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**The Effect of Social Stratification on Female Characters'
Subjugation in the Novel *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane
Austen**

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and Literature

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to my family and many friends who encouraged me and prayed for me throughout the entire time of my research

I am eternally grateful to my beloved parents Mohamed El Habib and Badiaa HAMADI, for their unwavering love and undying support.

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Abstract

The present research focuses on the social stratification reflected in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* and its effect on female character's submission. It aims to describe how the novel's social classes impacted female characters. It also determines the nature of those female characters and the way they were socially submissive and trying to ascend to a higher social status by marrying people from a higher class. The study employs the feminist approach that supports and calls for equality between genders and the Marxist approach, which focuses on the clash between social classes. This research belongs to qualitative research. The latter will use sources and literary reviews relevant to this research field. Also, this study employs the argumentative technique. The sources of the data are both primary and secondary data sources. The primary data sources will include an overall reading of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* and an intensive reading concerning the author's biography to understand the surrounding conditions when she wrote this novel. The secondary data sources are the historical material that will aid the researcher in developing valuable and crucial interpretations about feminism and social class. The pre-mentioned findings will be supported by reliable essays, books, articles, and dissertations to give a credible research outcome. Finally, this study stresses the importance of Jane Austin's work by demonstrating that the society in which *Pride and Prejudice* were written was still marked by substantial social disparities between males and females. In addition, it shows how women try to change the society's view by breaking conventional values.

Key Words: female, class division, feminism, social class, social stratification.

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General Introduction

19th century, much quicker than in previous decades, witnessed accelerated growth and transition rates. During this time, England transformed from a rural agricultural country to an urban-industrial nation. This transformation involved a major dislocation which radically changed the social structure. It has taken several years for both the government and the people, especially women, to adapt to the then circumstances.

Women faced a problematic situation characterized by inequality of rights in education and freedom. They had little independence and went fairly straight from their father's home to their husband's. In the Victorian era, Britain experienced many shifts in philosophy, economy, and politics that shaped the English culture. It was also a flourishing period in British literature. Jane Austen is one of the prominent English writers of the Georgian era. She was well known for her social commentary; she opposed the inequality in gender and moral standards imposed on women in her culture and in her novels, including *Pride and Prejudice*.

Pride and prejudice is the masterpiece of Jane Austen among her stunning successes. It was published in 1813, and it is considered a classic novel that carried a romantic theme of love and marriage. Jane Austen faced many struggles within her own life, and she portrayed a crucial reality of English women uncovering the social and stereotypical morals of her society. This portrayal included social classes, values, marriage and women's status.

As a literary work, the novel reflects the social reality seen from different aspects: social, economic, political, cultural and religious. Moreover, in the nineteenth Century, society's structure consisted of three major classes in England. These three significant classes are the upper class, middle class, and lower class, i.e. the working class.

England was nothing like today; social stratifications were clear, polite behaviours were highly regarded. Most importantly, women's social status was determined depending on their parents' and husbands' status. They were forced to marry the most appropriate man that was imposed on them by their families.

The issues discussed in this research seek to shed light on the social stratification reflected in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* and its effect on female character's submission. This research intends to describe how the social division system impacts the novel's female characters. The latter were socially submissive; they tried to ascend to a higher social status by marrying people from a higher class whom they love or not.

In this work, the researcher will analyse *Pride and Prejudice* by addressing the social class role as one of many causatives of female character's subjugation and how marriage and status became essential determinants of life rather than finding the right partner. Moreover, the novel's protagonist is trying to break these social norms by changing society's view and finding the right men to be happy.

The theoretical approaches to this study are feminist and Marxist approaches. First, the feminist approach supports equality between genders. This research will use this approach to analyze female issues that will be discussed in second chapter of this research. Second, the Marxist approach is a social, economic, political theory which

focuses on the clash between social classes. On the other hand, this approach will shed light on social stratification depicted in the novel and its effect on women's lives, how social status became their aim to secure their future.

This research's method will include an overall reading of Jane Austen's primary source, *Pride and Prejudice* and an intensive reading concerning the author's biography to understand the surrounding conditions when she wrote this novel. We will also use the historical material that would help us come up with helpful and crucial interpretations about feminism and social class. The pre-mentioned findings will be supported by reliable essays, books, articles, and dissertations to give a credible research outcome.

Chapter One:

Theoretical Framework of Feminist and

Marxist Approches

Introduction

If asked to share the very first thoughts that come into one's mind when thinking about *Pride and Prejudice's* novel by Jane Austen, many would think about its female characters and their contribution to the story as a whole. Austen was fairly aware that women's options in the nineteenth century were severely restricted. She wrote about marriage because it was the only option available to women at the time. Throughout the book, Austen addresses the traditional values of women. She emphasized the desperation of working-class women to marry for financial purposes.

This chapter aims to provide a theoretical framework for the study of feminist and Marxist issues. Moreover, it introduces the literary approaches and how we will analyze this literary work using those theories. Therefore, this chapter is devoted to introducing the adopted approaches for the novel's analysis. Consequently, it focuses on the feminist and Marxist views in its critical study of *Pride and Prejudice* and how these approaches reflect on the effect of social stratification on the novel characterization.

1.1. Feminism as an Ideological Perspective

Women have been speaking out for years about the differences they face due to their gender. However, it was until 1837 that the word "feminism," as a philosophy, was coined by Frenchman Charles Fourier. Over the following decades, it became popular in the United Kingdom and the United States as a term to describe a movement aimed at achieving legal, economic, and social equality for both sexes as well as ending patriarchy and male oppression of women (Delhi 13).

Scholars and historians use the word feminism in numerous ways; some of them use it to refer to historical political movements in the United States and Europe. Others refer to the idea that women live in an inequitable world with no rights or equality. Feminism is the belief in gender equality in all aspects of life, including social, economic, and political life. Feminism is a global movement that is reflected by a variety of organizations dedicated to promoting women's rights and interests, despite its origins in the West (Brunell).

Various strands of what constitutes feminism arise as a result of varying goals and levels of injustice across the world. Feminism's changing concepts and goals have continued to influence communities since its emergence, and it now ranks as one of the most important movements of our time, motivating, affecting, and even confounding large populations as it grows.

Feminism is a well-known and complicated concept. Many feminists disagree with it on a number of grounds, but most feminist theorists agree on four basic concepts. First, seek to improve equality because feminists want to be more active in the fight against discrimination to increase gender equality awareness. Second, by promoting the concept of equal opportunities for both men and women, we can broaden human choice. Third, eliminating gender stratification by objecting to traditional standards and laws, which generate gender inequality. Last, ending sexual violence and promoting sexual freedom by advocating that women should have control over their sexual identity without any men's permissions and threats.

The patriarchy system, which has governed most human societies for generations, is at the root of male domination. Men established institutions that reinforced their power and oppressed women for whatever purposes patriarchy arose.

As cultures became more complex, they needed more control, and men created institutions that reinforced their power and oppressed women. From government, law, religion to marriage and the home, these institutions enforced male rule at every level of life. Women were regarded as inferior to men in terms of intellectual, social, and cultural status because they were subordinate and ineffective under male rule (Delhi12).

Feminists around the time did and are still doing their best to end sexism in all its forms and achieve justice for women. There are many trends of feminism in which sometimes each one of them gives principles and conditions to give the woman her rights.

1.2. Main Trends of Feminism

1.2.1. Radical Feminism

In *History and Theory of Feminism* article, it was stated that the defining characteristic of women's oppression, according to radical feminism, is the male-controlled capitalist hierarchy, which it defines as oppressive. Radical feminists argue that women can only be free once the patriarchal system, which they see as fundamentally oppressive and dominating, is abolished. Radical feminists believe that there is a male-based authority and power structure responsible for sexism and injustice. They also think that society will not be able to be reformed in any meaningful way as long as the institution and its principles are in control. To achieve their goals, some radical feminists see no other option than to uproot and rebuild society.

1.2.2. Socialist/Marxist Feminism

Socialist feminism is concerned with issues such as the inequality of wages, obstacles in finding a job, difficulties of working in particular domains and the lack of equal policies in the organizations of higher education. Marxist feminists believe that women would have actual freedom if they work to end economic and cultural oppression (Pasque and Wimmer 18).

1.2.3. Liberal Feminism

This feminist perspective is essentially described as an individualist form of feminist theory. Liberal feminists argue that society holds the false belief that women are, by nature, less intellectually and physically able than men. This misbelief causes all kinds of discrimination in social life. Liberal feminists contend that occupations should not be divided by gender and that there is no such thing as a men's or women's career (18).

1.2.4. Cultural Feminism

This feminist theory viewpoint is used to refute the idea that there is a "female nature" or "female essence" or similar attempts to revalidate characteristics assigned to femininity (Alcoff 405-435). Cultural feminists maintain that there are natural biological differences between men and women. Women are naturally gentler and kinder than men. Because of certain inequalities, if women ruled the world, there would be no more wars, and the world will be a much better place.

1.3. Waves of Feminism

Sociologists highlight three waves or periods of feminism, and in the second decade of the twenty-first century, certain feminists hail the fourth wave. Although some view the metaphor as problematic, each wave has been activated by specific

catalysts and reduces each wave to one goal when femininity is a constantly evolving movement with a large range of objectives.

1.3.1. The First-Wave Feminism

During the nineteenth century, the first feminist wave emerged in Europe and North America, intending to obtain the right to vote and provide employment for women. It began in 1850 in the United Kingdom when a group of women initiated a campaign to address issues such as schooling, jobs, and changing marriage laws. They didn't concentrate on working-class women's issues; their most significant accomplishment was the establishment of higher education for women. They were successful in changing the high school system for girls, expanding access to other occupations such as nursing, and improving divorced women's custody rights. Activists in the United Kingdom, on the other hand, were unable to win women's votes.

Feminism began in the United States in 1848, when women demanded the right to use birth control in addition to the right to vote. On July 13, 1848, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, a leading figure in the American Women's Suffrage Movement, held the Seneca Falls Convention, where she addressed social, civil, and religious issues. At this convention, women and men signed the Declaration of Sentiments document expressing their opposition to such rules and laws such as the following: women were not allowed to vote, women had to submit to laws when they had no voice in their formation, married women had no property rights, men had legal power over and responsibility for their wives to the point that they could imprison or beat them with impunity, divorce and child custody laws favored men, giving no rights to women,

women were not allowed to enter professions such as medicine or law. Finally, the United States women were granted the right to vote in August 1920 (Pond 10 to 15).

1.3.2. The Second-Wave Feminism

History and Theory of Feminism article stated that second-wave feminism refers to activity in the early 1960s and lasted through the late 1980s. According to The scholar Imelda Whelehan, the second wave of feminism was a result of the suffragette movement in the United Kingdom and the United States. Since then, second-wave feminism has persisted, coexisting with what is now known as third-wave feminism. The scholar Estelle Freedman compares first and second-wave feminism, saying that: "the first wave focused on rights such as suffrage, whereas the second wave was largely concerned with other issues of equality, such as ending discrimination."

1.3.3. The Third Wave Feminism

Third-wave feminism emerged in the early 1990s as a reaction to the second wave's perceived shortcomings, as well as the backlash against the second wave's policies and movements. Third-wave feminism aims to challenge or avoid what it sees as the second wave's essentialist interpretations of femininity, which reflect the experiences of upper-middle-class white women, according to them.

According to *History and Theory of Feminism* article, the third wave philosophy is based on a post-structuralist view of gender and sexuality. Third-wave feminists are known for focusing on "micro-politics" and challenging the second-wave feminism concept of what is and is not beneficial to women. The roots of the third wave can be traced back to the mid-1980s. Gloria Anzaldua, bell hooks, Chela Sandoval, Cherrie Moraga, Audre Lorde, Maxine Hong Kingston, and many other

black feminists rooted in the second wave attempted to negotiate a space within feminist thought for the consideration of race-related subjectivities.

The main issues of this wave are sexual freedom, including women from various groups such as race, religion, sexual orientations, gender identities and social status. Nevertheless, these feminists mostly fought for reproductive rights, protection from violence at home, workplace and public place, economic rights, recognition of caring job, sex discrimination act, more female parliamentarians, religious rights as women clergy, rabbis and workplace equality.

Finally, each of the feminist waves mentioned before has played a crucial role in feminist theories and politics starting from the 1960s until now. They paved the way for other waves and activities to appear and help women get their social, political, cultural, religious, and sexual rights in their own different way.

1.4. Marxist Theory and its Various Concepts

Marxism is a theory founded in the mid-nineteenth century by Karl Marx and, to a limited extent, Friedrich Engels. It started as a set of three concepts: a philosophical anthropology, a historical theory, and an economic and political program. In addition, numerous socialist movements understood and applied Marxism in the years leading up to 1914. Then there is Soviet Marxism, which was established by Vladimir Ilich Lenin and updated by Joseph Stalin, and became the ideology of the communist parties formed after the Russian Revolution under the name Marxism-Leninism (1917).

Marxism, as described by anti-Stalinist Leon Trotsky and his supporters, Mao Zedong's Chinese version of Marxism-Leninism, and various Marxisms in developing countries, were all offshoots of this. There were also post-World War Two non-

dogmatic Marxism, which adapted Marx's ideas by incorporating ideas from modern theories, mostly those of Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger, but also Sigmund Freud and others (McLellan).

Professor McLellan claims that:

Marxism originated in the thought of the German radical philosopher and economist Karl Marx, with important contributions from his friend and collaborator Friedrich Engels. Marx and Engels authored *The Communist Manifesto* (1848), a pamphlet outlining their theory of historical materialism and predicting the ultimate overthrow of Capitalism by the industrial proletariat. Engels edited the second and third volumes of Marx's analysis and critique of Capitalism, *Das Kapital*, both published after Marx's death. (McLellan)

The Communist Manifesto, written jointly by Marx and Engels in 1848, is the basic work of Marxism and Communism. "*Das Kapital*" (Marx's ambitious treatise on political economy and critical study of Capitalism and its practical economic application) released in 1867, with two additional volumes revised and published by Engels after Marx's death.

Some of the basic ideas behind Marxism theory may include the dialectic, materialism, commodities, capital, Capitalism, labour, surplus value, the working class, alienation, means of communication, the general intellect, ideology, socialism, communism, and class struggles.

1.4.1. Karl Marx's Philosophy

We cannot reduce Marx's writings to a theory nor a philosophical method. His overall research is a radical critique of philosophy, mainly G.W.F. Hegel's idealist system and the post-Hegelian ideologies of the left and right. Although, we cannot say that it is merely a rejection of the pre-mentioned philosophies. According to David McLellan: "Marx declared that philosophy must become reality" (The Thought of Karl Marx). It was no longer enough to interpret the universe; a person had to be concerned with improving it, which meant changing its world and human consciousness. This, in consequence, necessitated both a critique of experience and a critique of concepts (McLellan).

Karl Marx assumes that all knowledge contains a critique of thoughts. Marx's philosophy is distinguished by the fact that, rather than making abstract claims about a broad range of issues such as human existence, experience, and matter, he explores each issue in its complex relationship to the others and seeks to link them to historical, social, political, and economic realities.

1.5. Essential Principles of Marxism Theory

1.5.1. Critique of Capitalist Society

Marx set out to find the structural causes of what he saw as a system of capitalist exploitation and destruction, as well as to propose solutions in politics and economics. Marx, like all socialists, objected to capitalism because it concentrated economic power in the hands of a few people: "The bourgeoisie... has centralized means of production, and has concentrated land in a few hands"(Marx and Engels 13).

The injustice and exploitation of the working classes are a consequence of this: "In proportion as the bourgeoisie, i.e., capital, develops, so does the proletariat, the

new working class; a class of workers who live only as long as they find employment, and who find work only as long as their labor increases capital." These laborers are a commodity because they have to sell themselves little by little" (8-15). The imperialistic aspect of the bourgeois enterprise is the third objection, according to Marx: to survive, capitalism must extend its tentacles all over the world: "The bourgeoisie cannot exist without constantly revolutionizing the instruments of production (...) the need of a constantly expanding market (...) chases the bourgeoisie over the whole surface of the globe." Marx believed that the bourgeoisie "creates a world of its own picture" (Marx and Engels 8-15).

Finally, capitalism reduces human interactions to a "money" nexus, self-interest, and egotistical calculation.

1.5.2. The Materialistic Perspective of History

a) Historical Dialectic Movement

Marx develops his criticism of Hegel's dialectic into, what he terms, the materialistic interpretation of history in *The German Ideology* (1846). The dialectic of Hegel gave Marx a historical model that, of course, he adapted. He viewed the world, human beings and history, like Hegel, as a product of human job. However, while Hegel viewed the dialectical movements of history as motivated by an absolute spirit of God, Marx insisted that history's dialectic of history was driven by material forces, by upheavals in economic production forces and relations. In particular, he viewed history as driven by class struggle. As he declaims in *The Communist Manifesto*: The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles (Marx, and Engels 10-15).

Between slaves and freemen, patricians and plebeians, lords and serfs, Marx refers to the background of class struggle from antiquity to his own days. The bourgeoisie and the proletariat, or industrial working class, are the two main classes in modern times. And, just like the capitalist mode of production supplanted the feudal mode of production, the capitalist mode would succumb to socialism. The bourgeoisie produces the instrument of its own decline: the proletariat, on the one side, that will unite against it; and, on the other side, increasingly debilitating economic crises that are internal in capitalism's processes.

Finally, Marx rejected previous philosophical systems because they were idealistic; he argued that: "history's dialectic required a certain mixture of theory and practice, and that a given economic and political regime could only be eliminated by revolution, not by mere thought. The philosophers have only described the universe in different ways; the point, however, is to change it," he said in this regard. Marx believed that bourgeois control and capitalist exploitation would come to an end when conditions for the vast majority of people had deteriorated enough (Rafey 527- 535).

b) The Economic Base and Superstructure

The materialist conception of history is based on the idea that man's first historical act is the creation of means to fulfill his material needs. Life is produced both naturally and socially by labor and procreation: a given mode of production is combined with a given stage of social cooperation. Only after going through these historical periods, according to Marx, we can talk about men having "consciousness," which is a "social product" in itself. As a result, ideologies, politics, law, morality, religion, and art are not independent but emerge from a people's material behavior; Life is not decided by consciousness, but consciousness by life (Rafey 527-535).

1.5.3. The Labor Department

In a section entitled "The Capitalist Character of Manufacture" from the book *Das Kapital*, Marx says that the modern division of labor makes it necessary to have a great number of workers under common capitalist. As a result, the minimum amount of capital that the capitalist has must continue to increase. The worker is transformed by these manufacturing developments. He sacrifices some of his identity in order to fit his specific job; he must become an appendage of a giant machine. Marx says, "The worker is brought face to face with the intellectual potentialities of the material process of production as the property of another and as a power which rules over him" (SparkNotes Editors).

The worker becomes impoverished of his productive power. Capitalists wish to discourage imagination, and they make the worker machine-like. Manufacture attacks the individual at his very basic and is thus "the first system to provide the materials and the impetus for industrial pathology" (Sparknotes).

1.5.4. Marx's Ideological Conception

According to Marx, the class that is challenging for dominance must gain political powers in order to express its interests as the general interest. It is the seed of Marx's ideological concept. He states that the class that is dominant in society is also the governing intellectual force. With the means of production at its disposal, it is enabled to disseminate its ideas as universally accurate in the realms of law, morality, religious belief and art. Through bourgeois ascendancy, dominant ideas of the aristocracy like honor and loyalty were thus replaced by ideas of liberty and equality, the infrastructure of which is an economic class (Rafey 527).

1.5.5. Class Conflict

One of Marxism's central tenets is that in a capitalist society, the "forces of production," or how goods and services are produced, would eventually lead to tension between social groups, which will be exacerbated by the way economic resources are used and who benefits from them. The conflict will be between the capitalists, who own the natural and human resources and manage the means of production, and the proletariat, who provide the labor that enables the owners to benefit.

The conflict is often interpreted as a conflict between management and labor, and sometimes as a clash between socioeconomic groups. They are two of a whole that conflicts with one another, not only physically but also ideologically. Marx developed the term "dialectic materialism" to describe this conflict. The term refers to the belief that all progress results from a struggle between opposites fueled by contradictions inherent in all events, concepts, and movements. A thesis collides with its antitheses, leading to synthesis, which in turn produces its antithesis, and so on, resulting in change.

1.5.6. Commodity Fetishism

According to Marxists, some of the harm caused by capitalism's economics is psychological. Capitalism preys on customers' insecurities in order to sell more products, pressuring them to compete with others in terms of the amount and quality of their possessions: a newer vehicle, a bigger diamond ring, a holiday home. Commodification is the consequence of this behavior, which values objects not for their usefulness but for their ability to impress others or their resale ability (exchange value).

As Dino claim that Marx explains in *A Critique in Political Economy*, as long as the product is linked to its use-value, it remains easy. For example, when a piece of wood is made into a table by human labor, its use-value is noticeable, and the table's value as a commodity is bound to its material use. The table, on the other hand, "emerges as a product" and transforms into a thing that transcends sensuousness. As soon as the table is attached to money as the universal equivalent for trade, the attachment to the actual hands of the laborer is severed. People in a capitalist society begin to regard commodities as if their value came from the products themselves rather than from the amount of actual labor spent to create them (Dino par.1).

In a recent article, *Introduction To Karl Marx, Module On Fetishism*, Dino states that the enigmatic character of the commodity-form resides simply in the fact that the commodity represents the social characteristics of men's labor as objective characteristics of the labor commodities themselves, as the socio-natural properties of these objects, Marx states. Thus, what is, in fact, a social relation between capitalists and exploited laborers instead assumes "the fantastic form of a relation between things" (Dino par.1).

1.6. Types of Marxism

Many different types of Socialism and Communism resulted from Marxist thought, but several types of Marxism will be addressed in the following passage.

1.6.1. Classical Marxism

The initial theory, as conceived by Marx and Engels, it is a theoretical-practical framework that analyzes the conflicts between the powerful and the subordinate with self-emancipation of the working class as its objective.

1.6.2. Marxism-Leninism

During Joseph Stalin's (1878-1953) post-Lenin period in the Soviet Union, the Communist theoretical stream emerged as the mainstream tendency, loosely based on Marxist theory. It is mainly associated with Stalin, but the extent to which he has, in fact, followed the principles of Marx or Lenin is debatable.

1.6.3. Western Marxism

It is a concept that refers to a broad range of Marxist philosophies originating in Western and Central Europe (and, more recently, North America), as opposed to the Soviet Union's or the People's Republic of China's ideology. It was able to bring Marxism into the mainstream of European culture. Its supporters have been mainly professional scholars who consider Marx a philosopher rather than a revolutionary, stressing the Hegelian and humanist aspects of his thinking. The Hungarian György Lukács (1885 - 1971) and the German Karl Korsch were probably the most prominent (1886 - 1961) (L).

1.7. Marxism's and Feminism's Common Grounds

Marxism and feminism both focus on different types of systematic inequality that contributes to injustice for oppressed minorities. Marxism is concerned with a form of injustice that results from capitalism's class dynamics. In capitalist societies, it sees class inequality as the central axis of oppression. Feminism is concerned with a particular type of disparity: gender inequality. In patriarchal cultures, it also addresses gender inequality as the central axis of oppression. The Marxist feminist framework aims to liberate women by changing the conditions of inequality and abuse that they face. According to Engels's famous analysis of women's situation in the history of

different economic modes of production in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (1942):

Women are originally equal to, if not more powerful than, men in communal forms of production with matrilineal family organizations. Women lose power when private property comes into existence as a mode of production. Men's control of private property, and the ability thereby to generate a surplus, changes the family form to a patriarchal one where women, and often slaves, become the property of the father and husband. (Ferguson and Mechthild. Marxism)

Conclusion

To conclude, feminism is described as a set of movements and philosophies aimed at identifying, establishing, and defending women's equal political, economic, and social rights. Feminism comes in many forms, but they all revolve around women's oppression. Feminism can also be found in literature, where it refers to how literary works are perceived both during production and reception.

On the other hand, the Marxist approach created by Karl Marx, a social, political, and economic ideology. It examines how capitalism affects labor, production, and economic growth and proposes a worker revolution to overthrow capitalism and replace it with communism. According to Marxism, economic relations in a capitalist economy are defined by the struggle between social classes (specifically, the bourgeoisie, capitalists, and the proletariat, or workers). This struggle would eventually lead to revolutionary communism.

Chapter Two:
Contextualising Female Character in *Pride*
and Prejudice

Introduction

Jane Austen is one of the most well-known female novelists of the nineteenth century and the most feminist writer in English literature. She uses her works to express her opinions about women's roles and gender in society, especially among the middle and upper classes. So, we can notice that the majority of her books are about women in society. Marriage and male superiority in all aspects of life are significant themes in her novels. Furthermore, in *Pride and Prejudice*, Jane Austen addresses marriage as the only choice for women in the Victorian era by using her critical social attitudes.

In the first part of this chapter, we aim to present a critical account of Jane Austen's life, the main facts and events that happened during her lifetime, her family, her childhood. Also, her first attempts at writing and the difficulties she faced to publish her works. It also includes clear identification of the period she belongs to according to her language, writing style, and novels' subject matter.

In the second part, we will talk about the unfair position of women in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Also, this chapter will contextualise female character's issues, the effects of patriarchal culture and the limited rights of women reflected in the novel.

2.1.The Georgian Era

2.1.1. The Historical Context of Georgian Era

The Georgian Era, which began in 1714, was characterized by political and economic instability. It was also a time when women's rights became a subject of debate in England. Women were, nevertheless, vulnerable due to the economic and

legal restrictions imposed on them during this period. Men were successful in establishing restrictions prohibiting women from owning, gaining, or inheriting wealth. In terms of the law, marriage, and job, all women were at a disadvantage, regardless of their social status (Wojtczak 3). In light of these conditions, it appears that the law and norms were created to allow men to maintain control over women. Women struggled to earn money due to economic barriers, forcing them to rely on the idea of finding a husband.

During the Georgian Era, being educated and having a job was strictly reserved for men. In 1871, women were unable to sign their names due to poor literacy rates; instead, they had to write an X next to their names. The intelligence of women was regularly questioned, and they were often thought to be inferior to males. Doctors argued that women were incapable of critical thinking and that exposing them to education would harm their fertility. Furthermore, men view all intelligent women as threatening. As a result, practical training to refine women's household roles was frequently offered to them as a serious education (Wojtczak 7-8). Women were taught different kinds of studies than men, such as drawing, dancing, piano playing, and often French to attract husbands and run better households.

2.1.1. Marriage Concept in Georgian Era

Women were thought to be best suited for domestic chores and caring for their families during the Georgian Era. After reaching the age of consent for marriage, women began searching for husbands who would be legally obligated to provide them with a home and social status. Even though couples became engaged early on, marriages did not occur until they were in their mid-twenties.

According to Wojtczak, women were not considered respectable and responsible unless married; therefore, getting married was their only purpose in life. Women, especially middle-class women without an inheritance or an education who had few job opportunities, were under social pressure to marry (12). Nevertheless, husbands were legally allowed to inherit their wives' wealth when they marry. Women had a lower status than their husbands because they lacked legal rights.

Gaelic women had a unique legal position and property rights because they were not exposed to English common law. Husbands could also prevent his women from getting jobs, travelling freely, or seeing their children. Divorce was also rare throughout the Regency Era for a variety of reasons. It was a time-consuming and costly process, so most couples avoided it. While a husband simply had to prove his wife's infidelity to Parliament in order to get a separation, a wife had to prove infidelity and also serious offences. Women found it nearly impossible to seek divorce under these conditions. Divorce was not made legal in the United Kingdom until 1937 (Perkin 22-23). There was one single solution in order to escape from unhappy marriage, which is the death of one of them.

2.2.Jane Austen's Artistic Voice

In the south of England, Jane Austen was born in Steventon on December 16, 1775, where her father worked as a preacher for the rural community. She was the seventh of eight children in a close-knit family. Jane was very close to her sister her entire life since she was one of only two girls. Jane's schooling was insufficient by today's standards because of the indifference of the time. Jane's regular education was limited due to this, as well as Mr. Austen's meager salary. Mr. Austen tutored young

men to augment his salary as a rector. Staying close to home and listening in on these lessons is assumed to have helped Jane learn Latin (Myer16-38).

She began writing verses at the age of six. Jane learned needlework, dance, French, drawing, and spelling during her two-year stay at a small boarding school, all hoping to produce marriageable young women. Literary works. She never married herself, but she did receive at least one proposal and lived an active and peaceful life surrounded by her family, free of dramatic events (Myer16-38).

Austen started writing as a young girl and finished *Love and Friendship* by the age of fourteen. This early work, an amusing imitation of the famous overdramatic novels of that period, demonstrates her talent for satirical and humorous writing style. More than a century after her death, three volumes of her collected young writings were published.

When Jane Austen was in her early twenties, she wrote the novel *First Impressions*, which was published in 1796. It was initially only read by her family and friends. Still, after fifteen years of failed attempts to publish the book, it was approved and published as *Pride and Prejudice* because a different novel entitled *First Impressions* was published in 1800 (Le Faye178-200).

In Jane Austen's novel *Pride and Prejudice*, there was an examination of women's lives in the late 18th to the early 19th century. During this era, women had a minimal role in society and were expected to be obedient and naive. Their primary goal was to get married, have kids, and to keep a household for their husband. In the novel, the protagonist, Elizabeth Bennet, defied this concept by being the model of a perfect woman. She was intelligent and stubborn, but she ended up choosing the life of a 19th century wife. But, there did seem to be a message conveyed by Austen in this story.

During this period, women frequently deferred to men's decisions, regardless of their feelings. Despite being often viewed as inferior to their male colleagues, the women in *Pride and Prejudice* represented various characteristics to show how the ideal was not always the most desirable. Even though the novel begins with an anonymous figure of a wealthy, single man, it is undoubtedly about the misfortune of a poor, single woman.

2.3. The Status of Women in *Pride and Prejudice*

Jane Austen's book "*Pride and Prejudice*" presented women's lifestyle in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Women had a precise role in society during this period, were expected to be both obedient and innocent. The novel's imposition of entailment forced women to marry and look for a husband to ensure a better status. The novel plans on the position of women from different angles which we will address some of them.

2.3.1. Education

Nandana describes education in his article "*Emphasis on education in Jane Austen's novels*" as:

"The largest sense is any act or experience that has a formative effect on the mind, character or physical ability of an individual. In its technical sense, education is the process by which society deliberately transmits its accumulated knowledge, skills, and values from one generation to another"

(1)

Jane Austen was a supporter of education and reading, as she indicated in her heroine characters Elizabeth and Marry. On the other hand, learning to read is an

essential aspect of this education. In addition, the novel *"Pride and Prejudice"* concentrates on the concept of an educated woman and how her education allows her to play a significant role within society (Alili and Melik 43).

During the 19th century, women were not permitted to complete their education which means it was limited; for instance, Elizabeth Bennet, a brilliant woman with a pleasant personality. Having an active mind allows her to acquire her education freely by reading.

2.3.2. Woman and Marriage

At the very beginning of the novel, 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" (01). From the first utterances of Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, it was evident that marriage is the central issue of the novel, which is concerned with economic bases to provide social and financial stability. Moreover, David Owen declares in his book *Reading Between the Lines* that the opening lines of *Pride and Prejudice* gathers marriage as the central theme and irony as the tone in a romantic novel (72).

Marriage is the ultimate goal of most young girls because women have been generally limited to home and family, and females have little employment opportunity. Also, getting married was economic security within society. Consequently, married women had a special status and a decent position while unmarried women remained neglected and rejected. Lydia confirmed: "Ah, Jane, I take your place now, and you must go lower because I am a married woman" (Austen265). She meant that she is now secured by marriage, and she got a higher

social status. Also, Mrs. Bennet keeps pushing her daughter to marry, especially Elizabeth, to a man from a higher class because she is worried about their future.

Mary Wollstonecraft claims in her book *"Thoughts on the Education of Daughters"*: "so if a woman did not marry nor was from a wealthy family that could support her financially, she did not have an easy existence ahead of her"(110-112). Marriage during the 19th century has been related to the social status or class the woman belongs to which leads her to be domestic and oppressed.

2.3.3. Wealth

Mrs. Bennet, a character in Jane Austen's novel *Pride and Prejudice*, represents the impact of status and money on marriage than pure love, an instance from the novel: "Oh! Single, my dear, to be sure! A single man of large fortune; four or five thousand for a year. What a fine thing for our girls!" (Austen 06). She presses her daughters to marry wealthy men to ensure their future. Elizabeth knows that the mother's beliefs are entirely wrong and that the truth is to find real love; this can be seen in the following quotation: "Mr. Bennet had very often wished, before this period of his life, that, instead of spending his whole income, he had laid by an annual sum, for the better provision of his children, and of his wife, if she survived him" (Austen 336).

2.4. Gender Inequalities in the Novel

This section addresses the asymmetries between both men and women in the *Pride and Prejudice* novel. It includes social, economic, and education asymmetries

2.4.1. Social Asymmetry

a) Limitations of Women's Rights

At the beginning of the novel, Elizabeth does not have the liberty to reject any marriage proposal, and she had no freedom to choose her husband. In this novel, also many cases showed a social phenomenon at that period. For instance, if a woman travelled alone, it is judged to be inappropriate.

To walk three miles, or four miles, or five miles, or whatever it is, above her ankles in dirt, and alone, quite alone! What could she mean by it? It seems to me to show an abominable sort of conceited independence, a most country-town indifference to decorum (Austen 43).

The quotation above refers to Elizabeth going alone for a few miles to check on her sister's health and pay attention to her who is sick at Mr. Bingley's residence. She chooses to walk to Etherfield because the road is still wet from the previous night's heavy rain. As a result of the road splash, she arrives at Mr. Bingley's house in a messy dress. Mr. Bingley welcomes Elizabeth's arrival with politeness. Still, his sister, on the other hand, is judgmental of Elizabeth's behaviour, believing that a lady should not go alone and that it is unpleasant. Mr. Darcy attitudes differ from theirs; he was unconcerned about Elizabeth's willingness to travel five miles alone. Mr. Darcy is precisely prejudiced against Elizabeth when she appeared in nasty clothes. As a result, the limitation of women's rights is apparent here; whatever done by women is always ridiculed by men.

Elizabeth was really anxious to see her sister. The carriage was being used and she decided to walk. 'How silly you are!'

cried her mother...You will be covered with mud when you get there. You will not be fit to be seen...I shall be fit to see Jane – which is all I want. It is only three miles. I shall be back for dinner. ‘She went alone, quickly crossing field after field (Austen 24).

This quotation above can prove Elizabeth courage facing the conventional norms and that she can be compared with men. She attempts to do things that perhaps men are unusually ready to do. In this situation, Elizabeth is fighting by herself. She chose to walk because it is her limitless right.

2.4.2. Economic Asymmetry

Jane Austen portrays a society that is materialistic in nature and distracted with money and status. Due to the patriarchal system, Elizabeth is under the pressure of her mother to marry a wealthy man, whether she likes him or not. In the novel, we can notice that Longbourn's ladies seek to impress a wealthy guest in their area. Elizabeth's sister exemplifies this by attempting to attract Mr. Bingley's attention.

But the fact is, that being, as I am, to inherit this estate after the death of your honored father (who, however, may live many years longer), I could not satisfy myself without resolving to choose a wife from among his daughters, that the loss to them might be as little as possible, when the melancholy event takes place—which, however, as I have already said, may not be for several years (Austen 133).

Mr. Collins, who will inherit the estate from Mr. Bennet, is depicted in the quotation preceding. Mr. Collins is excited about the new property and social status

he will get. As a consequence, Mr. Bennet's wife fears that her daughters will be poor as a result of Mr. Bennet's failure to provide her with a legacy.

2.4.3. Education Asymmetry

This section will examine the obstacle of educational inequality over the gap between social statuses stratification in society.

Pride and Prejudice novel depicts the social stratification in British society at the period, highlighting the inequalities that exist between the upper and middle classes. When Lady Catherine is astonished to know that Elizabeth and her sisters grew up without a governess, it is believed that Elizabeth's family does not put a high importance on learning. The following quotation depicts this concern.

Then, who taught you? Who attended to you? Without a governess, you must have been neglected." "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 207).

Lady Catherine gets surprised to know about what is mentioned before. Lady Catherine questions Elizabeth about her family's education. This question drives Elizabeth to become quiet and pensive. Lady Catherine, who is from an upper class, depreciates Elizabeth's and her family's education because of their lower class.

In Mr. Bingley's residence, Elizabeth had a discussion with Mr. Darcy. Elizabeth embodies feminism, as proven by the conversation below. With Mr. Darcy, she has the same opportunity to argue or defend herself. Elizabeth is an excellent debater, and

her method of thinking is on an equal level with men at the time. They believe that the rate of women with a high level of education is low. Only the wealthy and noble families sent their daughters, while the majority of women educated themselves at home. Austen contends, "Every person, I believe, has some special fault of character which even the best education cannot entirely cure.", "And your fault is a tendency to hate everybody" (340).

2.4.4. The Female Character as a Commodity

The work illustrates people who rely on financial conditions to survive. In the nineteenth century, a family with a daughter would typically look for a wealthy man to marry her, so she will get a stable life and will be able to provide other family members with guaranteed life. For the sake of parent's and family member's happiness, parents in the nineteenth century considered their daughters as means to get the social and economic status they expected. Following that, male domination has a serious impact on women's social conditions in the twentieth century. Austen maintains, "You are very kind, I am sure; and I wish with all my heart it may prove so, for else they will be destitute enough. Things are settled so oddly". "You allude, perhaps, to the entail of this estate". She adds:

Ah! Sir, I do indeed. It is a grievous affair to my poor girls, you must confess. Not that I mean to find fault with YOU, for such things I know are all chance in this world. There is no knowing how estates will go when once they come to be entailed (80).

The quotation above is to Mrs. Bennet expression to Mr. Collins when they are discussing the future of her daughters and how the Bennet family's hereditary law

states that when she dies, Mr. Collins, who is also a relative of the Bennet family, will definitely inherit from them. According to the system of inheritance at the time, a family without male children is not required to leave property to their daughter.

These lines can mean and prove that the Bennet family would be dissatisfied if an inheritance law has to be implemented later. Mrs. Bennet is a materialistic woman who would do everything for the happiness of her girls. Therefore; she wishes to marry one of her daughters to Mr. Collins in the hopes of sharing the legacy that would otherwise go to Mr. Collins with her daughter. One can assume that Mrs. Bennet's children will be born as a kind of exchange against Mr. Collins, who will marry his daughter.

2.5.Feminism versus Patriarchy in *Pride and Prejudice*

Jane Austen shows women's status in the society of her period throughout *Pride and Prejudice*. The novel depicts the great inequality that women faced during that era. It tackles issues relating to limitations on women. Indeed, women have been exposed to discrimination and subjugation for a long time. Wollstonecraft after she examined women's history, she declared that:

She [woman] has always been either a slave or a despot, and to remark, that each of these situation equally retards the progress of reason. The grand source of female folly and vice has ever appeared to me to arise from narrowness of mind; and the very constitution of civil governments has put almost insuperable obstacles in the way to prevent the cultivation of the female understanding: yet virtue can be built on no other foundation!" (66).

The major reason for women's submission and subjugation is based on the myth, authorized by men, that woman is soft and has a weak productive capacity. Patriarchy is still present in most societies; the word originates from 'patriarch', meaning father. Patriarchy is a social construct that enables father figures to control ladies in the family as the word means 'male-dominated family'. Walby defines Patriarchy as a "system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women" (20). The practice of Patriarchy is seen regularly in *Pride and Prejudice*, mainly within the Bennet family.

In the novel, Mrs. Bennet is hopeless to get rich spouses for her five daughters; "The business of her life was to get her daughters married; its solace was visiting and news" (Austen 5). If she fails, her daughters could end up with no economic future to carry themselves as women were not qualified to have an estate or property at that time. This severe reality forced women to depend on their spouses. For example, Charlotte Lucas' satisfaction totally relies on her man, Mr. Collins, as only he can provide her with economic security and a higher social status. Women were seen as so weak by society that entailment law did not recognize them. Men were preventing women from succession and subjected them to abusive force by not giving them any rights. It is easy to abuse the weak, as it has always been.

Women are an object of desire in *Pride and Prejudice*, with males cherishing women for their physical features. Charlotte overhears Mr. Bingley frowning on the looks of women at the ball. It's strange to see even Mr. Bingley, who comes from a higher social class, discussing the importance of beauty. Mr. Bingley and Mr. Robinson's discussion is so open and indiscreet that all women in their area can hear it. Instead of being offended, they are celebrating Jane's achievement. While males

can judge women based on their appearance, women are unable to do so. In the novel, women's role is to attract males who are interested in them. Males appear to have many opportunities in the book, but women should compete for men.

Furthermore, the relevance of physical looks is further examined through Mary's portrayal, "who having, in consequence of being the only plain one in the family, worked hard for knowledge and accomplishments" (Austen 19). This augments the concept that a woman's appearances are important in all quests of marriage. If she suffers the misfortune of not being pretty or attractive, she has to offset it with knowledge. Moreover, physical beauty is also vital for Mr. Darcy; when he remarks on Elizabeth's eyes, he stated that the eyes of women could give a man great satisfaction. He thinks women's physical appearance serves the purpose of providing men ease as if women exist only to make men pleased.

Conclusion

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, women were suffering from unequal and unfair life. They were barred from doing any political, social and economic activities, and their only goal was to be housewives who take care of the home and children. At the time, women were under the control of the man who dominated all the domains in which he signifies the symbol of control.

The oppression of women and gender inequalities that happened during the Regency Era is reflected in *Pride and Prejudice*. Women strongly relied on marriage for financial stability due to their low educational and economic standing. As a result, marriage is a central theme in Austen's novel. As illustrated multiple times in *Pride and Prejudice*, women choose marriage for economic reasons rather than happiness or

love. The book depicts multiple kinds of marriages, but the reader is left with the feeling that a good marriage based on pure love is what everyone desires.

Chapter Three:

Contribution of Social Class System on

Female's Subjugation

Introduction

During the period that *Pride and Prejudice* is set, social class played a significant part in determining how people interacted with each other. A person's worth at the time was determined by whether or not they had wealth. Conventionally, men inherited estates, therefore women, especially those from lower social classes, had to rely on the men they married to make their wealth. This influenced how the novel's protagonists interacted with one another, as well as how their social positions influenced their interactions with lower-class characters, even when love was concerned. The value of social standing is demonstrated in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* through the lives of Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth, Mr. Collins and Lydia Bennet.

Jane Austen's book depicts a social context in which females are reduced to commodities for marriage due to their nature. Besides becoming governesses or getting married into wealth and status, women in Austen's world have few options for preserving themselves in society. Females had few employment opportunities, and becoming a governess was considered low. When there are no brothers or owners to the estate, as in Elizabeth Bennet's family, the family is forced to entrust their estate to a distant relative, Mr. Collins. Women suffer on many levels because of their gender, and marriage becomes a necessity for survival in Austen's strangling world of manners and class arrogance.

Yet, Elizabeth is a strong-willed protagonist who refuses both Mr. Collins' and Mr. Darcy's proposals because she does not believe in marrying for status or fortune, therefore it is a perfect scenario when she falls in love with Mr. Darcy, who owns a big estate and is well respected in society.

This chapter is an attempt to shed light on the novel's social class's role and its effects, and how marriage became a goal and a security shield to them. Also, it is an attempt to prove that social stratification contributes to the female subjugation. Moreover, it shows that the female characters after all this suffrage they began to find new ways to improve themselves and to change their standing in life.

3.1 The Role of Social Stratification

3.1.1 Marriage as a Security for Women of the Lower Social Class

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" (3); it is clear from the opening lines of the novel that the dominant theme is marriage. Austen was aware that women's opportunities in the nineteenth century were severely limited. She chose to write about marriage because that was the only task allowed to women at the time. Throughout the novel, Austen addresses the typical ideals of women of the time. She emphasizes the desperate need of lower-class women to marry for financial purposes. In contrast, Elizabeth wants to marry for love. Everyone else is determined to secure their social and economic future.

The practical strategy to marriage is shown by Charlotte Lucas in the book. She is a twenty-seven-year-old woman who has a separate perspective from Elizabeth concerning marriage. She does not expect much from her husband, regarding that her purpose is to get social status and stable economic life. Despite distinguishing that Mr. Collins suggested marrying Elizabeth before her and she rejected, Charlotte Lucas gladly accepts Mr. Collins' proposition. Knowing that Elizabeth is the primary option of Mr. Collins does not change her choice as marrying Mr. Collins is necessary for her to secure a fate that insures her richness and convenience,

Engaged to Mr. Collins! My dear Charlotte impossible! '... ' Why should you be surprised, my dear Eliza? Do you think it incredible that Mr. Collins should be able to procure any woman's good opinion, because he was not so happy as to succeed with you?'... 'I see what you are feeling,' replied Charlotte. 'You must be surprised, very much surprised—so lately as Mr. Collins was wishing to marry you. But when you have had time to think it over, I hope you will be satisfied with what I have done. I am not romantic, you know; I never was. I ask only a comfortable home; and considering Mr. Collins's character, connection, 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 157-158).

Charlotte's marriage is not really perfect, and that doesn't worry her as long as she has a secure financial future. Elizabeth believes that she could never marry for economic purposes. However, the reasons behind marrying are complex. Even Elizabeth will be impressed by Darcy's gorgeous property in the end. She is delighted at the opportunity of avoiding the inevitable fate of becoming an old maid.

Moreover, Charlotte Lucas is well aware that she is caught in a web of social standards. Rather than lamenting the fact that she is facing a loveless marriage; she is appreciating the comfort and advantages of marrying Mr. Collins. She understands the truth of her condition, and she realizes that marrying Mr. Collin is a wise decision that will ensure her decent life.

Mr. Collins is the legal inheritor of Mr. Bennet's property after his death, keeping his daughters at the mercy of their spouses. As a result, marriage is a must for

their survival. Marriage is the only way for them to have a stable life because they lack an education and employment chances. Mrs. Bennet's preoccupation with marrying off her daughters to wealthier men is justified, as she does not want her daughters to end up like her.

When looking at Mr. and Mrs. Bennet's marriage, it is clear that love is the sole factor that should be considered before marrying. If the partners do not really respect each other or are not compatible, a marriage might simply fall apart. In the instance of Mr. and Mrs. Bennet, it is both. Mr. Bennet marries Mrs. Bennet because she is attractive. Mr. Bennet was:

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 (179).

Therefore, the fall of Mr. and Mrs. Bennet's marriage is due to their differing perspectives on marriage. Mr. Bennet believes that marriage is built on a superficial attraction basis. Mrs. Bennet, on the other hand, like Charlotte Lucas, joined the marriage with Mr. Bennet for evident financial benefit. Additionally, Mr. Bennet is from a higher social class of society than his wife. Mrs. Bennet obtains a social lift through the marriage, while Mr. Bennet gains a nagging wife to spend his life. Mrs. Bennet's motivation for marriage is as shallow as Mr. Bennet's. Regardless of this, they are not the appropriate match for each other. Their marriage pictures the foolishness of rushing into marriage with offensive and shallow reasons.

Lydia, a secondary character, emphasizes the importance of a lady never considering eloping, mainly during the Regency Period. The legitimacy of the births

from such marriage may be questioned. If it was not, her reputation would be damaged, and her chances of finding a suitable husband would be shattered. For example, if Lydia marries another man and leaves Wickham, her son may not be entitled to property due to Lydia's damaged reputation.

Furthermore, if Wickham does not marry Lydia after eloping, the chances of any suitable man marrying her are limited. As a result, she will be unable to support herself after Mr. Bennet's death. Lydia's status will degrade her sister's chances for marriage. Lydia's elopement with Wickham causes shame and embarrassment to her family. Wickham's refusal to marry her will create an economic burden to the Bennets family.

4.1 Class Division and Its Effects in *Pride and Prejudice*

The book's social interactions, particularly marriage, are controlled by social class. The entire work is about marriage and the restrictions placed on it as a result of social stratification inequalities. During this period, men and women were allowed to marry within their social level. They will harm and risk their social status by marrying someone who is below their position.

Darcy is aware of his social status at the beginning of the novel. Mr. Darcy falls in love with Elizabeth in chapter ten. He resists falling in love with Elizabeth because she belongs to middle-class society. Mr. Darcy is the typical upper-class gentleman. He confesses that he is raised to “think meanly of all the rest of the world” (Austen455). His parents implanted in him the belief that because he is from the higher class, he is permitted to think less of others from inferior social classes.

Mr. Darcy is a character in Jane Austen's novel that is used to criticize the upper class for their arrogant behavior. Moreover, Miss Bingley becomes upset when she

discovers that Mr. Darcy is showing an interest in Elizabeth. Elizabeth's powerful personality makes her feel insecure. As a result, she utilizes the social class gap between Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth to prevent Elizabeth from marrying Mr. Darcy. She knows that she will never be able to contend Elizabeth's virtue and brilliance. Therefore, she utilizes the superiority of her class and continuously ridicules the Bennet sisters and their social conditions. Paradoxically, Miss Bingley sees herself superior to the Bennets when her "brother's fortune and their own had been acquired by trade" (Austen 12) and not from having a property.

Pride and prejudice is set at a time when social classes are not equivalent to wealth. Nevertheless, it is also not wholly different from wealth. Social class has traditionally been built on family heritage, not wealth or money. The landowners had the top hierarchy, and, through their pride, acquisitiveness, and disrespect for the lower class, they demonstrated the flaw of a dominant aristocracy. Nevertheless, they were culturally based, respected by law and public bodies, and ambitious to participate in the trade and industry world. As any group of men, being people of high moral principles, they were protective of their higher social status and conscious of the rights of others (Mingay 14-15).

Mr. Darcy is a part of the landed gentry or upper class. Landed gentry addresses people whose income is earned from their estates instead of working. Mr. Darcy's income comes from his Pemberley estate rather than from working. Furthermore, like Mr. Darcy, Mr. Bennet is a member of the landed gentry. He has a smaller estate in Longbourn that gains him about £2,000 each year.

Despite that Mr. Bennet is a landholder; he is not classified as a member of the upper class because of his wife social status. Social status was traditionally

decided through familial connections. Mrs. Bennet's father and brother are among the middle class, and she has inherited their class status.

Moreover, Austen indicates that Mr. Bingley is not a member of the landed gentry because his income comes from his trade rather than owning an estate. His father tries to buy a property before he dies, but he fails. Therefore, Mr. Bingley buys the estate at Netherfield. Mr. Darcy despises Elizabeth because of her mother's middle-class status, even though his close friend, Mr. Bingley, belongs to the same class. Mr. Bennet and his daughters are mistakenly regarded as middle-class members due to Mr. Darcy and Bingley's sister's comments.

In *Pride and Prejudice*, the antagonism between Elizabeth and Lady Catherine perfectly encapsulates the social division. When Lady Catherine hears about Mr. Darcy's proposal to Elizabeth, she is completely shocked. Elizabeth is from an inferior social class; thus, she thinks it is a disastrous match. Lady Catherine decides to visit Elizabeth after learning of the engagement. Elizabeth and her family are taken aback and feel disrespected as: “she entered the room with an air more than usually ungracious, made no other reply to Elizabeth’s salutation, than a slight inclination of the head, and sat down without saying a word” (Austen 266).

Lady Catherine appears to be careless about Elizabeth and her family. She also makes insulting remarks about their property. Nevertheless, after being criticized by Lady Catherine, Elizabeth responds confidently and with more elegance than she does. Ahearn declared, “Lady Catherine’s adherence to aristocratic norms is flagrant, and most extreme in her argument with Elizabeth. Her assumption that the assertion of noble prerogatives will win the argument is countered by Elizabeth’s self-assurance in being a “gentleman’s daughter” (33).

Lady Catherine's claim that Elizabeth is inappropriate for Mr. Darcy is based on her shallow aristocratic thoughts. She is a perfect representation of the aristocratic class. Nonetheless, she is opposed to Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy's engagement and intends for Mr. Darcy to marry someone from his class, namely her daughter. Mr. Darcy is also from an aristocratic family and has a considerable estate that annually gains him ten thousand pounds.

Mr. Bennet's earnings are little in contrast. Taking this into account, Lady Catherine visits Elizabeth and informs her that she must not marry Mr. Darcy. Although Elizabeth is a member of the landed aristocracy, Lady Catherine is disturbed about her mother's origins. As a result, Lady Catherine utilizes abuse to try to subjugate Elizabeth. Unlike everyone else who agrees to her rule, Elizabeth is annoyed by her arrogant behavior

The effect of class division on female goals in life is illustrated in the *Pride and Prejudice* society by examining different marriages between the novel's protagonists. Charlotte Lucas and Mr. Collins' marriage is a model of an unloving practical marriage whose primary objective is to give Miss Lucas and her family financial security in the future. Mr. Collins' purpose is to find an acceptable wife. As previously stated, most gentry women thought that marrying a socio-economically respected man is their only possible choice for survival.

Mr. Collins' social status as a preacher and his present conditions and expectations for future income makes him an ideal match for Miss Lucas. The primary ambition of the latter is to marry and start her private business. Miss Lucas expressed her satisfaction with their marriage, saying, " I am not a romantic'...'I ask only a comfortable home; and considering Mr. Collins's character, connection, and situation

in life, I am convinced that my chance of happiness with him is as fair as most people” (Austen 79). Miss Lucas's marriage eliminates the possibility of her being unmarried and relying on her family for the rest of her life.

On the other hand, Mr. Wickham and Lydia Bennet's marriage is an example of a repaired business marriage as a result of an elopement. Mr. Wickham sees marriage as a way to lift up social positions and obtain a fortune, considering that his income is based on his career as a military commander and he has no fortune of his own. Therefore, Mr. Wickham encourages Lydia to run away with him secretly to gain access to her money through charm and flirtation. However, Lydia's fortune is insufficient for Mr. Wickham, so he agrees to marry Lydia by conviction and bribe, protecting her from becoming wholly shameful and with no chances to marry at such a young age (Teachman 58). This behavior is not only against society's norms, but it is also “really too great a violation of decency, honour, and interest” (Austen 173).

As previously stated, if a woman misbehaved, it could harm her reputation and, thus, her sister's marriages chances and threaten the family name's position. Lydia's elopement is judged to be “proof of family weakness, such an assurance of the deepest disgrace” (Austen 170) and a “humiliation, the misery she was bringing on them all” (Austen 170). Luckily for Lydia, the bribe and the marriage to Mr. Wickham stop a shame in society and ruining her reputation.

The marriage of Jane, the eldest sister, to Mr. Bingley is an example of a marriage between different social classes. Jane is a member of the lower gentry and hence has a lower social status than Mr. Bingley, a member of the upper class. Jane and her family will be financially secure in the future as a result of the marriage. Mr. Bingley's social standing may be threatened by his marriage to Jane, a woman of inferior social

standing, putting him in a bad social situation. Jane, on the other hand, is well-mannered, competent, and attractive. These are the characteristics that promote her position and make her deserving Mr. Bingley's interest. Mr. Bingley does not care about his status, and their marriage is built on pure love.

Mr. Bingley “did admire her'...'it was equally evident that Jane was yielding to the preference which she had begun to entertain for him from the first, and was in a way to be very much in love” (Austen 12). Jane, on the other hand, is not the rational or appropriate wife for Mr. Bingley from a social class standpoint.

From a social class perspective, Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy's marriage may be seen as extraordinary or exceptional compared to Jane and Mr. Bingley's rare marriage based on love and affection. This marriage is grounded on love and affection. It was highly unusual for a man of Mr. Darcy's class to love and propose to a woman from the lower class. Mr. Darcy, a gentleman from the upper-class of English society, the eldest son and heir to an inherited title and wealth, has big expectations. He is expected to live and act according to particular social conventions for his socioeconomic class and marry a woman of suitable social status and wealth.

For the sake of Elizabeth's love, Mr. Darcy ignores these expectations and social standards, sacrificing his social status. Lady Catherine informs Elizabeth of the seriousness of the offence by saying: “Do you not consider that a connection with you must disgrace him in the eyes of everybody?” (Austen 221).

Additionally, Lady Catherine explains why a marriage between Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy is seen as offensive, declaring:

Because honor, decorum, prudence, nay, interest, forbid it. Yes, Miss Bennet, interest; for do not expect to be noticed by his family or friends, if you willfully act against the inclinations of all. You will be censured, slighted, and despised, by everyone connected to him (Austen 220).

Mr. Darcy, on the other hand, considers Elizabeth is a wonderful woman because of her accomplishments in integrity, morality, elegance, and social behavior. Because Elizabeth and Jane have a social grace that their family members lack, they can suit higher social classes.

4.2 The Protagonist's Opposition to the Living System

In the nineteenth century of British society, it is not explicitly described how the forms of opposition used by women reconstruct the living systems that men have controlled. Streams outline what causes the subjugation of women over the years, how it starts, and the goals of an equal society that no longer exists and unfair treatment among the two sides.

According to the description in the preceding paragraph, one can observe and comprehend the main character's way of thinking, behaviors, and actions in order to locate forms of resistance that Elizabeth implements in response to discriminatory practices she gets over time as a result of men's dominance. Austen narrates,

Upon my word, sir, 'cried Elizabeth, your hope is a rather extraordinary one after my declaration. I 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 could make you so. Nay were your friend Lady Catherine to know me, I am persuaded she would find me in every respect ill qualified for the situation. (134).

The passage above is about Elizabeth, and it depicts the various images that society has of women and the expectations that society has of them. Women are portrayed as seeking wealthy and noblemen in order to be happy in their life. Elizabeth takes the risk of rejecting Mr. Collins, her father's heir. Due to the legal heir who organizes the inherited money, sons or brothers will inherit it. Therefore, she will be financially satisfied if she accepts Mr. Collins' proposal. Elizabeth is unconcerned about this; she has no feelings for Mr. Collins.

4.3 Woman Shifting the View of Society

People lived in a materialistic society in the 19th century of British society. Therefore, parents used their daughters as a way to reach happiness. So, parents believed that marriage is a suitable method of accomplishing a goal; this is linked to parents' role to look to their daughters for wealthy and honorable men. Therefore, these parents wanted to marry a great person to their daughters to be truly happy.

Pride and Prejudice novel depicts society's life. Parents have a strong desire for their children to marry a wealthy person. As a result, Elizabeth Bennet, the novel's principal character, affects society's opinion. Elizabeth is consciously changing society's perceptions, particularly that of the parents. Marriage is not a suitable strategy to improve one's social standing. The following quotation supports this notion, "I never considered the distance as the reason for a wedding, _said Elizabeth.'

I would never say that Mrs. Collins took the decision because he would live adjacent to the family” (Austen 264).

Elizabeth hopes to find a mate with significant wealth who can secure and ensure her future. As a result, women will be unaffected by long-distance relationships. Furthermore, the parents always push their daughter to marry a man of high social standing, because obtaining fortune will become a primary goal. Consequently, Elizabeth challenges society’s view that marrying a man from a high social rank and with high revenue assures happiness.

Conclusion

By displaying the conflicts between characters such as Elizabeth, Mr. Darcy, and Lady Catherine, Austen portrays the reality and distinction between the upper and middle classes. Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy's relationship is impacted by social stratification. Characters such as Lady Catherine and Miss Bingley try but ultimately fail to keep Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth apart by relying on their social class superiority.

As illustrated multiple times in *Pride and Prejudice*, women choose marriage for financial purposes rather than happiness or love. The book depicts various types of marriages, but the readers feel that a successful marriage based on pure love is what everyone desires. For her, Elizabeth opposes marriage since she recognizes it as a socially created concept of happiness. She prefers to wait for love rather than marry for the sake of economic advantages, even if it means remaining single.

Moreover, in the novel Austen demonstrates that subjugation and discrimination based only on status or gender are not characteristics of civilized people. That's why she depicted her heroine as being clear from that negative influence. She also depicted

a marriage built on love and affection in order to emphasize the importance of having a positive attitude about marriage.

General Conclusion

In the late eighteenth and beginning of nineteenth centuries, women struggled for basic rights and freedom. *Pride and Prejudice* reflects the subjugation of women and the gender inequality that existed during the time. Also, she tries to reflect the reality and difference between the middle class and upper class and its effect on female characters.

The dissertation has tried to explain how Jane Austen portrayed women subjugation in the novel *Pride and Prejudice*, by focusing on female characters to depict their pain and the destructive effects of abiding stereotypical gender roles. The novel shows how the social class and status contribute to women subjugation, and how women use marriage as security mean to guarantee their future, and to ascend their social status.

This research has aimed to answer the major question: How does Jane Austen portray women in *Pride and Prejudice* and how does social stratification contribute to the female character's subjugation? The study has proven that the novel did not only addressed women's oppression by men, but also the contribution of social division, social status in female characters' submission.

On the other hand, this thesis has portayed the feminist issues, gender asymmetries, and female status reflected in *Pride and Prejudice*. Moreover, it portrayed social class role as one of causatives of female character's subjugation, and how marriage and status became essential determinants of life rather than finding the right partner. Also, the novel's protagonist is trying to break the conventional social norms by changing society's view and finding the right men to be happy. Austen implies that love can break the obstacle of social hierarchy. Despite some

disagreement and clashing beliefs, the two protagonist characters are able to break the social class barrier and find the true love and happiness.

المخلص

يركز هذا البحث على التقسيم الطبقي الاجتماعي الذي ينعكس في كبرياء وتحامل للكاتبة جاين أوستن وتأثيره على تقديم الشخصية الأنثوية. ويهدف إلى وصف كيف أثرت الطبقات الاجتماعية في الرواية على الشخصيات النسائية. كما أنه يحدد طبيعة تلك الشخصيات النسائية والطريقة التي كن خاضعين بها اجتماعيا وكيف أنهن حاولن الصعود إلى مكانة اجتماعية أعلى من مكانتهن بالزواج من أشخاص من طبقة أعلى. تستخدم الدراسة النهج النسوي الذي يدعم ويدعو إلى المساواة بين الجنسين والنهج الماركسي الذي يركز على الصراع بين الطبقات الاجتماعية. هذا البحث ينتمي إلى البحث النوعي. سيستخدم الأخير المصادر والمراجعات الأدبية ذات الصلة بمجال البحث هذا. أيضا، هذه الدراسة تستخدم أسلوب الجدول. مصادر البيانات هي مصادر البيانات الأولية و الثانوية. ستشمل مصادر البيانات الأولية قراءة شاملة لكتاب جاين أوستن كبرياء وتحامل وقراءة مكثفة تتعلق بسيرة المؤلف لفهم الظروف المحيطة عندما كتبت هذه الرواية. مصادر البيانات الثانوية، وهي المادة التاريخية التي ستساعد الباحثة في تطوير تفسيرات قيمة وحاسمة حول النسوية والطبقة الاجتماعية. سيتم دعم النتائج المذكورة مسبقاً بمقالات وكتب ومقالات وأطروحات موثوقة لإعطاء نتائج بحثية موثوقة. أخيراً، تؤكد هذه الدراسة على أهمية عمل جاين أوستن من خلال إظهار أن المجتمع الذي كتب فيه كبرياء وتحامل لا يزال يتميز بتباينات اجتماعية كبيرة بين الذكور والإناث.

كلمات مفتاحية: الإناث ، التقسيم الطبقي ، النسوية ، الطبقة الاجتماعية ، التقسيم الطبقي الاجتماعي

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