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Trabajo Fin de Grado

The female hero in *Pride and Prejudice* and the role of women in Georgian England.

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ABSTRACT

Jane Austen was the author of many novels in the early nineteenth century, and “Pride and Prejudice” (1813) is one of the most famous. This work focuses on the social life of the upper middle class of Georgian England, and how most young women dealt with the search of a wealthy man to marry. This could be, for example, the case of Mrs. Bennet or Lydia Bennet, but not Elizabeth Bennet. She did not want to get married if it was not out of love. This vision of marriage, along with her wit and facility to give her opinion on all kind of matters – including people- is the main plot of the novel.

Key words: Pride and Prejudice, Elizabeth, marriage, women.

1. INTRODUCTION.

The aim of this project is to analyse the differences between Elizabeth Bennet, the female hero of Jane Austen's work "Pride and Prejudice" (1813), and the role of women in the Georgian England –and Regency England at some point-, the period in which Jane Austen lived and wrote all his works. The principal comparison with the character of Elizabeth Bennet would be women's role in social life, more specifically, concerning courtship and marriage in middle classes; since young women from austere families were expected to be well married to a wealthy gentleman, because it was their only opportunity to be wealthy and have a good life.

This novel is the second of Jane Austen's six major works - Sense and Sensibility (1811), Pride and Prejudice (1813), Mansfield Park (1814) and Emma (1816); and another two additional novels, Northanger Abbey and Persuasion, which were published posthumously in 1818-. All of Austen's novels reflected perfectly the life of young ladies at that time, since she mainly focused on the social relations and women perspective of how society worked. I have chosen *Pride and Prejudice* because, in my opinion, the author does a really good job in making prominent a female character who differs in many ways from the average English young lady of the early 19th century, a time when the idea of making a female character the hero of the story was something unthinkable taking into account the role that women were supposed to take at that time in society.

In the first place, I am going to make a brief summary of the state of England in the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century, the time in which "Pride and Prejudice" was set. Both politics and economy will be taken into account, however, the major factor to consider will be that of the role of women in the family, romance and marriage, and society in general.

Secondly, the character of Elizabeth Bennet will be analysed and compared with the rest of female character from the novel, such as her mother Mrs. Bennet, her sisters – Lydia, Lucy, Mary and Jane-, her friend Charlotte Lucas, Caroline Bingley, or Lady Catherine de Bourgh. This comparison will be mainly focused on the female perception of love and marriage, especially in the middle-class, as well as other issues concerning the daily life of the early nineteenth century ladies from the upper middle class and what was expected from them - their education and behaviour, which Elizabeth Bennet did not always suit.

Next, we will go through the personal evolution of Elizabeth Bennet in terms of her view on romance and ideal marriage, as well as how she treats people surrounding her and the relations she establishes with them, more concretely with Mr. Darcy and Mr. Wickham. The notions of pride and prejudice will have a great importance in this analysis since they are the major faults in Elizabeth's behaviour and the principal reason for her decision to change and mature enough to be aware of her own mistakes.

Finally, everything that has been mentioned and analysed in the previous chapters will be considered and summed up in order to come to a final conclusion about Elizabeth Bennet's role in the novel and what one can learn, not only from her personality's evolution, but also from the ways in which the rest of the characters are described or "prejudiced" by Elizabeth, whether her opinion was wrong or correct, and the way she addressed to each one of them.

2. GEORGIAN ENGLAND.

Jane Austen's writing period took place in the early nineteenth Century, overlapping with the so-called Georgian Era in England, a transitional and quite transformative period. During the Georgian era (1714-1830), various significant events took place, such as the Napoleonic Wars (1793-1815) – which are implicitly displayed in “Pride and Prejudice” (1813)-, the French Revolution (1789-1799) along with the execution of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette in 1793, the abolishment of slave trade, the settlement of the United Kingdom, and the Regency of George, the Prince of Wales (1811) due to King George III's health problems, until his coronation in 1820, upon his father's death.

As previously mentioned, this was a transitional era, since it was the stage for the Industrial Revolution, and the shift from the Enlightenment to the Romantic period in the art of writing. The Industrial Revolution's trade and manufacturing opportunities allowed some individuals to accumulate massive wealth. This brought sweeping changes to England's economy and society. However, poverty was quite prevalent during this time. A third of the population lived on the verge of starvation. Food riots were rampant and there was much unrest exacerbated by Luddite protesters who despised the industrialization of England, having spent the prior two decades engaged in a nearly constant state of war, the government violently repressed the protests, as fear of revolution spread throughout the country. Freedom of speech was crushed in response.

Romanticism (1789-1850) was a reaction against the Industrial Revolution and the Enlightenment. This movement emphasized individualism, imagination and emotions, in contrast with the eighteenth-century rationalism. This could have affected daily life in families, who began to be more expressive and affective with the rest of the members. Despite this, there was a return to the authority of the family as a result from three principal events: the fear of political revolution like the one which had recently taken place in France, social changes due to the Industrial Revolution in Britain, and the influence of the new religious movements of Methodism and Evangelicalism.

During the Regency and Georgian period, England's social hierarchy can be divided into five levels or classes. The highest class would be royalty: kings, queens, princes and princesses; followed by aristocracy or nobility: Dukes, Earls, Barons...; upper-class gentry comes next, including landed gentry with large states, high-level clergy and government officials; fourthly, the middle gentry, including people with smaller states, military officers, and lower-level clergy; and, finally, the lower and working classes. For the most part, “Pride

and Prejudice” represents the interactions of characters from the gentry. Even though the members of this class often lack the wealth and resources of the aristocracy, they were free to socialize with them. Women of the gentry did not have careers, in the upper classes a woman’s only acceptable role in society was as a wife. To prepare for her role as a wife, a woman had to master the rules of etiquette. Women who did not marry, did not have a clear role in society, and were called “spinsters”, and they might at best managed the household of an unmarried brother.

The social landscape at home was also in transition, Austen’s novels tend to portray the gentry, defined as a broad social class that includes landowners, as well as the professional classes such as lawyers, doctors and clergy. English lands tended to be concentrated in the hands of a few. This was due to inheritance laws that encouraged the consolidation of states. One male children or relative would have the exclusive rights to all the wealth and properties of the family, and other members of the family would have to rely on his generosity. In “Pride and Prejudice” (1813), much of the plot revolves around the entailment of Longbourn. Land ownership and inheritance is closely tied with courtship and marriage during this period. Women could not inherit, they were dependent on marriage for financial survival. In addition, as the landed gentry became increasingly focused on accumulating wealth, the status of daughters in the family changed. They became a means through which a family could attain greater wealth, though an advantageous marriage. All of these things made courtship the central focus of women’s lives. Women had high behavioural expectations as well. Refinement was praised constantly in “Pride and Prejudice” as well as certain individuals’ lack of refinement was scorned. As stated by Caroline Bingley:

“A woman must have a thorough knowledge of music, singing, drawing, dancing, and modern language 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 dress and expressions, or the word will be but half deserved”. (Austen. *Pride and Prejudice*. Page 39: 24-28)

This assertion reflects the demands of women during this period and Elizabeth Bennet is quick to note its ridiculousness replying: “I never saw such a woman, I never saw such capacity, and taste, and application, and elegance as you described united.” (Austen. *Pride and Prejudice*. Page 40: 3-4). Given these expectations, one might be surprised by Elizabeth’s personality with such societal pressures. However, she did worry about good presence, well-being and honour, and it is evident in her reaction when she gets the news about Lydia’s elopement with Mr. Wickham.

Young women who were on the age of marriage –from 15 or 16 years onward-, were presented to society in balls, and these public events were a great opportunity to look for a suitable suitor, even though there were also some constraints concerning the number of assistances per year, etiquette, etc.

Once the young lady found a good match and got married, she was no longer her parents' responsibility, but her husband's. In any case, a woman was always dependent on a male figure – a father, a husband, or, in some occasions when they did not get married, a brother. The only way a woman could get some independence –at a great expense- was becoming a widow, and even then, if she had any male descendant, she would have to rely on this inheritant.

3. THE CHARACTER OF ELIZABETH BENNET IN COMPARISON WITH THE REST OF FEMALE CHARACTERS.

Elizabeth Bennet, the main character and the female hero of the novel, is the second daughter of a large middle-class family, composed by her parents and her four sisters –there is no direct male inheritor in the Bennet family. For this reason, the five of them are expected by her parents –especially, their mother- to marry of, since women could not claim the family’s property – Longbourn. Although having been educated in the same way and raised in a very close proximity, each one of the five Bennet sisters are remarkably unique.

Elizabeth was the wittiest of the five sisters, and she is also characterized by her playful nature and quick disposition to judge other people’s follies, although always in an endearing rather than offensive way. To her mother’s disappointment, Elizabeth was never interested in an advantageous marriage, she was determined not to marry unless it was out of love. This was one of the reasons why she was Mrs. Bennet least favourite: “she is not half as handsome as Jane, nor half so good humored as Lydia” (Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*. Page 4: 32-34). On the contrary, Mr. Bennet expresses his preference for the second of the Bennet sisters: “they are all silly and ignorant like other girls; but Lizzy has something more of quickness than her sisters.” (Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*. Page 5: 2-3). At some point, when she rejects a marriage proposal from her greedy cousin Mr. Collins – who was to inheritate Longbourn-, Mrs. Bennet is enraged and Mr. Bennet, in contrast, agreed with Elizabeth’s decision: “An unhappy alternative is behind you, Elizabeth. From this day you must be a stranger to one of your parents. – Your mother will never see you again if you do not marry Mr. Collins, and I will never see you again if you do.” (Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*. Page 113: 1-4)

Mrs. Bennet embodies the traditional beliefs of the time, hoping to see her daughters marry wealthy young bachelors: “The business of her life was to get her daughters married; its solace was visiting and news” (Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*. 5: 23-24). Therefore, when Mr. Bingley and Mr. Darcy, two very rich and successful young men, moved nearby, Mrs. Bennet was quick to express her desire for her daughters to marry them: “If I can but see one of my daughters happily settled at Netherfield [...] and all the others equally well married, I shall have nothing to wish for” (Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*. 9: 14-16). Sometimes, this enthusiasm about her daughters’ expected advantageous marriages, leads to an inappropriate behaviour that would influence her daughter’s future. In fact, it was a conversation she had with Lady Lucas about Jane’s expected marriage with Mr. Bingley the reason for the Bingleys distancing from the Bennets.

Jane Bennet is the eldest of the five sisters. Kind and gentle, she always sees the best in others, sometimes to her detriment. Her close and well-balanced relationship with her sister Elizabeth is, partly, due to the combination of Elizabeth's judgemental nature and Jane's positivism. When she first meets Mr. Bingley and her sisters, she cannot think badly of any of them, although the Bingley sisters are quite judgemental and dishonest with her – something that Elizabeth, her confident, does notice-. Taking advantage of Jane's introvert nature and difficulty to express her emotions, Mr. Bingley's sisters convince their brother that Jane is not as interested in him as he is in her. Elizabeth, the person who knows Jane best is quick to defend her sister when she is accused of not showing her feelings for Mr. Bingley: "But she does help him on, as much as her nature will allow. If I can perceive her regard for him, he must be a simpleton indeed not to discover it too." (Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*. Page 22:6-8). Despite all the initial complications, she and Mr. Bingley end up in a happy marriage.

Catherine Bennet, frequently referred to as "Kitty", is the fourth of the Bennet sisters, only two years older than Lydia. Irritable and "weak-spirited", she is very influenced by her younger sister who, although having been presented to society at a very early age along with Kitty, tends to get all the attention from their mother. This leaves Kitty, a 17-year-old girl, with little self-esteem and, unlike her sister Mary, she cannot use her knowledge and skills to get people's attention. The only situations in which Mr. and Mrs. Bennet acknowledge her are when she gets scolded or laughed at, only favouring her frustration:

"Don't keep coughing so, Kitty, for heaven's sake! Have a little compassion on my nerves. You tear them to pieces.' 'Kitty has no discretion in her coughs,' said her father; 'she times them ill.'" (Austen. *Pride and Prejudice*. Page 6: 21-24).

Lydia Bennet is the youngest and most undisciplined of the Bennet daughters. She is very impulsive and immature, and her main interests are flirtation and frivolous pursuits. One could say that Lydia is openly coquettish with any man that she finds attractive, something that her mother doesn't reprimand, and her father detests but he doesn't really speak up about it. So, her parents do nothing to rein her in. Lydia is, in fact, Mrs. Bennet's favourite daughter and she is spoiled by her mother. The one who does express her discomfort about her little sister's behaviour is Elizabeth:

"If you were aware [...] of the very great disadvantage to us all, which must arise from the public notice of Lydia's unguarded and imprudent manner; nay, which has already arisen from it, I am sure you would judge differently in the affair." (Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*. Page 233: 4-7).

Things only got worse when she eloped with the manipulative militia officer George Wickham, endangering her family's honour. Even when she got back home after the wedding, far from feeling guilty, she bragged about her married status to all her sisters and the whole neighbourhood.

Mary Bennet, the third of the Bennet sisters, seems to be left behind in some situations, considering the close bond existing between her two older sisters and, in some way, between her two younger sisters as well. She is unquestionably more mature and sensible than Lydia and Kitty, but she lacks the grace and sense of taste that Jane and Elizabeth possess. Despite her efforts and being a very accomplished girl, she can have a rather unpleasant personality due to her pedantic nature and she made it quite evident at the Netherfield Ball, where she put her family in evidence by playing the piano and singing in a not very pleasant way:

“That will do extremely well, child. You have delighted us long enough. Let the other young ladies have time to exhibit.’ Mary, though pretending not to hear, was somewhat disconcerted; and Elizabeth sorry for her, and sorry for her father’s speech, was afraid her anxiety had done no good.” (Austen. *Pride and Prejudice*. Page 101: 22-26).

This need to impress people, especially her parents, might be due to the fact that Mr. and Mrs. Bennet are not the most affective people and the possible comparisons that could be made between her sisters’ appearance and her own.

At some point in the novel, Mr. Darcy himself mentions to Elizabeth Bennet how he finds her family members’ behaviour inappropriate, especially that of her mother and her younger sisters. This behaviour is clearly evident at the Netherfield Ball, as Mr. Darcy states in the letter he writes for Elizabeth:

“[...] The situation of your mother’s family, though objectionable, was nothing in comparison of that total want of propriety so frequently, so almost uniformly betrayed by herself, by your three younger sisters, and occasionally even by your father.” (Page 200: 12-16).

He even gets to think that her older sister Jane, who barely expresses her emotions due to her shyness, wants to marry his friend Mr. Bingley just because of his fortune:

“Your sister I also watched. – Her look and manners were open, cheerful and engaging as ever, but without any symptom of peculiar regard, and I remained from the evening’s scrutiny, that though she received his attentions with pleasure, she did not invite them by any participation of sentiment” (Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*. Page 199: 21-25).

Moving on from the Bennet family, a character who has a very close bond with said family is Charlotte Lucas, Elizabeth’s best friend and the woman who would, ultimately, inherit the Bennets’ property through marriage. Being 27 years old, she is considered an old

maid by everyone's standards. She is not beautiful by anyone's assessment, not even her own mother, and she starts to feel like a leech for her family's finances. She is the eldest of daughter of a large family. Due to this, and the fact that her family is not very wealthy, she ends up marrying Mr. Collins. Unlike Elizabeth, Charlotte finds a good match in Mr. Collins. Charlotte does not have deep feelings for him, but she was never interested in a romantic marriage, in fact, all she asked for was economic stability. She makes this clear during her conversation with Elizabeth about her upcoming marriage with Mr. Collins:

“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, *Pride and Prejudice*. Page 226: 12-17).

Both Miss Bingley and Mrs. Hurst are arrogant, false and mean. Unlike Caroline Bingley, Mrs. Hurst does not have such a great impact in the main characters. Caroline Bingley is rich, elegant and witty. She seems to have everything she needs, but there is one thing that she desires and does not have, and that is Mr. Darcy's heart. Caroline becomes quite jealous when she realizes that Mr. Darcy – her love interest- is falling in love with Elizabeth Bennet. She is similar to Elizabeth in intelligence, wit, quick spiritedness and good observational skills. She know how to treat –or manipulate- people in order to get what she wants, and it takes Jane, a clear victim of her dishonesty, a long time to notice her true intentions. In contrast, Elizabeth is able to see Caroline's intentions from the very beginning. Miss Bingley tries to sabotage any kind of relationship between the Bennet sisters and Mr. Darcy and Mr. Bingley, since she thinks the Bennets are way beneath her and all of her relatives and friends. She made her opinion about the Bennet family quite clear in a conversation she had with Mr. Darcy at one of the balls:

“You are considering how insupportable it would be to pass many evenings in this manner – in such society; and indeed I am quite of your opinion. I was never more annoyed! The insipidity and yet the noise; the nothingness and yet the self-importance of all these people! – What would I give to hear your strictures on them!”(Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*. Page 27: 5-10)

But, in the end, her plans are not fulfilled and her brother and her love interest end up marrying Jane and Elizabeth Bennet, respectively.

Unlike most of the characters in this novel, Lady Catherine de Bourgh is a member of the English aristocracy. This noblewoman is bossy, unfriendly and arrogant, giving everyone her piece of mind even when she should not. She is used to have everything her way, with people like Mr. Collins favouring this attitude by agreeing with her in everything she says and does. On the contrary, on her visit to Rosings, Elizabeth Bennet does not hold back her wit and unique personality:

“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*. Page 167: 30-33; page 168: 1-3).

For this reason, she is overtly shocked by Elizabeth’s confidence, considering Elizabeth belongs to a lower class. Nonetheless, it is important to note that Lady Catherine’s behaviour was not being the most adequate and appropriate for her status: “‘Upon my word,’ said her Ladyship, ‘you give your opinion very decidedly for so young a person. – Pray, what is your age?’” (Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*. Page 168: 4-5).

After analysing the main female characters of “*Pride and Prejudice*” (1813), it is fair to say that, although all of them have unique personalities, Elizabeth Bennet possesses some of these characters’ good traits, such as Mary’s sensibility or Jane’s beauty. And, even, a positive version of other characters’ undesirable traits, for instance Lydia’s playfulness or Lady Catherine’s pride. To be sure, Elizabeth Bennet is the only female character in the novel whose personality and behaviour is not expected in a young lady of such historical period and social and economic status.

4. EVOLUTION OF THE CHARACTER OF ELIZABETH BENNET.

The principal story of *Pride and Prejudice* is that of Elizabeth's evolution in her personal life. Elizabeth Bennet represents the "prejudice" in the title of the novel, since at the start of the novel she could quickly criticize and judge other people, mainly focusing on appearances rather than reality; and this is her main fault.

Elizabeth Bennet started out as an indifferent woman. First, she thinks that traditional courtship rituals and marriage concepts are silly, and because of her sense of humour and wit (ladies of that time were not supposed to be sarcastic or ironic). Secondly, she used to prejudice against the members of the economic elite, and did not believe that Mr. Bingley was worthy of his sister, and he may be vain, and she was extremely dissatisfied with Mr. Darcy because of Mr. Darcy's wealth and arrogant nature. In this way, she embodies both pride (her wit and cleverness) and prejudice (against the rich).

Although Elizabeth mistakenly misjudged Mr. Wickham and Mr. Darcy, and insisted on this judgment more stubbornly until she was forced to recognize her own mistakes, she was usually right about people. For example, she was painfully aware of the misconduct of most of the members of her family and quickly identified Mr. Collins as a fool and Ms. Catherine as a tyrant. However, this ability to identify people sometimes makes her go too far. She went from certain and rational opinions to wrong conclusions about Darcy and Wickham. Her confidence in her own insights (including pride and prejudice) plunged her into the worst mistake she could make.

The two main targets of her prejudice are Darcy and Wickham. From the beginning, she intended to hate Darcy "for no reason". In fact, since Darcy's first comment was cruel and offensive, her initial dissatisfaction was considered reasonable. This situation took place when Mr. Bingley suggested Mr. Darcy to ask Elizabeth for a dance and he replied by saying she was "tolerable; but not handsome enough to tempt me" (Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*. Page 12: 2-3). However, afterwards, she enjoyed provoking him.

On the other hand, when Elizabeth first met Mr. Wickham, he appeared to her as a very polite, kind and interesting man and, even though she only had known him for a very short time, when Mr. Darcy was criticized by Wickham, she was very willing to believe the accusations about him. At one moment, she said firmly that she didn't think Darcy could be so inhumane, and the next moment, she completely accepted Wickham's story. From the beginning, she was "unconscious" about Wickham's appearance and charm. For a long time,

despite the warnings given by Jane, Mrs. Gardner and Caroline Bentley, she still stands by Wickham. Ironically, Elizabeth thinks everyone is prejudiced against him.

A key moment in looking back at Elizabeth's growth is when she read Darcy's letter and painfully reaching an agreement with her misunderstanding of Wickham and Darcy. She was forced to face some prejudices and earlier judgments here, and in doing so made her realize that she had not been the sharp character reader she thought she was. She accused herself of not being aware of Wickham's improper behaviour, but allowing herself to be deceived by his charm.

Darcy's letter showed Elizabeth the truth. He had already hinted that she would only hear what she desired to hear. Therefore, she made an effort to read his letter with an open mind and made a rational analysis during the second reading. Eventually, she began to notice the contradictions in Wickham and the lack of any real evidence of goodwill. She finally realized how "blind, partial and prejudiced" she was. She also realized that she was also guilty of accusing Darcy of being proud, fault that she has too. She also always believed that she was superior to others, and refused to believe that she might be wrong, because Wickham's attention fuelled her vanity and Darcy it. This is a critical moment in the novel, marking her awareness of her shortcomings and her determination to change.

Although she was not in very good terms with Darcy yet, from this moment on, we can clearly see a change in Elizabeth's personality, since she is indeed trying to see things clearly without being proud. She confessed her fault to Jane, told Wickham that she knew the truth about him, and tried to solve her problems rationally and honestly, and started to value Mr. Darcy. Her ability to do this makes her the heroine in the novel. Facing her true self and realizing that she was severely affected by her prejudice – and pride too-, she accepted this fact, thought about it, and acted on her own conclusions. In fact, she became a mature adult. Her opinion on marriage and love also changed. Elizabeth Bennet shows the idea of a mature, ideal marriage compared with other unworthy marriages. Elizabeth seemed to know her expectations of love at first. As she told Charlotte, she was not looking for a husband, let alone a rich person. She despised the traditional courtship games and wanted to get to know her partner, and when she heard the news of Charlotte's engagement, her reaction was of astonishment. Elizabeth could not contemplate her best friend Charlotte Lucas wanting to marry Mr. Collins, and she had not noticed the flirtation that occurred before her eyes. She was extremely frustrated -Elizabeth who had negatively prejudiced Mr. Collins at first sight, found it difficult to understand that someone she respected might have different opinions from

hers. She slowly learned that her prejudice had messed up with her. Her visit to Hunsford made her notice that this kind of marriage was not only possible, but also a good compromise.

Darcy's views, her visit to Pemberley, and her sister's elopement showed her too that financial and social status were important factors to take into account when taking about marriage. She needed to learn this before she could have a realistic view of marriage as a social union and become Pemberley's responsible mistress. However, she believes that marriage as an equal partnership is a very effective view, and she was correct in rejecting Mr. Collins' proposal. His marriage to Charlotte worked because the relationship was well-balanced, and now all that is left is for Elizabeth to reach her equal partner.

It's worth trying to determine the exact time when Elizabeth fell in love with Darcy. The fact that she did not like him and irritated him at the beginning of the novel was probably a sign of her attraction towards him, but Elizabeth did not admit it. She claimed to find him annoying, and of course did not think twice about rejecting his first declaration. She didn't appreciate Darcy's true value and his feelings until she visited Pemberley, and then she started to feel more about him. Her opinion of marriage also began to change. She knew that Darcy's assessment of her family was correct, and Lydia's elopement only confirmed this. The inequality between her and Darcy was finally overcome. Seeing Pemberley marked the beginning of her love for Darcy, because there she began to appreciate his true character, not just his wealth.

Lydia's elopement with Mr. Wickham crystallised Elizabeth's view of marriage – she could then see the ideal and realized that Darcy could provide it and "satisfy" her needs. His compassion on behalf of Lydia stirred up her feelings, and when he returned to Longbourn, Elizabeth was quiet and uncertain. He was very important to her, and she knew that she needed his attention and approval. But first, she had to overcome the double obstacles of Darcy's family and herself. She first confronted Mrs. Catherine and defended Darcy and her right to choose her partner. Her courage to face the powerful Lady Catherine here will certainly encourage Darcy to propose again. Then, she overcame her family's prejudice against Darcy, showing that she was now a truly independent adult and could get married.

5. CONCLUSION.

Elizabeth Bennet is a very uncommon and complex character for the time the novel was written; so much that she could be mistaken for a character created in the twenty first century. She was not only rare in her way of thinking and seeing the world for a young woman of her condition, but also in the way of managing her social and romantic relations. She sees marriage as the union of two compatible individuals who would be able to make each other happy, rather than a way of making sure one's financial security. Additionally, she – after learning about Mr. Darcy's feelings and real intentions - becomes aware of her faults and feels determined to change, so she finally becomes the mature woman we can see at the end of the novel.

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