of virtue and knowledge as a way to improve life and, in turn, society. The notion of politeness, as defined by Joseph Highmore in his *Essays, Moral, Religious, and Miscellaneous*, gives evidence of the role that language played both as the herald of matter designed to give pleasure and as a sign of educability and propriety. Though Austen's characters endorse the idea that manner is as important as matter, the novelist endowed her heroine with the capacity and right to do without conventions in favour of self-assertion and convictions, a trait that makes Elizabeth fit into the category of a Victim in Position Three.

As far as the concept of female virtue is concerned, the writings of thinkers like Rousseau, Fordyce and Gregory set the standards of what a virtuous woman was like at the time of the novel. The emphasis on timidity, modesty and shame as well as the limitations imposed on women in relationship to showing or developing their wit fostered female

slavish dependence on men. Since virtue was an unavoidable condition for a woman to be considered marriageable, female preparation for marriage aimed at developing moderation, meekness and a sober mind just as it silenced women and subordinated them to men. Fordyce's *Sermons to Young Women* was of crucial importance in this regard as he justified the development of a sober mind and a soft temperament in view of the 'ease' women were to ensure at home.

Apart from the conventions governing politeness and virtue, women were expected to observe strict codes of decorum because they added to their respectability and worth. In early nineteenth-century England, propriety was judged taking into account the way women looked, spoke and moved about in society. As decorum informed how worthy and therefore marriageable a woman was, it also reinforced the patriarchal society depicted in the novel. To certain extent, no female characters in *Pride and Prejudice* can escape the tight rules of etiquette as their manners are judged everywhere by their prospective suitors. Neither do they put resistance to the restrictions that moral codes imposed on them on the grounds of gender and can consequently be considered Victims in Position Two. Yet, Elizabeth once again refuses to be enslaved by social conventions as she questions the worth of meekness as a female virtue, disregards looks and demands to be considered a rational being. Her independent spirit and her determination to be true to herself and take her own decisions thus render her a Victim in Position Three.

In "Meeting Places", our fifth theme, we analyzed the significance of parties in early nineteenth-century England and discovered that these social gatherings provided the setting for the process of spouse-picking to take place. Crucial to this end was the display of female accomplishments, good manners and decorum through which men judged how marriageable a woman was. The dictates imposed on women in terms of propriety and the sense of duty ruled such diverse issues as dancing and conversation at balls. In this regard, Austen drew on Amelia Opie's *Temper, or Domestic Scenes* for the opening chapters of *Pride and Prejudice* to show that women were even forced to dance with a prospective suitor simply because propriety and parental expectation thus determined it. Aware of how mandatory and inevitable these social conventions were, the female characters in Austen's novel fail to rebel against them and thus fit into Victims in Position Two. It is only through Elizabeth that Austen presents a destabilizing element by dissociating social gatherings

from marriage and introducing the notion of pleasure, and by questioning the subservient attitude women displayed in front of men for the sake of being eligible for marriage. Thus, Austen's heroine takes distance from the prevailing female stereotype of the time and can be considered a Victim in Position Three.

The title Austen chose for her novel provides still another example of intertextuality in the text since the conjunction of the terms pride and prejudice had already been used to introduce the moral of Frances Burney's *Cecilia: or Memoirs of an Heiress*. Following Burney, Austen believes pride and prejudice are not totally negative traits as they can be adjusted to put an end to the miseries they may have eventually caused. Besides, Austen echoes Samuel Johnson's warning against 'an exuberance of pride' which, she implies, informs and supports human prejudice. Just like Elizabeth's prejudice against Mr. Darcy is rooted in her excessive pride in reading character—a talent merely based on her hasty first impressions—, Mr. Darcy's prejudice against people from a low social class is informed by his exuberant pride in noble birth and fortune, a fine upbringing and a good education.

Although the society depicted in *Pride and Prejudice* associates and sometimes justifies pride on the grounds of external situations like economic power and education—privileges mainly available to male aristocrats—, Austen stresses the importance of pride as an inner quality that should be informed by moderation and a sober mind. Only after adjusting their excessive pride can Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy get to know themselves and each other, get rid of their prejudice and overcome the obstacles that separated them. The hegemonic discourse favouring male right to pride—and eventually to prejudice—finds in Elizabeth an antagonistic counterpart for she embodies a woman who can acknowledge her flaws, change and therefore grow. She consequently becomes an ex-victim of her pride and heads for her happiness next to Mr. Darcy. Francis Burney's *Cecilia: or Memoirs of an Heiress* may have inspired Austen in the choice of a title to her work. Austen's innovation, however, consists in having developed a new concept of pride based on self determination and wits rather than on aristocratic privilege.

Finally, under "The Construal of Characters" we focused on how Austen crafted her creatures to discover her true interest in them and their stories. She was particularly fond of her heroine Elizabeth Bennet whom she considered delightful. Her gift for depicting characters contributed, as Somerset Maugham points out, to the readability of her novel just

as their well-depicted nature added, in Woolf's opinion, to their adaptability to different moods and circumstances.

Austen's prolific imagination gave birth to the vivid stories her characters were involved in. For their faces and looks, on the other hand, the novelist drew on artistic painting, thus giving evidence of how the historical context permeated *Pride and Prejudice.* As Austen wrote in a letter to her sister Cassandra, she was particularly interested in the Great Exhibition at the British Academy where she expected to find her Mrs. Darcy among Sir Joshua Reynolds' works. It is worth pointing out that the miniature portrait painter Jean François Marie Huet-Villers had apparently inspired her Mrs. Bingley. Since going to exhibitions was an important leisure activity in Austen's days, it is not surprising that she should have been inspired by paintings portraying the grace and sophistication of the aristocrats and the charm and simplicity of humbler women as she crafted her creatures through words.

To sum up, this New Historicist's reading of *Pride and Prejudice* has attempted to show how the texts that contributed to the writing of the novel reveal the interplay of conservative and subversive discourses. Austen's fictional world, in our judgement, masterfully mirrors the nineteenth century life of the aristocrats and the country people, with its conventions and restraints, with its stereotypes, with the hardships imposed on submissive women. However, Austen's originality lies in having portrayed as well a different world where female virtue and intelligence overweigh looks and class, where codes can be broken, where women can marry for love instead of for convenience. The construal of a heroine like Elizabeth Bennet gives evidence of the three stages Elaine Showalter identified as part of the development of female writing: the phase of identification, the phase of protest, and the phase of self-discovery. Having gone through such three stages in her growth as a character, Elizabeth manages to survive the dictates of the deeply-rooted patriarchal society of her days and be guided by her own convictions, all of which gives evidence of the emergence of a new female consciousness. This web of meanings so wonderfully woven and her gifted prose is what gives Jane Austen the aesthetic strength Harold Bloom associates to canonical writers and defines as "an amalgam: mastery of figurative language, originality, cognitive power, knowledge, exuberance of diction"(29). The result is a book like *Pride and Prejudice,* 'a little living

world' which enables readers to meet what Bloom considers the ultimate aim when reading: "to confront greatness" (524).

CONTRIBUTIONS

Having identified some of the cultural artifacts that informed *Pride and Prejudice* and analyzed the thematic repertory of what was considered doxologically, aesthetically or ethically acceptable and efficient in the Social Discourse of nineteenth-century England, we expect to have thrown some light on the interplay of conservative and subversive forces in the discursive field and social practices typical of such an epoch. Though this study is far from exhausting the multiple readings the novel is open to, we hope it will contribute to further research on the theme from the theories proposed not only at national but also at international level.

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APPENDIX 1: Some of Sir Joshua Reynolds' paintings

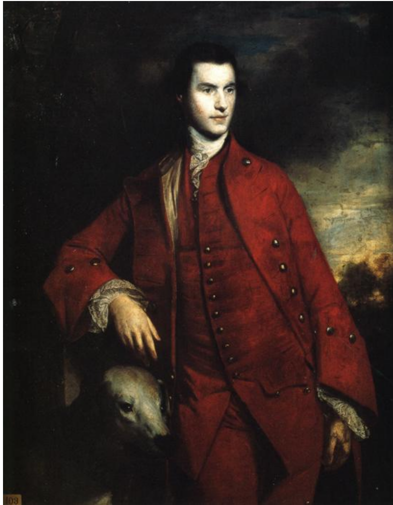

Fig. 2. Joshua Reynolds. *Charles Lennox, 3rd Duke of Richmond & Lennox.* 1758. Oil on canvas. Trustees of the Goodwood Collection, Goodwood House, Sussex, UK. Web. 30 Mar. 2013. <http://www.wikipaintings.org/en/joshua-reynolds/charles-lennox-3rd-duke-of-richmond-and-lennox-1758/>.

Fig.3. Joshua Reynolds. *Lucy, Lady Strange.* 1755. Oil on canvas. Private collection. Web. 30 Mar. 2013. <http://www.wikipaintings.org/en/joshua-reynolds/lucy-lady-strange/>.

Fig. 4. Joshua Reynolds. *Augustus, 1st Viscount Keppel.*1759. Oil on canvas. Trustees of the Goodwood Collection, Goodwood House, Sussex, UK. Web. 30 Mar. 2013. <http://www.wikipaintings.org/en/joshua-reynolds/augustus-1st-viscount-keppel/>.

Fig. 5. Joshua Reynolds. *Charles Rogers.* 1777. Oil on canvas. City Art Gallery, Plymouth, UK. Web. 30 Mar. 2013. <http://www.wikipaintings.org/en/joshua-reynolds/charles-rogers/>.

Fig. 6. Joshua Reynolds. *Catherine, Lady Chambers.* 1756. Oil on canvas. The Iveagh Bequest, Kenwood House, London, UK. Web. 30 Mar. 2013. <http://www.wikipaintings.org/en/joshua-reynolds/catherine-lady-chambers/>.

Fig. 7. Joshua Reynolds. *Susanna Beckford.* 1756. Oil on canvas. Tate Gallery, London. Web. 30 Mar. 2013. <http://www.epdlp.com/cuadro.php?id=1050/>

Fig. 8. Joshua Reynolds. *Miss. Ridge*. 1773-4. Oil on canvas. Cincinnati Art Museum. Web. 30 Mar. 2013. <http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:'Miss_Ridge'_by_Joshua_Reynolds,_Cincinnati_Art_Museum.JPG/>.

Fig. 9. Joshua Reynolds. *Emily, Duchess of Leinster.* 1753. Oil on canvas. Private collection. Web. 30 Mar. 2013. <http://www.wikipaintings.org/en/joshua-reynolds/emily-duchess-of-leinster/>.

Fig. 10. Joshua Reynolds. *Miss. Mary Hickey*. 1770. Oil on canvas. Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection, Wallington, Connecticut, USA. Web. 30 Mar. 2013. <http://www.wikipaintings.org/en/joshua-reynolds/miss-mary-hickey-1770/>.

Fig. 11. Joshua Reynolds. *Henri Fane with his Guardians.* 1762. Oil on canvas. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City. Web 30 Mar. 2013. <http://www.wikipaintings.org/en/joshua-reynolds/henri-fane-with-his-guardians-1762/>.

Fig. 12. Joshua Reynolds. *Francis Hastings, Earl of Huntingdon.* 1764. Oil on painting. Henry E. Huntington Art Gallery, San Marino, CA, USA. Web. 30 Mar. 2013. <http://www.wikipaintings.org/en/joshua-reynolds/francis-hastings-earl-of-huntingdon/>.

Fig. 13. Joshua Reynolds. *Lady Sunderlin.* 1786. Oil on canvas. Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Gemäldegalerie, Berlin, Germany. Web. 30 Mar. 2013. <http://www.wikipaintings.org/en/joshua-reynolds/lady-sunderlin/>.

Fig. 14. Joshua Reynolds. *James Coutts.* N. d. Oil on canvas. Web. 30 Mar. 2013. <http://www.wikigallery.org/wiki/painting_281194/(after)-Sir-Joshua-Reynolds/Portrait-of-James-Coutts/>.

Fig. 15. Joshua Reynolds. *Young Woman Leaning on a Ledge.* 1760. Oil on canvas. Private collection. Web. 30 Mar. 2013. <http://www.wikipaintings.org/en/joshua-reynolds/young-woman-leaning-on-a-ledge/>.

Fig. 16. Joshua Reynolds. *George Hamilton, 8th Eral of Haddington*. N. d. Private collection. Web. 30 Mar. 2013. <http://www.wikipaintings.org/en/joshua-reynolds/portrait-of-charles-hamilton-8th-early-of-haddington/>.

Fig. 17. Joshua Reynolds. *Lady Anstruther.* 1761. Oil on canvas. Tate Gallery, London. Web. 30 Mar. 2013. <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/reynolds-lady-anstruther-n06243**>.**

APPENDIX II: Biographical directory

This section includes biographical information on some of the writers, thinkers and critics mentioned in the thesis paper. For reasons of space, some names have been omitted.

Addison, Joseph (1672-1719), English essayist, poet and contributor to the periodicals *The Tattler* and *The Spectator.*

Angenot, Marc (born in 1941), Belgian-Canadian social theorist, and literary critic. He is the holder of the Chair of Social Discourse Theory at McGill University in Montreal and an important exponent of the sociocritical approach to literature. *Un état du discours social* (1989) is considered one of his most important books along with *La Parole pamphlétaire* (1982), *Rhétorique de l'anti-socialisme* (2004), and *Dialogues de sourds: Traité de rhétorique antilogique* (2008).

Atwood, Margaret (born in 1939), Canadian poet, novelist, literary critic and essayist who is best known for her work as a novelist. Among her most famous novels are *The Edible Woman* (1969), *Surfacing* (1972), *Oryx and Crake* (1969), *Alias Grace* (1996), *The Blind Assassin* (2000) and *The Penelopiad* (2005).

Auerbach, Nina (born in 1943), Professor of English and Comparative Literature at the University of Pennsylvania. She has published, lectured, and reviewed widely in the fields of Victorian literature, theatre, cultural history and horror fiction. Her best-known books include *Our Vampires, Ourselves*; *Romantic Imprisonment: Women and Other Glorified Outcasts*; *Woman and the Demon: The Life of a Victorian Myth.*

Austen, Cassandra (1773-1845) was Jane Austen's devoted sister and heiress. She was the addressee of most of Jane Austen's famous letters.

Austen, Henry (1771-1850) was Jane Austen's fourth brother. He was Captain of the Oxfordshire Militia. He was the first to provide biographical information

about his sister in the introduction to *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion*, novels that were posthumously published.

Bloom, Harold (born in 1930), American literary critic and Professor of Humanities at Yale University. He is a specialist in Shakespeare and in poetry from Geoffrey Chaucer to Hart Crane. Among his most famous publications are *The Anxiety of Influence* (1973), *The Book of J* (1990), *The Western Cannon* (1994), *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human* (1998) and *The Anatomy of Influence* (2011).

Brontë, Charlotte (1816-1855), English novelist who is best-known for her *Jane Eyre*. She was one of Austen's most famous detractors.

Burney, Frances (1752-1840), English letter writer and novelist who is famous for *Evelina* (1778), *Cecilia* (1782) and *Camilla* (1796).

Chapone, Hester (1727–1801), writer of conduct books for women. She is best-known for her *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind*.

Fordyce, James (1720-1796), Scottish writer who was a devout follower of Rousseau's opinions about women. He is famous for his conduct book *Sermons to Young Women.*

Greenblatt, Stephen Jay (born in 1943), American literary critic, theorist and scholar who is considered to be one of the founders of New Historicism. He has written books and articles related to the study of culture, the Renaissance and Shakespeare. He is also co-founder of the literary-cultural journal *Representations.*

Gregory, John (1724-1773), Scottish physician and author. His conduct book *A Father's Legacy to his Daughters* (1794) follows Rousseau's views on women.

Highmore, Joseph (1692-1780), English painter who designed twelve illustrations for Samuel Richardson's novel *Pamela* (1740). He was also a prolific writer.

Huet-Villers, Jean François-Marie (1772-1813), portrait painter whose work includes miniatures, oil and watercolor paintings.

Johnson, Samuel (1709-1784), essayist, poet, biographer and critic who was one of the most important literary figures in the eighteenth century.

Lascelles, Mary, literary critic whose *Jane Austen and her Art* (1939) is considered to be the first example of modern criticism of Austen's novels.

Le Faye, Deirdre, well-known Austen biographer who is the author of the acclaimed biography *Jane Austen: A Family Record* and the collector and editor of *Jane Austen's Letters* (1997).

Maugham, W. Summerset (1874-1965), novelist and short story writer. He is famous for his novel *Of Human Bondage* (1915) and for his collection of short stories published as *The Trembling of a Leaf* (1921). As a playwright, he wrote successful social comedies.

Milbanke, Annabella (1792-1860), Lord Byron's wife. She praised Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* because she considered it a 'probable fiction'.

Monaghan, David, Associate Professor at Mount Saint Vincent University. He has written a number of articles on Jane Austen and other English, Canadian and American novelists. He is the author of *Jane Austen: Structure and Social Vision* (1980).

Nardin, Jane, Associate Professor at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Her most important publications include *Those Elegant Decorums: the Concept of Propriety in Jane Austen's Novels* (1973).

Opie, Amelia Alderson (1769-1853), English novelist and poet who was in her youth a friend of Mary Wollstonecraft and William Goldwin. Her novels include *Father and Daughter* (1801), *Adeline Mowbray* (1805) and *Temper* (1812). The latter is said to have inspired the opening chapters of Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*.

Pritchett, V. S. (1900-1997) wrote collections of short stories such as *You Make Your Own Life* (1938) and novels including *Dead Man Leading* (1937) and *Mr. Beluncle* (1951).

Reynolds, Sir Joshua (1723-1792), portraitist who exerted a very important influence on English artistic life in the mid and late eighteenth century. In 1768 he was elected the first president of the Royal Academy. This institution, which was under the patronage of King George III, played a key role in the professionalization of art in Britain.

Richardson, Samuel (1689-1761), English novelist who is best-know for *Pamela* (1740), *Clarissa* (1747-8) and *Sir Charles Grandson* (1733-4).

Robertson, Charles John, famous British miniature painter.

Rousseau, Jean-Jacques (1712-1778), French philosopher who defended liberty and equality in political writings such as the *Social Contract* 1762). His progressive views did not apply to women whom he regarded as physically, intellectually and morally inferior to men. His educational treatise *Émile, ou de l'Education* (1762) establishes the tenets of natural as opposed to artificial and formal education. For Rousseau, women are the weak, passive, inferior counterparts of men, and idea that deeply influenced the way of thinking in the eighteenth and nineteenth century.

Scott, Walter (1771-1832), Scottish poet and novelist who was a generous critic of Austen's work.

Smith, Adam (1723-1790), economist and philosopher who was an important figure of the Scottish Enlightenment. Among his most influential works are *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759) and *The Wealth of Nations* (1776).

Showalter, Elaine (born in 1941), American literary critic, feminist and writer on cultural and social issues. She is a specialist in Victorian literature and one of the founders of feminist literary criticism in United States, developing the concept of gynocritics. Her best known works include *Toward a Feminist Poetics* (1979), *The Female Malady: Women, Madness, and English Culture* (1830–1980) (1985), *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle* (1990), and *Inventing Herself: Claiming a Feminist Intellectual Heritage* (2001).

Twain Mark (1835-1910), American writer who is best-known for *The adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876) and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884).

Tyson, Lois. Professor of English at Grand Valley State University. Author of *Critical Theory Today. A User-friendly Guide* (1999).

Wollstonecraft, Mary (1759-1797) was considered one of the most radical voices of her time and an advocate of educational and social equality for women. Her *Vindication of the Rights of Men* (1790) was an answer to Edmund Burke's

condemnation of the French revolution in *Reflections on the Revolution in France,* while her *Vindications of the Rights of Woman* (1792) supported the idea that true political freedom implied equality of the sexes.

Woolf, Virginia (1882-1941) was one of the most important members of the so-called "Bloomsbury Group", which was an association of writers, philosophers and artists. She is best-known for novels such as *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), *To the Lighthouse* (1927), and *Orlando* (1928). Her literary criticism is collected in volumes including *The Common Reader* (1925) and *A Room of One's Own* (1929).