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WOMAN PERSPECTIVE IN JANE AUSTEN’S PRIDE AND PREJUDICE

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ABSTRACT

Jane Austen is one of the most famous women writers of the nineteenth century. Her novel Pride and Prejudice (1813) deals with the position of women and their social expectations, most of which are related to marriage. The protagonist of this novel represents a unique response to those expectations, which is a product of her way of thinking. Women in the nineteenth century did not have much choice when it came to their future. They could either get married or become governesses if they were educated enough. Their life was shaped mostly by their families which tried to find them a husband who would support them. Austen’s heroine Elizabeth, is self-reliant and unconventional woman who marry the man she love. The other characters, such as Lydia and Mrs. Bennet represent women whose ultimate goal in life is connected to marriage. Charlotte Lucas represents women who marry out of necessity and Jane Fairfax embodies the women who are strong and ready to do anything in the name of love. Accordingly, all those women represent different female responses to social norms and to their own position in the society.

Keywords: Pride And Prejudice, Persuasion, Women Characters, Representation, Marriage, Love

Jane Austen was a British writer who was dynamic during the Regency period. Pride and Prejudice (1813) is her most popular novel. It deals with the life of Elizabeth Bennet, who is the second of five daughters in the Bennet family. The main aim of this paper is to demonstrate that these characters speak to a female representation to certain social standards concerning their life. This paper depicts the identities of Elizabeth, Mrs. Bennet, Jane Bennet, Lydia and Kitty are the important characters from Pride and Prejudice. The description concentrates on the women characters identities and their social circumstance in order to show how their actions and decisions are formed by their position in and their view on society.

Pride and Prejudice is based particularly in the mid nineteenth century under the Victorian Age. Even when a female representative was administering the nation, women did not have any options for their lives, they were viewed as ideal, saints and pure, so as saints they had no
lawful rights. During this exposition, role of nineteenth century women will be developed, women role at that century will be developed, relating those with the diverse characters that we see in the book. The novel Pride and Prejudice deals the life of the sisters from the Bennet family. It concentrates on the life of Elizabeth, the main character of the novel. The Bennet family belongs to the middle class. Mr. Bennet does not have a male heir: few people these days have any reason to comprehend the importance of a home's being entailed – it is, or was, a lawful arrangement whereby the property could descend only to a male heir. If there was no male heir, as in the Bennets' case, then the following closest male collateral relative of the owner who had initially made the entail would inherit — In this situation, Mr Bennet's distant cousin Mr. Collins. (La Faye 184). Expecting that her daughters will be left with nothing after their father's passing and that they will rely on upon good will of his cousin, Mr. Collins.

Elizabeth's mother, Mrs. Bennet, dedicates her life to finding spouses for her daughters: "The business of her life was to get her daughters married; its solace was visiting and news" (Pride and Prejudice 5). Mrs. Bennet is an adoring mother who wishes only the best for her daughters and subsequently she forces Mr. Bennet to acquaint their daughters with Mr. Bingley, an unmarried young fellow with a good income who has recently moved in the neighborhood: "If I can but see one of my daughters happily settled at Netherfield (a place where Mr. Bingley lives) . . . and all the others equally well married, I shall have nothing to wish for" (Austen, Pride and Prejudice 9). However, there are times when her motherly love is dominated by her aspiration concerning her daughters. For instance, she makes Jane go on horseback to Netherfield she knows that it will rain and that Jane should stay there. When Jane becomes ill, Mrs. Bennet is not very stressed. Actually, "she is very happy and satisfied because of this opportunity that her daughter has to be there for more time and to be closer to Mr. Bingley" (Florentino 16). Additionally, Mrs. Bingley is a lady who enjoys gossip and inappropriate social behaviour. She is depicted as not being a very smart person: "Her mind was less difficult to develop. She was a woman of mean understanding; little information and uncertain temper. When she was discontented she fancied herself nervous" (Pride and Prejudice 5). Mrs. Bennet is an uproarious person who expresses her assessment even when it is inappropriate situation. In a room brimming with people she converses with Lady Lucas "of nothing else but of her expectation that Jane would be soon married to Mr. Bingley. –It was an animating subject and Mrs. Bennet seemed incapable of fatigue while enumerating the advantages of the match" (Austen, Pride and Prejudice 111). Mrs. Bennet does not comprehend that her conduct impacts her daughter's destiny and that as a result of this discussion with Lady Lucas Mr. Bingley will be isolated from Jane. Mr. Bingley's friend, Mr. Darcy, and his sisters express that "with such a father and mother, and such low connections" (Pride and Prejudice 40), the Bennet daughters have no chance of marrying rich. Thereupon, it is evident how much social associations and a family's notoriety decide a woman's life and her future, a future which can be only secured through marriage.

Elizabeth "Lizzy" Bennet is the second daughter of the Bennets. She is twenty years of age and is portrayed as having "a lively, playful disposition which delighted in anything ridiculous" (Austen, Pride and Prejudice 12). As a result of her observations and intelligence, she is a standout amongst the most renowned literary characters ever: "For the first time in
English literature, outside Shakespeare, we meet heroines who are credible, with minds, with the capacity to think for themselves, with ambition and wit” (qtd. in “Study Guide for Pride and Prejudice by Jane Austen” 10). She is Mr. Bennet's most loved daughter. Depicting his daughters, Mr. Bennet says that "they are all silly and ignorant like other girls; but Lizzy has something more of quickness than her sisters" (Pride and Prejudice 5). Interestingly, she is the last dear to her mother because "she is not half so handsome as Jane, nor half so good humored as Lydia” (Pride and Prejudice 5). However, Elizabeth transcends her family members in her manners and understanding of life. Due to their behavior at specific occasions, she: "blushed and blushed again with shame and vexation” (Pride and Prejudice 112). Additionally, Elizabeth expresses her feeling directly and has a sharp tongue, which frequently stuns those who trust that women can't be permitted such freedom. During her discussion with Lady Catherine, who is an effective lady, she answers a great deal of questions yet with some reservation and declares her opinion on the social standards: 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, Pride and Prejudice 187). Lady Catherine is bewildered by such an answer since Elizabeth transparently challenges social standards with respect to female behavior. when Lady Catherine finds out that the five Bennet's daughters have been raised without a governess, she is stunned because it is unimaginable that young ladies have not been shown essential aptitudes, for example, drawing and playing an instrument. Elizabeth thinks that its irrelevant by expressing: "Compared with some families, I believe we were; but 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. Those who chose to be idle certainly might” (Austen, Pride and Prejudice 186). In other words, perusing is the thing that feeds the brain and other skills that women are forced to learn are unnecessary. Elizabeth's conclusion is the product of common sense, not of social traditions. Elizabeth: "suspected herself to be the first creature who had ever dared to trifle with so much dignified impertinence" (Austen, Pride and Prejudice 187), thus proving herself to be a modern woman who does not care about class and rank. Likewise, even her state of mind towards marriage is distinctive. She wants to marry out of affection, not simply with the goal that she would be financially secured. Her romantic esteems differentiate those of society. Mr. Collins, the man who will acquire the property of Mr. Bennet after he passes on, proposes to Elizabeth and she rejects his proposal. He trusts that she pretends to be unattainable and that is when Elizabeth expresses her supposition: I do guarantee you that I am not one of do assure you that I am not one of those young ladies (if such young ladies there are) who are so daring as to risk their happiness on the chance of being asked a second time. 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 (Pride and Prejudice 120).

Elizabeth comprehends the true purpose of marriage, something that neither her mother nor her sisters do. When she rejects Mr. Collins, her mother is furious because "society recommends that all women accept the marriage proposal they receive” (Reena 129). She even rejects Mr. Darcy's first proposal since she believes him to be a evil and immoral
person. He is exceptionally rich, wealthier than Mr. Bingley, however it makes no difference to her since "Elizabeth sees that a loss of her personality in the name of security is worse than [being a] penniless spinster" (Reena 130). Her state of mind towards marriage is visible from the way she talks with Charlotte, her dearest friend, when she hears that Charlotte has accepts Mr. Collins' proposal. Elizabeth believes that "Charlotte, the wife of Mr. Collins, was a most humiliating picture!—And to the pang of a friend disgracing herself and sunk in her esteem, was added the distressing conviction that it was impossible for that friend to be tolerably happy in the lot she had chosen“ (Pride and Prejudice 141). She feels sorry about her companion since she realizes that she and her future spouse will never love each other. Besides, Elizabeth's judgments are sometimes unreasonable and blinded by her pride but, when this is the situation, she is willing that she isn't right. When she understands that Wickham has tricked her and deceived her about Darcy's nature, that Darcy is really an extraordinary man, she grows “absolutely ashamed of herself. – Of neither Darcy nor 6 Wickham could she think, without feeling that she had been blind, partial, prejudiced, absurd“(Pride and Prejudice 230).

She tries to be reasonable towards everybody and that is the reason she feels that she has done wrong to Darcy. Later on, when Lady Catherine defies her since she trusts that Elizabeth and Darcy will get married, Elizabeth shows that she is not afraid of her. Lady Catherine expresses that their marriage would be the most unsatisfactory match; yet, Elizabeth does not share that opinion: "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" (Pride and Prejudice 395). In other words, Elizabeth does not think about money and does not consider Mr. Darcy as her predominant; she believes them to be of equivalent worth. When Lady Catherine asks that she reject Darcy, Elizabeth expels her request rather by saying: You have widely mistaken my character, if you think I can be worked on by such persuasions as these. How far your nephew might approve of your interference in his affairs, I cannot tell; but you have certainly no right to concern yourself in mine. I must beg, therefore, to be importuned no farther on the subject (Pride and Prejudice 396).  Elizabeth is not a woman whom somebody could easily frighten and she fights for what she needs and has confidence in – and that is Mr. Darcy and her adoration for him. Again, Elizabeth proves to be independent and intelligent woman who does not think about the opinion of others; she does what she supposes to be the best for her.

Jane Bennet is the eldest daughter in the family. She is 23 and knows "that she has reached the age where it is beyond proper, rather necessary, for her to marry“(Reena 128). She is the prettiest young lady in the area; even Mr. Bingley states that. When people ask him who he supposes to be the prettiest lady around, he replies: Oh! The eldest Miss Bennet without a doubt, there cannot be two opinions on that point” (Pride and Prejudice 20)). She is merciful and always thinks the best of people, which makes her innocent in specific cases. For instance, when she finds out about Wickham's true nature, Elizabeth portrays her perspective: "What a stroke was this for poor Jane! who would willingly have gone through the world without believing that so much wickedness existed in the whole race of mankind, as was here collected in one individual“ (Austen, Pride and Prejudice 249). In addition, she has the best opinion of Mr. Bingley's sisters and trusts them to affirm of her. However, this is not the
situation. They don't consider her to be a suitable match to their brother, so they take him away from the Netherfield. When they leave, Jane is broken, however she doesn't despair: "He may live in my memory as the most amiable man of my acquaintance, but that is all. I have nothing either to hope or fear, and nothing to reproach him with. Thank God! I have not that pain. A little time therefore.—I shall certainly try to get the better" (Pride and Prejudice 236). Jane ends up being a strong woman who decides to hide her agony. She is not interested on Mr. Bingley's fortune; she truly adores him: "Jane loves and admires Mr. Bingley not for his yearly allotment, but for his person and character. Therefore, Jane Austen shows that the eldest Bennet sister is unimpressed by social status alone" (Reena 128). Those emotions don't fade as the time passes by: She still cherished a very tender affection for Bingley. Having never even fancied herself in love before, her regard had all the warmth of first attachment, and from her age and disposition, greater steadiness than first attachments often boast; and so fervently did she value his remembrance, and prefer him to every other man, that all her good sense, and all her attention to the feelings of her friends, were requisite to check the indulgence of those regrets, which must have been injurious to her own health and their tranquility (Pride and Prejudice 336) Jane is the same as Elizabeth with regards to love; she lean towards adoration over financial security and, not at all like her mother and other women, does not think about money.

Charlotte Lucas is worth mentioning because she represents traditional women who are not interested on marrying out of adoration. She "finds herself with little to recommend her and even fewer options on the marriage front" (Reena 130). She is 27 years of age and thought to be spinster. She accepts Mr. Collins' proposal "Without speculation exceptionally both of men or of marriage, marriage had dependably been her question; it was the main good arrangement for well educated young ladies of little fortune, and however dubious of giving joy, must be their pleasantest additive from need" (Pride and Prejudice 222). Clearly she doesn't care for him however she imagines that she can't do better than him. She only thinks about the position that she will gain once she is a married woman: "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" (Pride and Prejudice 224). Charlotte does not understand that her economic motivations deny her of an opportunity to be cheerfully married and emotionally attached to her husband. At last, she pays the price for her decision as she turns into an indistinguishable shallow person as he is. Accordingly, Austin's novel makes it clear that, according to the social standards of the time; dependent women have no chance of living a satisfied life.

Lydia and Kitty are the youngest sisters in the Bennet family. Kitty is 17 and Lydia is 15. They are not all that clever and behave like most of the teenagers. Mr. Bennet depicts them as being "two of the silliest girls in the country" (Pride and Prejudice 116). Their life revolves around balls and the military: "Every day added something to their knowledge of the officers’ names and connections. Their lodgings were not long a secret, and at length they began to know the officers themselves" (Austen, Pride and Prejudice 116). They behave improperly and are not interested on anything aside from the soldiers. Lydia is much more terrible than Kitty, as she has "high animal spirits, and a sort of natural self-consequence, which the
attentions of the officers, to whom her uncle’s good dinners and her own easy manners recommended her, had increased into assurance”(Pride and Prejudice 134). Her free spirits prompts the most disgraceful act of all. She flees with Mr. Wickham, in this manner imperiling the position of her sisters on the marriage market since nobody would marry them if the news of her escape ended became public. However, Lydia does not think about that; she is glad to be a married woman: Oh! mamma, do the people hereabouts know I am married to day? I was afraid they might not; and we overtook William Goulding in his curricle, so I was determined he should know it, and so I let down the side glass next to him, and took off my glove, and let my hand just rest upon the window frame, so that he might see the ring, and then I bowed and smiled like anything. (Austen, Pride and Prejudice 434) Her reckless conduct demonstrates how social standards with respect to marriage make young women do absurd things and enter a marriage they will one day surely regret.

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