

**Západočeská univerzita v Plzni**

**Fakulta pedagogická**

**Katedra anglického jazyka**

**Bakalářská práce**

**Manželství v novelách Jane Austen**

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**Undergraduate Thesis**  
**Marriage in the novels of Jane Austen**

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Tato stránka bude ve svázané práci Váš původní formulář *Zadání bakalářské práce* (k vyzvednutí u sekretářky KAN).

Prohlašuji, že jsem práci vypracovala samostatně s použitím uvedené literatury a zdrojů informací.

*V Plzni dne*

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Jméno Příjmení

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to doc. Justin Quinn, PH.D. for his help, guidance and patience while writing this thesis. I would also like to thank my family and friends for their encouragement.

## ABSTRACT

This thesis will focus on the concept of marriage in the novels of Jane Austen. It will search for differences in how the characters see marriage, how they pursue it and what their reasons for finding husband/wife are. This thesis will also go through the different types and approaches to marriage; like marriage as a social obligation, marriage for love and marriage by necessity. The first chapter will provide a general overview of the historical period of the novels, how the Regency Era viewed marriage in general and whether the love had any part in the matter. The thesis will end with a short conclusion describing the results of Austen's view of marriage and its implications.

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## Introduction

The Regency Era was a time of great change. War was raging: King George III surrendered his throne to his son and the Prince Regent initiated a new epoch. It was a time of advancement and cultural boom, but also of unrest and even greater division between social classes. The difference between rich and poor was enormous. It was an era of architectonic conquests and birth of many great writers, poets and artists. We could mention several names like Lord Byron, John Nash, Lady Hamilton, John Keats and Sir Walter Scott. It was also the time of Jane Austen and her novels. This was the key period of Jane Austen's life and also provided the basis of all her novels, stories and juvenilia. This society, which was so well described in her work, influenced her writing the most. Austen was a part of the gentry and she spent her whole life in this society. It was driven by strict rules and etiquette, by prejudices and reservations.

Some of the following questions are central to this thesis: what was the role of women in marriage? How did courtship function and what were the customs and rules while courting a woman? Did the concept of marriage in Austen's novels differ from the concept of contemporaneous society? What was part concept of marriage in Austen's novels? Without answers to these questions and others it was impossible to create an integrated image of Austen's background and novels.

The purpose of this work is to answer these and other questions concerning the Regency Era, Austen's background and her society. We will also look into the historical sources and discover what the Regency Era was like in more detail and social rules for courtship and marriage

The first chapter explores historical background and will discuss the state of Britain during the Regency Period. We will learn about social background, the Marriage act, reasons for marriage, and rules of courtship, love and marriage itself. We will discuss marriage as a formal contract between two people forming a material connection rather than an emotional bond as it is seen nowadays. The position of women within marriage will also be mentioned.

The second and third chapters will focus on two individual novels - *Pride and Prejudice* and *Sense and Sensibility*. We will explore how marriage is treated in these novels. While other novels will be mentioned throughout these chapters as well, but won't be so prominent.



The last chapter will focus on comparison and conclusion from the preceding analyses. We will compare the differences between novels and historical facts about society and marriage structure. We will distinguish where they differed and where they were similar. We will compare the views on how the marriage was supposed to look like in the eyes of society and the given time period and how these views were translated in the novels.

## Chapter 1

### 1.1. Historical and social background of Jane Austen's novels

To understand Jane Austen's idea of marriage we first need to understand the historical and social background of the novels. In what state was the society in at the end of 18<sup>th</sup> century? What did the term 'marriage' mean and was love a part of it as well? What was the importance of courtship and status in marriage? What was the position of women in contemporary society? Those are the important issues for our study of the period at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of nineteenth century.

At this time, there was an extensive social movement created by the technological boom of Industrial Revolution. There was an increasing population movement from countryside to growing cities. New steam-based factories were created and therefore decreased the traditional home-based production industry. Water power was immensely improved and the fuels changed from wood to coal. The Industrial Revolution was an important turning point in history and to some degree changed the lives of all people. According to Kenneth O'Morgan (2009), "the period which in retrospect seems to have provided the platform for industrial take-off was widely regarded at the time as one of worrying recession, and continues to present problems of evaluation..."(p.374). So even though the Industrial Revolution brought much good it also created many complications. For example, due to high factory production agriculture suffered a major blow and many people became unemployed and discontented. Despite these negative aspects it improved several areas, for instance, food prices and transport.

Even though Britain was in many great disputes and wars throughout this short period, Jane Austen's novels showed very little interest in revolution or war itself. From the end of 18<sup>th</sup> to beginning of 19<sup>th</sup> century England was in a constant state of war accompanied by general unrest, criminality and other disturbances. Jane Austen not only lived but also wrote throughout this whole time and still there is no real evidence of any of these events. The only mentions were in *Persuasion*, where the main character Frederick Wentworth becomes a wealthy captain due to his victories in Napoleonic wars. Yet, that is very little for a person who lived through most of the war.

### 1.1.1 The Impact of the Industrial Revolution on families and marriage

The Industrial Revolution entirely altered the role of traditional family and marriage of labouring classes. Marriage outside one's social group was quite uncommon. A tailor's daughter would marry the son of other tailor and so on. Couples did not marry until they obtained the required skills to be self-sufficient. During the Industrial Revolution this approach significantly changed. One of the main reasons for this shift was an alteration of the family unit. In the preindustrial period families were nuclear, working for economic prosperity and survival. The father as a head of the household would practice his artisan work, the wife would take care of their family and sell their products and children would be either trained in family craft or provide house chores. There was an equal contribution to this patriarchal unit and everyone had strictly defined roles. This changed dramatically with the establishment of factories and mechanization. Agriculture and small craftsmen received a major blow and many families were forced to work in factories. Thus, family units were broken and every member except children had to work on factory lines with very small wages and under hard conditions. This system was cruel, especially towards women. They worked in low positions with lesser pay than men. They had to work for about 14 hours a day and after work, they were supposed to take care of their family and house as well. Their previous roles within their simple family units were abolished and new sets of rules came in place. Many young women moved away from their families to the cities to work in the factories. Some did it to save money for their marriage and some to find a possible husband far away from the eyes of their protective fathers. Traditional marriages transformed to more sociable unions. Men and women usually married someone from among the people they met within their work places, boarding houses and other places of occupation. These types of marriage became regular in this period.

Marriage for middle-class women did not change so much. Families sought economic prosperity or a higher status. Therefore marriages were established according to its benefit. Families in distress tried to secure a higher level of stability. Families married their children to gain new connections and business opportunities. The Industrial Revolution only extended these opportunities and added a variety of new ones.

## 1.2. The Regency Era

The Regency era was a period between 1811 and 1820. It was a short transition stage between the Georgian and Pre-Victorian eras. It was the starting point which brought England under the Regency, to which was appointed his son the Prince of Wales

The Prince Regent had an extravagant lifestyle; he was a heavy drinker and notorious gambler. He was also a womanizer and due to many of his escapades, his name and trustworthiness received a serious blow. Deeply in debt and spending most of his money on building projects and luxurious parties, he ran out of finances quite soon.

In 1820 The Prince Regent became King George IV. His wife Caroline returned from seclusion and tried to claim her right on becoming a Queen. King George disagreed with that and wanted their marriage annulled. This brought many demonstrations and unrest against the new king. All ended after Caroline's unexpected death in 1821. King George IV ruled only another 9 years.

Overall the Regency Era is a period of great political and social change. Despite the constant Napoleonic wars, bloodshed and despair, there were many cultural achievements and the social structure was improved. Population greatly increased and especially higher class thrived. The gap between low, middle and upper class widened rapidly. Many great writers, poets and artists emerged, making the cultural scene flourish. Fashion and social habits of higher society was also changing. Many of these changes were described in Jane Austen's novels, showing the impact it had on all social classes.

King George IV was a great fan on Austen's work and after she finished her novel *Emma*, he gave her 'a permission' to dedicate it to him. Jane Austen disliked the King but was unable to say no. Therefore she showed her discontent in her written dedication: "To His Royal Highness the Prince Regent, this work is, by His Royal Highness's permission, most respectfully dedicated to His Royal Highness by His dutiful and obedient humble servant, the Author" (Austen, 2005).

## 1.3. Courtship and Marriage

### 1.3.1 The Marriage Act and its requirements, dissolvent of marriage

This act was the first official statutory legislation in England and Wales, which described the requirements for establishing a formal marriage. It came into force on 25

March 1754. It was called: “An Act for the Better Preventing of Clandestine Marriage” but it was more likely known as “Lord Hardwicke’s Marriage Act”. This act changed many requirements for establishing marriage.

Before the Act, the only requirement for establishing marriage was prescribed by Canon Law of the Church of England. Banns and marriage licenses were supposed to be obtained and the ceremony itself should be performed in the place where one of the partners lived. Many of those were guidelines, not requirements: therefore they did not all have to be fulfilled for a marriage to be deemed valid. This created many problems.

It changed many things. The existing requirements became mandatory. It required parental consent if the person marrying was under the age of 21. The only way to make a marriage valid was for people to obey these requirements: it had to be performed in a church, banns had to be published and a license obtained. The marriage Banns were supposed to be read on Holy days during the service. It also stated that this Act had no relevance overseas or in Scotland.

Another important matter of Marriage Act and marriage in general was a dissolvent of marriage. Marriage could be cancelled only by three methods. It was divorce, annulment or death. In the Regency Era it was an arduous process. The only way to annul a marriage was if they were too young to marry, if one of the married couple was a minor and did not receive a proper permission from their parent or a legal guardian and if one of them already had a husband/wife. Divorce was also possible if one of the couple was impotent or unable to reproduce or bear children. Another important thing with respect to divorce was that the only one who could apply for it was a man and it had to be because of adultery. The only way a woman could claim divorce was because of incestuous adultery.

### 1.3.2 Courtship and wedding

"It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife." (ch.1)

This opening sentence of Austen’s (2008) *Pride and Prejudice* could summarize the pursuit of women and men throughout the Regency period. The so-called hunt for a husband was important, especially if you were born into the upper class. Parents were willing to invest enormous amounts of money so their children have a higher chance to find or charm their potential husband. The hardest challenge of every unmarried woman was the whole process of courtship and finding a suitable and wealthy spouse. This process

was different from what we know and practice nowadays. There was a strict code of conduct that women and men had to obey. A woman could not openly admit that her main goal was to find a husband and marry. This was men's work. He was supposed to court a woman, try to seduce and woo her. Such conduct was to protect women and their reputation and prevent men from being taken or 'caught' against their will.

Courtship manners of the Regency Period were well described in Ross' (2006) *Jane Austen's Guide to Good Manners: Compliments, Charades & Horrible Blunders*. After two people were attracted to one another there was another series of restrictions that both parties had to honour. Thus courtship was very difficult. For example, the couple could not call each other by their given name. They could not be left alone in one room without the presence of chaperone nor could they touch in any way or dance more than two sets. A handshake was also included therefore couple could only nod their head or bow when greeting and saying goodbye. Couples could stay behind a little further from others to at least talk more privately, but still there had to be supervision. They could hold each other's hand while wearing gloves and dancing. Couples also couldn't exchange any gifts. This is the reason why women in Regency Era had to pay attention to the details of their dress and participate in every possible assembly or a ball. Charming one another was very external and strongest factors were always the first impression, beauty and charm or ability to show intelligence and wits while talking to one another.

According to Goddard's (2012) *Marriage and Courtship* engagement progressed as follows: After a successful courtship another stage in their relationship would come. When the man was certain that he wanted to pursue a marriage he officially asked the parents or legal guardians for permission to marry the woman. If the parents agreed a proposal would be arranged and woman could say yes or no. In most cases it was yes, women had not that much of a choice in this matter. Finding a suitable husband who was also interested in marriage was an accomplishment on its own, not many would decline such an offer.

If woman agreed to marry her suitor, she had to obtain all the requirements already stated in the section of Marriage Act. Wedding usually followed soon after. Regency weddings were very private occasions following their own customs and regulations.

Invitations were usually written individually to every invitee or people that were supposed to know about it even if they could not attend. It was not a printed letter sent collectively to all attending people like nowadays.

Ceremonies were very simple and silent events. They were generally held in a local church. Usually only the closest family was in attendance as well as clergymen and parish. When the ceremony was over, the married couple would sign their names in the registry.

The importance of wedding ring was best described by Edward J. Wood (1869): “...a ring is absolutely necessary in a Church-of-England marriage; it may be of any metal, and of any size.”

Similar importance is given into the wedding gown. The bride could choose any colour she liked. There was no doubt about bride’s chastity by not wearing a white dress; colour was only a matter of personal preference.

The last thing that remained was honeymoon. Of course, only if the couple had enough money. After leaving the church bride threw her shoe for good luck and new period of her live could begin.

Overall attitudes toward marriage were quite straightforward. For women, it was understood as destiny. From the start, women were led to the idea of marriage, wealthy husbands and higher living standards. At the end of 18<sup>th</sup> century the average age for the first marriage was 26 for women and only 2 years more for men. At the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the age of marriage for women dropped slightly but it never crossed 22 years. Therefore it was a natural order, when women came of age, marriage and search for husband became their main focus. For men marriage was viewed as a social prerogative or a duty. As written in *Coverture* (2015), a legal doctrine enshrined in common law, by marrying and claiming a wife for himself he was able to possess all her propriety. A woman was also unable to sell or buy anything and she had no legal identity. There was also another reason for marriage. In this period women outnumbered men and therefore viewed marriage as a necessity to insure her livelihood. Also, staying single was seen as disgraceful. Usually when a woman turned thirty, she was called an old maid. Marriage was viewed as an obligation and necessity. It was a social placement, no matter whether it was down or up. It was a contract establish on many different foundations and for many different reasons. Most of these reasons were practical rather than sentimental and emotional; it provided stability and security as well as possible connections, wealth and status.

### 1.3.3 Reasons for marriage and love

The reasons for marriage in the Georgian Era according to Gillis (1985): “the most important moment in [an individual’s] life cycle” (p.6), were different from now.

Marriage was a contract and its significance resulted from cultural expectations that viewed marriage as a social and family duty (McMillen, 2012). Therefore reasons for such a contract were mainly practical and involved personal status, money and property. It also took into consideration business opportunities and access to new trade routes that came with it. Other reasons were more about women’s rights, which were described under the Common Law of England and the legal doctrine of Coverture.

For any woman living in the Regency Era, marriage was the only option as they could not own any of their own wealth or lands. They were ‘owned’ by their father and until they married off, they had no access to their fortune. Until then, money was kept in trust for them. After marrying they would become a lady of the house, finally able to take care of themselves, making the decisions about their lives and money. This was viewed as a major advantage for many women.

Another major reason, probably the most common, was money. In one of her letters, Austen wrote: “Single women have a dreadful propensity for being poor, which is one very strong argument in favour of matrimony” (Austen, 1816). In Austen’s time women could hardly live an independent life without a father or a husband. Women could not work and earn their own money; therefore the only way to obtain funds was through marriage or inheritance. But inheritance was very unlikely; usually it was always the first son, who inherited the family’s money. A woman could inherit it only if she had no brother. Men would also choose their wife according to the dowry and propriety she and consequently he would inherit after the marriage. After all, marriage was viewed as a contract, bringing access to money and property to both of the parties.

Another reason for marriage was status. Women desired higher positions, and other advantages that naturally came with it. Of course same was true of men, as they tried to woo wealthy widows or young and naïve ladies from good families to get to their fortune. For the middle-class it was normal to marry in their own circles being very careful whether their husband or wife has the same status and level of influence and money, so the family would not sink lower in the status and power.

In the early 18<sup>th</sup> century Britain and in all the places around the Europe, arranged marriages were quite common. Only at the beginning of 19th century in the Pre-Victorian



Era, were the idealistic views of romantic love and love marriage introduced. Prior to that, marriages were arranged by daughters' fathers and guardians commonly for practical reasons. The concept of love matches changed their nature from practical into something more sentimental.

So, when did the love so thoroughly described by many romantic writers and poets come into the equation? In many cases, never. There were very few people that married for affection or love. No one could afford such a luxury. Mostly, the reasons for marriage in this Era were economic, yet there had to be something missing in such a companionship. Men were seeking mistresses and women were in many cases unhappy or they just did not know any better. Perhaps they had no other choice. Many people also mistook desire or attraction for love.

#### 1.3.4 Role and position of women during the Regency Era

Women had a very complicated position in this society. The only relevant economical unit in marriage was the wife's husband. Men also inherited everything the wife had before the marriage, including her fortune and land. The only way for her to own land was through her father from whom she rarely inherited it. This was thoroughly described under the Common Law of England and even further under the legal doctrine of Coverture. Coverture itself defined a woman's legal condition during marriage as covered by her husband (Albow, ch.3). It was abolished mid-to-late 19<sup>th</sup> century with the Married Women's Propriety Act (1874).

Many women were less educated. By spending most of their teenage years by searching for husband, there was little time for taking classes and studying any higher education. Even if they would like to educate themselves, it was impossible. Universities were closed to women; therefore no higher education could be achieved. Of course, some parents paid for their education and classes, where they were taught to sew and other handcrafts. Middle-class girls were also coached in 'accomplishments', which were taught mostly at boarding schools or governess. These skills are also listed by Caroline Bingley in *Pride and Prejudice* (2008d) and are referred to as skills required by any lady, who considers herself accomplished: "...must have a thorough knowledge of music, singing, drawing, dancing, and the modern languages, to deserve the word; and besides all this, she must possess a certain something in her air and manner of walking, the tone of her voice, her address and expressions" (ch.8). Many women were usually uneducated in the matters

of politics, economics and other knowledge that was throughout more befitting for a man. Women could not work; their main purpose was staying home and taking care of children and their residence.

These conditions were what primarily made many women rebel. At the beginning of the nineteenth century women's acceptance of these traditional rules and positions started to crumble. They started to protest and attend political speeches. These protests were mainly driven by lower and middle class. Lot of women also became members of women's right movements. (Sailus, 2003) Overall the 19<sup>th</sup> century was a transition step for women's rights. In 1870 and 1874 The Married Women's Property Act allowed women to own property and money. In 1869 it became legal for women to vote. Those were the few events that led women to better equality, which was very poor throughout the Regency Era.

## Chapter 2

### Marriage in *Pride and Prejudice*

#### 2.1. Courtship in *Pride and Prejudice*

Courtship is one of the most prominent and recurring themes of this novel. In *Pride and Prejudice* courtship is mainly described through the eyes of young Bennet sisters, mainly by Jane and Elizabeth Bennet. This theme is established from the outset of this novel. "It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife" (ch.1). This sentence not only establishes the two main themes of this novel: marriage and courtship, but also shows a rather ironic and humorous approach to marriage and how it was viewed by 18<sup>th</sup> century society. Courtship was the main tool for achieving the individual's goals, which were in this novel marriage. There are several additional courtships in *Pride and Prejudice* best described by Monaghan (1980):

Mr. Collins is rejected by Elizabeth; Wickham tries to elope with Georgiana Darcy, pays attention to Miss King, and becomes briefly involved with Elizabeth; Elizabeth and Colonel Fitzwilliam are prevented from pursuing a mutual attraction by financial considerations; Darcy is involved with Caroline Bingley and, at least in Lady Catherine de Bourgh's mind, is the suitor of Anne de Bourgh. (p.64)

The instigator of courtship in this novel is Mrs. Bennet, whose goal is to find proper husbands or suitors for all her daughters. To this end she invited Mr. Bingley to a ball which they attend. She immediately forces her husband to introduce their daughters to him, not caring about their well-being or whether they are truly in love with the men they have to marry. This can be clearly seen, when Jane visits Netherfield and becomes ill. Mrs. Bennet doesn't care about her health; on the contrary, she sees it as an opportunity for Jane to court Mr. Bingley, hoping her illness will make them closer. "Oh! I am not afraid of her dying. People do not die of little trifling colds. She will be taken good care of. As long as she stays there, it is all very well" (ch.7). She also tries to force Elizabeth to marry Mr. Collins, even though she knows she doesn't fancy him. Mrs. Bennet's opinions and views on marriage are quite visible and to some extent influence all her daughters as well.

Austen's description of courtship in *Pride and Prejudice* is very authentic to the middle-class courtship of 18<sup>th</sup> century society, where people usually met at public events and balls to find possible husbands or wives. According to Brown (1979) "Every social event is important in affecting the attachments that will result and in forwarding the heroine's education in proper selection... selecting a mate was an arena in which women's whole future was decided" (p.77). Therefore attending balls was essential for every young woman, for these occasions enabled the bonds of courtship.

## 2.2. Marriage Proposals

Successful courtship inevitably led to a marriage proposal that also followed certain protocols and requirements. In Austen's novels the proposals were taken seriously. If man decided to pursue a woman he had to ask her father for permission first. Woman's consent was of secondary importance. In *Pride and Prejudice* this rule is not applied properly. Due to Mr. Bennet's disinterest and lack of patriarchal leadership over his family, Elizabeth is allowed to refuse Mr. Collins even though he already received permission from her family first. There are several marriage proposals in this novel. At first both Mr. Collins and Mr. Darcy are declined by Elizabeth, which astonishes them immensely. Mr. Collins even tries to propose several times; he is refused each time. This refusal is due to his unpleasant personality and his views of marriage. Mr. Collins does not see marriage as emotional notion; he sees it as a contract or a duty. Once he acquired a house and satisfactory income to maintain himself his second logical step is to marry. Throughout the novel he is portrayed as "not a sensible man" with the "self-conceit of a weak head" (ch.15). Overall he is depicted unfavourably. His cold approach justifies Elizabeth's refusal. The same applies for Mr. Darcy's first proposal. Even though he loves Elizabeth, he is too proud to say it and spends most of the time reminding Elizabeth her low status and his superiority, which is one of the reasons for her refusal. "His sense of her inferiority—of its being a degradation—of the family obstacles which had always opposed to inclination, were dwelt on with a warmth which seemed due to the consequence he was wounding, but was very unlikely to recommend his suit" (ch.34). Another reason for Elizabeth's refusal is lack of emotions in the proposal. As Monaghan (1980) states: "Elizabeth is not conscious of any feelings other than dislike and, since his proposal is phrased in a condescending and almost unwilling way that proves he has not overcome his original prejudices" (p.89). This revelation and refusal of Darcy's proposal leads the couple to the most desperate and also

the hardest point of their relationship. This view is supported by Flavin (2004) who wrote in his *Jane Austen in the Classroom: Viewing the Novel/ Reading the Film*: “After the marriage proposal, the characters appear to be at the point of greatest separation” (p.59). Both Mr. Collins’ and Mr. Darcy’s unsuccessful proposals encourage us to think that any proposal based on reason without love will result in rejection, and conversely proposals made out of love are accepted, as in cases of Mr. Bingley and the second attempt of Mr. Darcy.

Once marriage is arranged and contrived it is irreversible. A woman cannot obtain a divorce and man can only divorce due to some extreme circumstances, in many cases leading to public disgrace. There is in *Mansfield Park* a case of divorce, when Mr. Rushworth divorces his wife Maria for adultery, but this act is portrayed as scandalous and it is even published in newspapers. Mr. Bennet is described as regretting his choice of Mrs. Bennet. Austen remarks that he married her for her beauty and therefore it was a marriage for physical attraction and not love.

There is no reversing it. The choices that Austen’s characters make are absolute and there is no possibility to take them back. In *Pride and Prejudice* we can clearly see author’s opinion on marriage for love and happiness and marriage for money and status and its reflection on acceptance or refusal of marriage proposals.

### 2.3. Importance of class in marriage

Class in *Pride and Prejudice* plays a significant role. It is the main reason for many conflicts and courtship problems throughout the whole story. This is supported by Paris (1978) who claims: “It is true, as many critics have observed, that *Pride and Prejudice* evokes a vision of society as governed by the values of the marketplace. Human relations and especially the marriage relation, are threatened by an excessive emphasis upon money and status” (p.104). Class is also closely related to reputation and the importance of certain characters in comparison to others. Through the characters of Caroline Bingley and Mrs. Hurst, Austen shows arrogance and how status defines their personalities. On the other hand the case of Bennet family can be viewed as an exception to the strict rules of class differentiation. Aforesaid, the Bennet family is facing inheritance struggles. They belong to the lower gentry, whereas Mr. Darcy and Mr. Bingley are part of the upper class which creates a major conflict standing in the way of their possible attachments.

Jane Bennet and Mr. Bingley meet at Netherfield ball. Mr. Bingley is very charismatic and sociable. He contradicts his class status with his kind and light-hearted personality. He is very similar to Jane and therefore they fall in love. Unlike Jane, Mr. Bingley belongs to the upper class. He is constantly reminded by his sisters Caroline and Mrs. Hurst that he should only associate “with people of rank” (ch.4). Later on Caroline sends Jane a letter where she claims that Mr. Bingley does not love her. Mr. Darcy is also against their relationship, thinking Jane is of rank and already having different ideas, who Mr. Bingley should marry. This is confirmed by Mr. Darcy’s cousin who vouches for his loyalty and even gives an example that he recently stepped in on behalf of his friend who created a relationship with woman against whom “there were some very strong objections” (ch.33). At the end Jane’s and Mr. Bingley’s relationship withstands the strong opposition from the side of his family and they marry.

Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy offer a similar case. Even though Mr. Darcy is not one of the wealthiest of Jane Austen’s characters he possesses a substantial amount that clearly categorizes him in a higher society, with his £10,000 a year. In the beginning when he meets Elizabeth he is repulsed by his own feelings for a woman of lower standing, and this creates enormous conflict between them. He fights his feelings for her and is unable to see how their relationship could ever work when so much separates them. Their connection is also sabotaged by Lady Catherine, who tries to dissuade Elizabeth from marrying Darcy, due to her relative poverty. Lady Catherine is also angry with Mr. Collins, because he was supposed to marry Elizabeth. Lady Elizabeth’s nephew Mr. Darcy was to marry Lady Anne DeBourgh. Their connection is also disrupted by Mr. Darcy himself. When he proposes to Elizabeth for the first time, he talks about her “inferiority” and her lower rank, therefore persuading Elizabeth to dislike him even more and give her a reason to reject him. Overall class and rank is what almost tears their relationship apart. However as in case of Jane and Mr. Bingley, love is stronger and their relationship prevails.

A further important aspect of class can be viewed through George Wickham. He knew Mr. Darcy since he was a child, due to him being a son of his father’s steward. He is charming and well-spoken. He uses his charisma to manipulate and seduce women to gain their money, just so he can rise in rank. He is a gambler and liar, capable of all to be in the same class as Mr. Darcy. Wickham notices Elizabeth’s opinion of Mr. Darcy and uses it to his advantage. He spreads rumours about him being a victim of Mr. Darcy’s evil manipulation with his father’s inheritance and tries to court Elizabeth. Later on, he elopes with Lydia without any intention of marrying her. This may cast a great shame not only on

Lydia but on the other sisters as well. "...but likewise by Lady Catherine and her daughter, to whom I have related the affair. They agree with me in apprehending that this false step in one daughter will be injurious to the fortunes of all the others; for who, as Lady Catherine herself condescendingly says, will connect themselves with such a family" (ch.48). The situation is saved by Mr. Darcy who bribes Wickham to marry her.

Overall the theme of class and status is regarded in all Austen's novels. She pays great attention to it and portrays not only her own opinion in this matter but faithfully reflects the contemporary society. To this we can also add the words of Monaghan (1980) who says that: "the two groups are united by a shared ideal of concern for others" (p.92). This opinion harmonizes with Austen's idea, in *Pride and Prejudice*, that only affection and love can overcome class status.

#### 2.4. Aspects and attitudes to marriage as reflected by individual relationships

*Pride and Prejudice* clearly gives preference to marriage that is based on affections and especially love. Austen also shows the importance of other necessities like decorum and social responsibility. This view is validated by Paris (1978), who says: "Austen feels that one should marry for love, for personal satisfaction, and out of a regard for the human qualities of one's partner. At the same time, one cannot ignore the socioeconomic position of the other person" (p.103). In the novel, Austen presented several different attitudes to marriage, which are portrayed by individual relationships and approaches of Bennet sisters Jane, Elizabeth, Lydia and Elizabeth's best friend Charlotte. There are four main approaches to marriage in *Pride and Prejudice*: marriage for love, convenience, money and mercenary reasons. These types of marriage and the character's views on them will be further described in following paragraphs.

##### 2.4.1 Marriage with socio-economic motives

The only marriage conceived out of convenience, due to social and financial security is that of Charlotte and Mr. Collins. He gains a wife and she obtains social security and a house to command. Their marriage is by far the most realistic representation of regular marriage of the Regency period. According to Paris (1978); "Charlotte's marriage remains, nonetheless, the darkest note in the novel. This sensitive and intelligent woman has been forced by the accident of her lot to be cynical about marriage and prostitute herself for

status and security” (p.104). Here Paris uses a strong expression and compares this marriage approach to prostitution. This clearly illustrates his opinion. Yet both Charlotte and Mr. Collins are somehow happy in their marriage; this can be only explained by their unworldly and unusual demands on a partner and marriage itself.

Charlotte is the eldest child of Sir William Lucas and Lady Lucas and has several siblings. She is described as “a sensible, intelligent young woman, about twenty-seven” (ch.5). Brown (1979) disagrees. In her work she depicts Charlotte more as “insensitive and unintelligent character “and her reasons for marriage strictly out of “necessity” (p.74). Charlotte is Elizabeth’s best friend and from the start she is desperate. She is neither beautiful nor rich; therefore there she has few opportunities to marry and she herself recognizes that. She does not consider herself romantic and her approach to marriage is more practical. Due to spending most of her life without any potential husband, she fears she will end as an old maid; therefore she has low standards for prospective husband. Her opinions on marriage are pragmatic. “Happiness in marriage is entirely a matter of chance” (ch.6). She also thinks that: “it is better to know as little as possible of the defects of the person with whom you are to pass your life” (ch.6). Such an approach makes us think that she does not think that happiness and love are essential to marriage. “Jane should therefore make the most of every half-hour in which she can command his attention. When she is secure of him, there will be more leisure for falling in love as much as she chooses” (ch.6). With this sentence, she points out that that marriage comes first and love may or may not occur after the marriage. All she says throughout the novel makes us think that she does not see marriage as self-fulfilment but as already mentioned by Brown merely a necessity. On this matter Paris (1978) differs: “What Elizabeth cannot understand is Charlotte's resignation – the degree to which she has given up the hope of personal fulfilment through marriage” (p.113). He views Charlotte as a victim of her desperation and fear of staying alone.

Mr. Collins shares some similar traits with Charlotte Lucas. He is a self-centred and pompous person with a limited view of world. His actions are snobbish and egotistical. He is a clergyman and will inherit the Bennet estate and all properties. He takes great pleasure in letting everyone know his involvement with Lady Catherine (she is his patroness). According to Paris (1978) he “seems to be nothing but his social mask or persona. His civilities are excessive partly because they have no feeling, no personal sensitivity, behind them. He overdoes what is proper in every situation and is successful only with people who are themselves preoccupied-with rituals.” (p.106). Mr. Collins’ views on marriage are



similar to Charlotte's. He is practical and his approach to marriage can be seen in his proposal to Elizabeth:

My reasons for marrying are, first, that I think it a right thing for every clergyman in easy circumstances (like myself) to set the example of matrimony in his parish; secondly, that I am convinced that it will add very greatly to my happiness; and thirdly—which perhaps I ought to have mentioned earlier, that it is the particular advice and recommendation of the very noble lady whom I have the honour of calling patroness. [...] But the fact is, that being, as I am, to inherit this estate after the death of your honoured 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. This has been my motive, my fair cousin, and I flatter myself it will not sink me in your esteem. And now nothing remains for me but to assure you in the most animated language of the violence of my affection. [...] (ch.19)

During his speech Mr. Collins is arrogant and confident that Elizabeth will accept him. He takes her for granted, thinking he is helping her by marrying her and securing her family from financial distress. He gives reasons for why he wants to marry in general but never mentions why he wants to marry Elizabeth in particular. His egotism is underlined by his reply to her rejection:

it is usual with young ladies to reject the addresses of the man whom they secretly mean to accept, when he first applies for their favour; and that sometimes the refusal is repeated a second or even a third time. I am therefore by no means discouraged by what you have just said, and shall hope to lead you to the altar ere long" (ch.19)

Mr. Collins assumes that Elizabeth is only playing hard-to-get and eventually will accept his proposal. He is rejected three times, before he finally realizes that she is serious. Overall his proposal seems more like a business proposal. It is structured properly with "firstly... secondly...". Not only his speech, but also his replies to possible rejection are

prepared. There are no emotions whatsoever and it clearly states his cold-hearted approach to the whole concept of marriage.

As remarked above, both Charlotte and Mr. Collins are practical in matters of marriage. Later in the story she states that she: “accepted him solely from the pure and disinterested desire of an establishment” (ch.22). Mr. Collins does not care much about who he marries as long as he marries someone, as evident by his several attempts. Their relationship is frowned upon by her best friend Elizabeth, who is shocked when Charlotte tells her. Fortunately as Paris (1978) says later on in the story “Elizabeth becomes somehow reconciled to Charlotte’s choice” (p.104).

#### 2.4.2 Marriage for all the wrong reasons

Other prominent types of marriage in *Pride and Prejudice* are motivated by money and physical attraction. These types are represented by relationships between Mr. and Mrs. Bennet and Lydia and Mr. Wickham. There are many similarities between these two couples. Both are based on the wrong reasons and consequently end in unhappiness and desperation. Also the personalities of Mrs. Bennet and her daughter Lydia are very similar in character. As Brown points out they are “independent personalities ... characterized by a failure to distinguish the important from the trivial, the valid from the invalid. In language and action, they have no true discriminating sense. Their failure is both intellectual and moral” (p.71). Therefore we can assume that the failure of their marriages is mainly due to their own mistakes and character.

##### 2.4.2.1 Lydia Bennet and Mr. Wickham

Lydia Bennet, the youngest of all Bennet sisters, is spoiled by her mother. She is described as “untamed, unabashed, wild, noisy, and fearless” (ch.51). She loves social events and dresses. She is ill-educated and her view of marriage is almost identical to her mother’s. She wants to be the first daughter to marry and is very flirty. “At sixteen, be the most determined flirt that ever made herself or her family ridiculous; a flirt, too, in the worst and meanest degree of flirtation; without any attraction beyond youth and a tolerable person; and, from the ignorance and emptiness of her mind” (ch.41). Her actions are only excusable by her young age, strong influence of her mother, who filled her mind with prospects of marriage and matrimony, and Mr. Bennet’s retirement from his paternal role.

Paris (1978) describes her as: “uncivilized. She is guided by her impulses, which are primitive, and her manners are atrocious. She feels and behaves improperly in every situation and continually gives pain to those around her” (106).

As mentioned above, Mr. Wickham is a very charming and intelligent man. He seduces Ms. Darcy, who is very young and tries to elope with her, to gain some of Mr. Darcy’s wealth. He is very manipulative and seductive and it takes him very little to seduce young and callow Lydia. His view of marriage is obvious - a tool to obtain money and status.

From the start, Elizabeth sees how manipulative their relationship is. “Wickham's affection for Lydia was just what Elizabeth had expected to find it; not equal to Lydia's for him” (ch.51). Lydia is very childish and unexperienced; therefore it is not that hard to seduce her, as she is attracted to his good looks. Their elopement is a great disappointment to all the family members. Mrs. Bennet refuses to get up from bed and fears what neighbours will say. Mr. Wickham does not want to marry Lydia, but is persuaded by Mr. Darcy, who promises to pay his debts when they do. This shows his true intentions and that he does not love Lydia at all. Even though they are not compatible partners and each marries for a different reason, Lydia is satisfied. She also thinks that her status is now higher, due to her being a married woman. “... Ah! Jane, I take your place now, and you must go lower, because I am the married one ...” (ch.51). Her mother only encourages this idea, due to her utter happiness, that “her Lydia” is married first. Their relationship slowly breaks and “Lydia was occasionally a visitor there, when her husband was gone to enjoy himself in London or Bath” (ch.61). The main cause of Lydia’s unhappy marriage is the failure of her parents to educate her, prompting Brown (1979) to remark: “her marriage is emotionally vacant and economically irresponsible” (p.78).

#### 2.4.2.2 Mrs. and Mr. Bennet

Even though the marriage of Mr. and Mrs. Bennet is not described in detail, many of its traits are apparent throughout the novel. Mrs. Bennet is described as loud and not very smart woman caring only about finding husbands for her daughters. Paris (1978) describes her as: “Mrs. Bennet supplies little in the way of mothering and offers no model of mature womanliness” (p.118). She does not pay particular attention to her good demeanour; she uses vulgar words and humiliates her daughters in front of the good

society. She is highly invested in her daughters' relationships. She is also very childish and ill-mannered.

Mr. Bennet is different. He is a man driven by desperation, due to his ridiculous wife and so many daughters. He is ironic and his approach to his wife is clear from the outset: "I have a high respect for your nerves. They are my old friends. I have heard you mention them with consideration these last twenty years at least" (ch.1). Paris (1978) sees his sarcasm and ironic behaviour as a type of defence mechanism saying: "Everything that would pain him, if he were to take it seriously, he turns into a source of amusement" (p.117). He is withdrawn from his family and detached from all that is going on around him. He takes refuge in reading and spends a lot of time in his library. His disappointment with his own marriage drives him further away from his family and his role of patriarch. His lack of care and supervision is a source of many conflicts in the novel. According to Mazzeno "all of Austen's women suffer in the patriarchy – even intelligent ones like Elizabeth Bennet" (p.117). Thus Lydia's elopement and other problems are partially caused by Mr. Bennet's detachment. His role is later replaced by Mr. Darcy, who is able to solve many of these problems and help the Bennet family. Mazzeno (2011) agrees, remarking: "paternity of Mr. Bennet over Elizabeth is replaced by that of Darcy" (p.117). Paris (1978) also concurs, claiming: "The nearly disastrous affair of Lydia and Wickham is a direct consequence of Mr. Bennet's abdication." (p.101)

It is similar to marriage of Lydia and Wickham. Mr. Bennet married a woman he found physically attractive and he did not realise what she was like until afterwards. Their relationship had a destructive impact on Mr. Bennet's character and approach to life. Paris (1978) points out that he: "withdraws permanently from human relationships, which have proved to be so disappointing, and immerses himself in the pleasure of an intellectual and retired life" (p.116) He realises his ignorance towards his family at the end of the story, but it is already too late to do anything about it. He accepts his part in wrong development of his family, due to his lack of proper interest.

#### 2.4.3 Marriage for love

In *Pride and Prejudice* the matter of marriage for love clearly portrays the authors own opinion on love. According to Austen's approach, love can conquer status and class and it can also overcome incredible amount of prejudice and misunderstandings. Love brings happiness and self-fulfilment to all who are willing to pursue it, unlike the

marriages for physical desires and money that leads to bitter disappointment and unhappiness. The relationships that are created on the basis of love interest are those of Jane Bennet with Mr. Bingley and Elizabeth with Mr. Darcy. Even though both of them are based on love they slightly differ from each other. Jane and Mr. Bingley are overall very similar good hearted uncomplicated characters that are after several hardships able to pursue their love and marry. Their marriage is based strictly on naïve and simple love. Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth are opposites of them. They are very different, strong-minded and complicated characters whose relationship is based not only on love but is also “rationally founded” with “Excellent understanding and general similarity of feeling and taste” (ch.55).

#### 2.4.3.1 Mr. Bingley and Jane Bennet

Both Mr. Bingley and Jane Bennet share many characteristic traits. Jane is Elizabeth’s beautiful elder sister and also her best friend, while Mr. Bingley is a young gentleman with an income of 5,000 pounds and Bennet’s new neighbour. Despite their central importance in the novel, their characters are quite vague and not that complex. Their behaviour and nature is quite similar and therefore they can be easily described together. Both are kind-hearted, friendly, cheerful always smiling and willing to help others. They lack the more strong traits of Elizabeth and Darcy. Jane is innocent, shy, gentle and her traits are also well described by her mother: “You never see a fault in anybody. All the world are good and agreeable in your eyes. I never heard you speak ill of a human being in your life” (ch.4). Paris thinks that her approach is actually defensive by saying “She defends herself against fears... If she likes others, they will like her” (p.111). Her approach to marriage is similar to Elizabeth’s. Jane wants to marry for love, but she realizes her responsibilities to her sisters and parents as an oldest daughter. She knows she has to marry not only for love but also to secure the future of her parents and younger sisters. Jane’s feelings of family responsibility are very strong. It is even possible, if there was no Mr. Bingley, she would marry Mr. Collins, as she was his first choice in courting. She is romantic as well as practical. Mr. Bingley’s opinion of marriage is never specifically stated. He is not that interested in his wealth and status. He says, that he “can be equally happy either” (ch.9) in the town or country. We can deduct that he cares about love in marriage as well, because he is willing to leave Jane, due to his uncertainty of sincerity of her feelings.

After finding out about Mr. Bingley and his inheritance, Mrs. Bennet immediately starts planning to pair him with his beautiful daughter Jane. They first meet at the ball in Meryton and it is love at first sight. Jane Bennet's first impression of Bingley is "sensible, good-humoured, lively; and I never saw such happy manners! — so much ease, with such perfect good breeding" (ch.4). From this, we can understand her growing affections toward him. Mr. Bingley is also enchanted by her saying that: "she is the most beautiful creature I ever beheld" (ch.3). Both Jane and Mr. Bingley are very subtle in their show of feelings. Jane is especially modest and shy, which is the reason for Mr. Darcy's and Mr. Bingley's doubts of her true intentions and whether she sincerely loves him. Mr. Darcy explains his doubts in his letter to Elizabeth:

Your sister I also watched. Her look and manners were open, cheerful, and engaging as ever, but without any symptom of peculiar regard ... the serenity of your sister's countenance and air was such as might have given the most acute observer a conviction that, however amiable her temper, her heart was not likely to be easily touched. That I was desirous of believing her indifferent is certain (ch.35)

The reason for Jane's, by some seen as, colder behaviour towards Mr. Bingley is simple. Jane behaves exactly as she is supposed to. She is respectful and protects her reputation, therefore seems less in love than she truly is. This opinion is affirmed by Paris (1978): "Her manners are so generally agreeable and she is so diffident that Bingley fails to perceive how much he is loved" (p.108). Mr. Bingley is easily manipulated into leaving her and then just as easily led back to her, in both cases by Mr. Darcy. We can see how dependent Mr. Bingley is on Mr. Darcy. This view is shared by Paris (1978) who states: "Darcy enjoys exercising his power while Bingley escapes the anxiety of having to make his own decisions and of taking responsibility for his life. It gives him a feeling of security to have his actions directed by Darcy" (p.112). At the end their misunderstandings and manipulation is overcome and they have their happily ever after.

#### 2.4.3.2 Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth

Elizabeth is intelligent and complex character. Her view of marriage is romantic. She believes that person should marry not only for love, but respect and equality. She does not believe in marriage for social status or convenience. She argues that a marriage

requires “true affections” (ch.18). Many times throughout the story she is shocked by other people’s reasons for marriage. She disagrees with the marriage of her friend Charlotte: “Charlotte the wife of Mr. Collins was a most humiliating picture! And to the pang of a friend disgracing herself and sunk in her esteem, was added the distressing conviction that it was impossible for that friend to be tolerably happy in the lot she had chosen” (ch.22). Paris (1978) believes that “Elizabeth’s belief in human nature, already guarded, is badly shaken” (p.120). Still, her belief in love is very strong through two of her marriage refusals of Mr. Collins and Mr. Darcy, even though both could save Elizabeth and her family from financial troubles. She is not as practical as Jane and unwilling to make compromises.

Mr. Darcy’s character is very different from Elizabeth’s. Unlike Jane and Mr. Bingley, they are at loggerheads throughout most of the story. For the first half of the story he plays a character of antagonist, but after some time he changes into a leading protagonist. Paris (1978) remarks that: “Darcy is an arrogant man who feels contempt for most of his fellows... He enjoys manipulating compliant people like Bingley, but he despise them in his hearth” (p.137). He is aware of his high status and therefore acts accordingly. He is very complicated character struggling with his own views and feeling towards Elizabeth.

At first his attitude to marriage is straightforward. He knows his class and position. Also, he is already engaged to Anna. He knows he has to marry someone of the same status and importance. He finds the Bennet family disgraceful and not worthy. Later on, his views change and due to his love for Elizabeth he is willing accept her family. Brown (1979) comments on this by saying “their marriage represents his capitulation to the force of irrationality” (p.76). This shows that love and tolerance in relationship means a lot to him as well.

From the beginning Mr. Darcy finds Elizabeth “tolerable, but not handsome enough to tempt me” (ch.3). Elizabeth shares the similar dislike to Mr. Darcy, she finds him arrogant and rude. “He was only the man who made himself agreeable nowhere, and who had not thought her handsome enough to dance with” (ch.3). Their relationship is therefore established on the basis of strong prejudice, pride and dislike. Paris (1978) confirms this by pointing out that: “The major obstacle to the marriage is, of course, Elizabeth’s dislike of Darcy. The central action of the novel is the evolution of that dislike...” (p.99). Elizabeth’s dislike is only enforced by meeting Mr. Wickham, who tells her false stories about him. Elizabeth therefore believes that her disregard of Mr. Darcy is well-founded and based upon strong evidence provided by Wickham. Thus she is astounded when Mr. Darcy

proposes to her and declares his love for her. His proposal however sounds more like an insult, where he proclaims her inferiority. It is a clear evidence of Mr Darcy's inner struggle between his attraction to Elizabeth and her status and impertinency. At that point there is very little indicating their relationship could ever change. However Mr. Darcy's dedication is strong and Elizabeth's conviction crumbles beneath several acts of kindness from his side. Mr. Darcy reconciles Jane and Mr. Bingley and saves Bennet family from shame by establishing Mr. Wickham's and Lydia's marriage. The biggest impact on Elizabeth's change of mind has a letter, which he delivers by hand, telling her his motives for separating Jane and Mr. Bingley and also the truth of Wickham's behaviour and seduction of his younger sister. To this Paris (1978) points out: "The significance of the letter from a psychological point of view is that it penetrates her defences and makes it more difficult for her thereafter to maintain her feelings of superiority and detachment" (127). The letter clears out the two main reasons for her dislike of Mr. Darcy and her refusal of his first marriage proposal. It also makes Elizabeth reconsider her views and recognize her own flaws in judgement and prejudices. Darcy also changes under the influence of her criticism and alters his manners. This mutual change allows them to see one another without the previous dislike and transforms their relationship into amorous. Their marriage portrays the true power of love over not only the outer but also inner influences and obstacles.

This chapter gave us a basic overview of how marriage concept was portrayed in *Pride and Prejudice* and how it resembled and differed from marriages in the Regency Period. We revealed the characters' views and approaches to the marriage and how it shaped their decisions and courtships. We distinguished which courtships were established on the foundations of love, money and physical attraction and how it determined characters' eventual happiness or misery. We also described the women's roles and impact of status on marriage. In the next chapter we will focus on deepening our knowledge of Austen's marriage concept by further analysing her other novel *Sense and Sensibility*.



## Chapter 3 Marriage in *Sense and Sensibility*

In the last chapter we discussed specific courtships and marriage types portrayed in *Pride and Prejudice*. We recognized how Austen's views of marriage for love and mercenary marriage shaped the fates of characters. This chapter will also focus on recognizing characters traits and views opinions of marriage. We will demonstrate which marriage types occur in *Sense and Sensibility* and how they result. We will also compare some of the characters of this novel with those of *Pride and Prejudice* and illustrate their similarities.

### 3.1. Courtship in *Sense and Sensibility*

As in all Austen's novels *Sense and Sensibility* is abundant in courtships. Unlike in *Pride and Prejudice*, where courtships were much more linear and straightforward, *Sense and Sensibility* is much more complex and entangled. As described by Magee (1987) "Austen developed two love triangles... triangle based on the man's choice with Elinor to one based on woman's choice with Marianne" (p.200). Edward must determine whether to stay with Elinor or marry Lucy Steel and Marianne must make the same decision between Colonel Brandon and Willoughby. There are other courtships occurring in the novel as well but they are of lesser importance than these two main plots. In Magee's (1987) point of view both of the triangles "are conventional rather than innovative and at their closing disappointing" (p.200). This disappointment is palpable in marriage proposals which are only noted and not described properly. Also at the end, the main characters seem more passive, denouement and pairings less satisfactory and, as Magee said, almost "disappointing". Overall courtship of main characters and sisters Elinor and Marianne is the focus point of this novel.

As we can see while reading the novel, courtship is a problematic matter for Dashwood sisters. One of the main reasons for that is the lack of patriarchal supervision. The father is usually the one in charge of his daughters' introduction to society and possible marriage proposals. Thus all sisters are in disadvantage and have very little opportunity to participate in social events and be able to find potential husbands. The only person somehow aiding them as a matchmaker is Mrs. Jennings, who after marrying off all her daughters makes it her mission to marry all the single ladies in her neighbourhood. "She

had only two daughters, both of whom she had lived to see respectably married, and she had now therefore nothing to do but marry all the rest of the world” (ch.8).

Overall in *Sense and Sensibility* the description of courtship and courting habits of 18<sup>th</sup> century society is not as detailed as in *Pride and Prejudice*. Most of the courting occurs during dinners, picnics, in their home or visit. There are not many social events or balls happening throughout. For the contemporary society these events were the main opportunity to socialize and obtain new connections from the same social circles.

### 3.2. Importance of money and status in *Sense and Sensibility*

As can be seen from the beginning of the novel, money holds great power over the lives of all the characters. For instance, it makes Willoughby leave Marianne and save Edward from marriage with Lucy. As we can see, when it comes to the marriage, matters of wealth and class exceed the love and affections. Each character has its own view and approach to wealth which considerably shapes their character and actions.

Henry Dashwood is greatly influenced by not only money, but his wife as well. After inheriting the Dashwood money, he could help his half-sisters, yet he greedily keeps the money for his own family. First he offers to give them a substantial amount per year, but his wife argues: “He did not know what he was talking of, I dare say; ten to one but he was light-headed at the time. Had he been in his right senses, he could not have thought of such a thing as begging you to give away half your fortune from your own child” (ch.2), therefore discourages him completely. John’s view of money is also visible through his opinion on Mrs. Jennings. He remarks to Elinor: “Her inviting you to town is certainly a vast thing in your favour; and indeed, it speaks altogether so great a regard for you, that in all probability when she dies you will not be forgotten. She must have a great deal to leave” (ch.33). He rudely points out Mrs. Jennings kind regard for Elinor and even suggests that she might leave some money to her, after she dies. He pays more attention to her fortune rather than her personality, proving his true values. Even though he consequently shows some guilt over his decision not to give his half-sisters any of their money, we can still see, he values money over anything.

Same strong enticement by wealth is evident in Mr. Willoughby and Lucy Steel. For both of them, money is the most important thing in the marriage. They are willing to leave their partners, who not only love them but are able to sacrifice their whole heritage

for them. Yet such notions are not enough for either Willoughby or Lucy and so they choose life in financial comfort and wealth before love and devotion.

Elinor and Marianne also mention their opinions on importance of money in marriage.

They say:

"Elinor, for shame!" said Marianne; "money can only give happiness where there is nothing else to give it. Beyond a competence, it can afford no real satisfaction, as far as mere self is concerned."

"Perhaps," said Elinor, smiling, "we may come to the same point. *Your* competence and *my* wealth are very much alike, I dare say; and without them, as the world goes now, we shall both agree that every kind of external comfort must be wanting. Your ideas are only more noble than mine. Come, what is your competence?"

"About eighteen hundred or two thousand a year; not more than *that*." (ch.17)

Elinor and Marianne oppose the desire for wealth to a certain degree. For Elinor, money is a way to acquire comfort in life. Marianne on the other hand desires a certain amount of luxury to live a satisfactory life. Although all her ideas arise from what she thinks her life with Willoughby will be.

Many characters, even though they already have money, still search for and desire more. The only exception is Colonel Brandon. He shows his biggest gesture of generosity for Edward's virtue by offering him a property at Delaford to live at and therefore helping him from his unfortunate situation.

The matter of status and its importance in marriage is portrayed by Mrs. Ferrars, who does not really care about her son's happiness. When she finds out about Edward's engagement with Lucy Steele who is much lower on the social ladder with no dowry, she immediately disinherits him and shows that class and social position is more important than family and happiness of her children.

To conclude we can see how prominent the theme of money and class is in this novel, how much it shapes the events and decisions of characters and therefore its general impact on overall story. It also illustrates the desperation and unhappiness for characters that choose a greedy decisions or marriage for money. Both John Dashwood and Mr. Willoughby regret their decision and suffer certain consequences. In Willoughby's case it

is desperation and plain prospect of marriage with woman he does not love nor particularly care for.

### 3.3. Aspects and attitudes to marriage as reflected by individual characters

As in all Austen's novels marriage and attitudes toward such concept is the main priority. Here more than in any other of her novels we can see that marriage is not only a matter of personal preference and love but also a matter of many external influences. It is a concern of parents, siblings, friends and whole social cast. *Sense and Sensibility's* main focus is on a difference between two types of marriage. The first is marriage for money, social and financial security. The second is a marriage for love, for pure reasons of emotions and deep connection between two individuals. As in *Pride and Prejudice* Austen emphasizes the importance of love, expressing her dislike for marriage for less honourable reasons.

#### 3.3.1 Marriage for love - Elinor's sensible love

As an oldest sister Elinor represents "sense"- she portrays the reason, self-control, and composure. She is merely nineteen, yet she exhibits reason and responsibility. She is capable of influencing and acting as a supportive pillar not only for her sisters but mother as well. Stuart Tave (1973) remarked: "*Sense and Sensibility* is the story of Elinor Dashwood... The whole of Marianne's story is included within Elinor's... Marianne's story could not be resolved except for what Elinor does, advising her, protecting her, providing her an example..." (p.96). This opinion corresponds with many others. Elinor is truly a character without which Dashwood sisters could hardly exist and turn out the way they did, such responsibility takes its toll. She is reserved and hides her feelings for others. Many might even say that she does not have any emotions at all, because she does not present them as her sister Marianne. To this topic, Gibbons (1957) points out that "Elinor, not to mince words, is what some have forthrightly called a stick...it can make a character unsympathetic to general reader." (1957, intro) and Mark Twain called her a "wax figurine" (p.298), unable to warm up and feel a passion. Even her sister doubts her true feelings on several occasions. She calls her "Cold-hearted Elinor! Oh! worse than cold-hearted! Ashamed of being otherwise" (ch.4). The mentions of Elinor's feelings are very scarce throughout the novel. In the first chapter we are told that "her feelings were strong"

(ch.1), but the first proof of her more intense feelings comes later on in her reaction to Marianne's despair from Willoughby's cruel letter or her discovery of Edward being free of Lucy and she is completely overwhelmed by emotions and runs away. She is practical and understands that marriage should bring some social and financial security; however she wants to marry for emotional reasons also.

Elinor's love is portrayed by her courtship with Edward Ferrars. He is first described as "not handsome, and his manners required intimacy to make them pleasing. He was too diffident to do justice to himself; but when his natural shyness was overcome, his behaviour gave every indication of an open, affectionate heart" (ch.3) However, Elinor is interested in him. Some might ask why the heroine falls in love with as Chapman (2000) retorts "the insignificant microbe", rather than with the more suitable character of Colonel Brandon. As the story develops Edward's character undergoes a critical transformation, which makes him more like a typical Austen hero. It is a transformation of his self-confidence and ability to stand up to his family's and Lucy's demands. For him, money or status in marriage means nothing, especially due to his desire to live "quiet and private life" (ch.3).

At the opening both Elinor and Edward are very sensible characters. Even though they hold certain growing affections for each other, they do not act upon them. Edward is very reluctant to stand up to his family and his ill-considered engagement with Lucy, therefore he is being held back from acting according to his desires. He desperately fights between his sense of commitment to Lucy and sensibility of growing affections to Elinor. Elinor acts properly and according to the social rules, knowing very well that with no real commitment, there is neither engagement nor marriage to be expected. Her hopes of their possible engagement are shattered by discovering Edward's commitment and by countless hurtful remarks from Lucy.

As the story develops, we can see Elinor's and Edward's similarity to Jane and Mr. Bingley. They share many similar traits for instance both Edward and Mr. Bingley had not yet reached the sufficient level of maturity. They are easily controlled and manipulated by their friends and family. Both of them have been romantically involved before they met Elinor and Jane. Both of them embodies the type described as "sweet and safe ... kind, responsible and decent... This man doesn't enjoy confrontation and can sometimes be unassertive because he doesn't want to hurt anyone's feelings" (Cowden & others, 2000, p.16). Jane and Elinor also share several traits. They are caring, sensible, practical and hide their feelings which brings them many hardships. They fall in love but know there is no

promise made and therefore they can hardly expect anything of such courtship. They understand social conventions and act with high reservations, since as Jones (2009) claims “it was considered highly improper for a woman to fall in love before the gentleman’s preference was declared” (p.17). Fortunately in both cases of these courtships, their problems and misunderstanding are resolved and they get married.

### 3.3.2 Marriage for love - Marianne’s sensitive love

Marianne represents the other side of the coin “sensibility”. She is described as “sensible and clever, but eager in everything; her sorrows, her joys, could have no moderation, could have no moderation. She was generous, amiable, interesting: she was everything but prudent.” (ch.1). All her emotions are dramatic and exaggerated. She is very similar to her mother, with which she shares her romantic soul and ideals of ultimate love and perfect husband. Marianne is the character that is in need of maturing and learning from her mistakes. This opinion is supported by Jones (2009), who comments that “Jane Austen presents us with fallible women, who learn from their mistakes, because this is how experience is gained” (p.4). Her views of marriage and love are very simple. Marianne possesses no reservation, she acts before she thinks. Her opinion of the perfect spouse is described as stated: “I could not be happy with a man whose taste did not in every point coincide with my own. He must enter into all my feelings; the same books, the same music must charm us both” (ch.3). She believes that the only true marriage is the one conceived in love. For her, the marriage created for financial or social security is “commercial exchange, in which each wished to be benefited at the expense of the other” (ch.8). She also thinks that “A woman of seven-and-twenty," said Marianne, after pausing a moment, "can never hope to feel or inspire affection again;” (ch.8).

Marianne’s love is firstly portrayed by her courtship with Willoughby, who makes the perfect first impression. He is depicted as the ideal romantic hero, helping lady in distress. In this case he saves Marianne and carries her all the way home. Of Marianne’s approach Smith (1890) remarks: “Into Willoughby’s arms she rushes with impulsive indiscretion of wildly romantic, sentimental, and enthusiastic girl” (p.90). Yet Marianne’s love for Willoughby is so passionate that she takes no notice of his ill-behaviour and ignorance. Even when Colonel Brandon tells Dashwood about Willoughby’s history and how he seduced his protégé Eliza, she ignores it.

Willoughby is also similar to another character in *Pride and Prejudice*. According to Smith (1890) Willoughby’s character “reminds us of Wickham... both in his power of

fascination and in his want of principle” (p.90). This is more than true because both Wickham and Willoughby are able to present themselves favourably, seduce women, marry for money and consequently end up in unhappy marriage.

The second portrait of Marianne’s love is her relationship with Colonel Brandon. Every character has different opinion of him. To Elinor the Colonel is a good friend. To Mrs. Jennings and Mrs. Dashwood he is an eligible bachelor and potential husband to Marianne. Smith views Colonel Brandon as “far worthier, at the same time feels the charms of Marianne’s beauty and of her warm and affectionate disposition” (p.90). Regrettably, for Marianne herself he is thirty-seven and wears flannel waistcoat. Furthermore he was already once in love and for Marianne it is impossible to love twice. In general Colonel Brandon is described as strong and honourable type. He is wealthy, gentle and possesses unusual generosity in comparison with others. He immediately falls in love with Marianne. “Poor Brandon! He is quite smitten already, and he is very well worth setting your cap at, I can tell you, in spite of all this tumbling about and spraining of ankles” (ch.9). Unfortunately his feelings are unreciprocated due to a lack of interest and even mockery from Marianne’s side. Yet Colonel Brandon keeps his posture and remains at her disposal, always helpful and attentive. The turning point for Marianne’s and Brandon’s relationship comes after recovering from her infatuation with Willoughby, to which Brandon contributes to a great degree. Marianne learns her lesson, matures and realizes her ill manners and faults. She becomes more sensible and is able to appreciate Colonel’s affections and true worth. Due to Colonel Brandon’s patience and devotion, their lives consequently join together and prove that both of them can indeed love again. In Austen, the way to good marriage is never easy.

However did Marianne really love him? Critics differ on this point. To this Flavin (2004) remarks: “The penance seems to come through marriage to Colonel Brandon, a good and decent man but one whose character is presented without charm or vitality. Marianne’s acceptance of him comes over time and is unconvincing” (p.35). On the contrary Smith (1980) sees their marriage as a “gate to happiness.” (p.98) Austen also tries to persuade readers that it really is a marriage for love and writes:

Marianne Dashwood was born to an extraordinary fate. She was born to discover the falsehood of her own opinions, and to counteract, by her conduct, her most favourite maxims. She was born to overcome an affection formed so late in life as at seventeen, and with no sentiment superior to strong esteem and lively friendship,

voluntarily to give her hand to another!—and THAT other, a man who had suffered no less than herself under the event of a former attachment, whom, two years before, she had considered too old to be married,—and who still sought the constitutional safeguard of a flannel waistcoat! (ch.50)

Overall, Austen wants us to believe that Marianne truly loves Colonel Brandon, even though many seem unconvinced. Her love transformed just as her character, from the sensitive affections which she held for Willoughby to more sensible and rewarding love with Colonel Brandon.

### 3.3.3 Marriage for money

In *Sense and Sensibility* there are several courtships representing marriage for money. These courtships are secondary and not thoroughly depicted, yet they hold great power over the lives and events of the main characters. It makes Marianne realize her mistakes, making her mature and helping her find her true love in Colonel Brandon. It is similar for Elinor, who would be forever separated from Edward, if it wasn't for Lucy's elopement.

One of the turning points is Willoughby's betrayal. Although we know that his affections for Marianne are honest, he runs away from her in a cowardly manner and decides to marry Miss Grey, a lady with a fortune. To exonerate himself, he says: "To avoid a comparative poverty, which her affection and her society would have deprived of all its horrors, I have, by raising myself to affluence, lost everything that could make it a blessing" (ch.44). According to his explanations he is truly in love with Marianne, but due to his expensive lifestyle and debts he finds it necessary to marry Miss Grey. He knows that he sold himself for her fortune and can never be happy in such marriage. Still, this confession relieves him of great amount of guilt and he is forgiven. Smith (1890) agrees with his redemption saying: "Jane Austen is merciful to the sinners and saves him from final perdition" (p.96).

Another mercenary marriage is that of Lucy Steele and Robert Ferrars. Lucy is attractive and her manners are perfect. She tries her best to be a proper lady and hides her poor character, lack of class and insufficient education. According to Smith (1890) Lucy is "low-bread, low-minded, illiterate and pert in highest degree" (p.91). She resembles her male counterparts, Wickham and Willoughby. She recognizes Elinor's interest in Edward and tries to warn her off. She pretends to be her friend, only to seem more reliable. She



deceives her by telling her that Edward thinks of her only as a 'sister' and gives away her secret of their engagement. She deliberately wounds Elinor, pointing out her lock of hair which Edward has in his ring and which Elinor had assumed to be hers. There is little she would do to secure her place next to Edward. Yet it is not Edward's love or jealousy that she fights for, it is money. She expresses her feelings for Edward thus:

I could give up every prospect of more without a sigh. I have been always used to a very small income, and could struggle with any poverty for him; but I love him too well to be the selfish means of robbing him, perhaps, of all that his mother might give him if he married to please her. We must wait, it may be for many years. With almost every other man in the world, it would be an alarming prospect; but Edward's affection and constancy nothing can deprive me of I know. (ch.24)

When the situation occurs and Edward is stripped of his inheritance, she immediately changes her mind and contradicts this statement. After realizing that she will receive no money from marriage to Edward, she flatters Robert and persuades him into marrying her. Robert Ferrars does not care about his future wife's character, due to his nature being very similar. Robert is "silly and great coxcomb" (ch.24). He is vain, arrogant and self-absorbed man. He is attracted to Lucy and in possession of fortune; therefore he sees no shame in taking Lucy from his own brother. Smith (1890) remarks: "by having the property now settled on him...he can defy his mother's wrath, cuts out his brother in the affection of Lucy Steele and carries her off" (p.94). These examples and many other occurrences throughout the novel prove both Robert's and Lucy's contemptuous and abominable personalities, which makes them a perfect match.

To conclude mercenary marriage is in *Sense and Sensibility* described as bad, yet it serves a good purpose, because they precipitate the happy actions of Elinor and Marianne. *Sense and Sensibility* depicts mercenary marriage as the most common marriage in 18<sup>th</sup> century.

This chapter finalized our analysis of marriage concept in both *Pride and Prejudice* and *Sense and Sensibility*. In *Sense and Sensibility* we distinguished the specific courtships and recognized the importance of money in marriage. We described the "sensible and "sensitive" love and marriage for economic reasons. Altogether these two novels gave us

the knowledge of basic marriage patterns which are most prominent in Austen's novels and familiarized us with general similarities between main characters and their traits.

## Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to analyse and discover the basic characteristics of marriage concept as described in Austen's two novels *Pride and Prejudice* and *Sense and Sensibility*. The last section of this thesis will summarize and conclude these findings.

Austen's description of contemporary society in her novels was for the most part authentic. She wrote about a milieu that she knew very well, focusing mainly on the ordinary life of the gentry in southern England. She described the wide range on different relationships from approach of parents to their children, sibling love, friendship to risks and complements of falling in love. Her novels included the domestic concerns such as desire for money, importance of status, inheritance matters and ownership of property. These concerns greatly interweaved with courtship and marriage. Austen also pointed out the gender roles of women, which had changed considerably, transforming young ladies into a tool for families to acquire a greater wealth and therefore establishing advantageous marriages. We can notice that many reasons for marriage occurring in both *Pride and Prejudice* and *Sense and Sensibility* are to help the families in financial distress or to acquire even greater wealth or higher social standing. We can see woman's inequality and dependence on marriage for the purposes of financial and social security. In *Pride and Prejudice* we described the importance of status on marriage and courtship and its overall influence on both Elizabeth's and Jane's relationship. In *Sense and Sensibility* the money dominated and allowed both Elinor and Marianne to end up with their proper counterparts. As we can conclude, the realism of contemporary society, its prerogatives and rules were superbly and authentically depicted, granting the readers a faithful glance on 18<sup>th</sup> century society. Yet all the novels hold romantic elements which critiqued contemporary mores. In Austen's novels love and good nature always wins over the bad intentions and obstacles. Love is the most important symbol overcoming both status and money, even though they are the main values of 18<sup>th</sup> century society.

We found various motivations and types of marriages. There was a marriage love, social and financial security and marriage for money also known as mercenary marriage. In these cases the reasons are physical attraction, desire for money, hope to belong to a higher society or lust. It is concluded that for these reasons marriages end in unhappiness and despair. This can be witnessed in Mr. and Mrs. Bennet's marriage, Willoughby's marriage with Ms. Grey or Mr. and Mrs. Palmer's marriage. All of these relationships were based on silly notions and for wrong reasons therefore in author's view, consequently ending badly.

In her novels Austen tries to advert that woman should stand up for herself and marry for more than what society expects her to marry for. The courtships of Elizabeth, Jane, Elinor and Marianne are heavily tested and there are moments when we think it is hopeless, yet each and every time the situation changes and allows them to be happy. This notion is romantic and in reality very unlikely. This clearly pictures Austen's own opinion and desire to reward these honourable marriages for emotional and intellectual reasons. This is something that was unorthodox in 18th century society and is common in present times, setting her opinion at odds with her age.

We were also able to recognize certain patterns in characters' attributes and views and its consequential impact on their marriage and future. Especially in *Pride and Prejudice* and *Sense and Sensibility* these behaviour patterns are strongly visible. All "bad" characters share several traits that are quite similar, make the same wrong decisions based on immature or selfish reasons and consequently end up in unhappy marriage. These characters were in the first place pursuing the good characters. Wickham was courting Elizabeth, Willoughby Marianne and Lucy was already engaged to Edward. Yet they threw it all away for the prospect of more convenient opportunity. All were manipulative, charming and seductive characters, who eventually married for money and for their dishonourable decision suffered in ill-fated marriage. Such strong similarity is certainly no coincidence. We can also see the parallel in good characters. On one hand we have sensible, good mannered characters of Elinor and Jane, who are both responsible and caring. They are reserved with clear knowledge of their role and position within the society. They show very little of their feelings and both of their courtships are resolved by others. On the other hand there are more sensitive and romantic characters of Elizabeth and Marianne. Both are charmed by Mr Wickham and Willoughby. Their courtships are based on strong first impression and flashy qualities. They are easily manipulated and dissuaded from any interest in Mr. Darcy or Colonel Brandon, due a strong rivalry between these male characters. Both Elizabeth and Marianne are forced to realize their errors and change their view by reading a letter and eventually end up in fulfilling and loving relationship. Several other parallels can be also portrayed in desperate marriages of Mr. and Mrs. Bennet and Mr. Mrs. Palmer. Both of them conceived without the knowledge of partner's true personality. Both men marry silly women, realizing it too late and end up in hopeless marriage with no way out. Both partially despise their wives; viewing them as stupid and uneducated. They are forced to retire to solitude and their attitudes to them become ironic and bitter. To conclude we are able to see many similarities between certain types of

characters and their overall behavioural patterns and approaches. If we search more we would certainly be able to recognize the same parallels in other Austen's novels and its characters. In her novels she promotes typical characteristics of main protagonists and antagonists. Depending on their attributes and views we are able to determine which course their relationship will or will not take and whether it will end up in happy ending or life of regrets.

We can see that not only in *Pride and Prejudice* and *Sense and Sensibility* but in other novels as well, Austen tried to promote her concept of marriage and its social implications. She used the marriage and courtship as an instrument to advance her critique of contemporary society. She scorned marriage for social and material reasons, for selfish gain and status and always filled such marriage with guilt, regrets and distress. She rewarded marriage based on emotions, love and understanding. Marriage based not only upon attraction or endearment but on intellectual connection and mutual respect. She tried to depict partners as an equals, who care about each other and are willing to prevail and fight for their relationship. Primarily she gave hope to many women, convincing them that if they choose the honourable way and approach, their search for love and happy marriage will be answered.

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## Czech Summary

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá konceptem manželství ve vybraných novelách Jane Austen. Hledá rozdíly v tom, jak postavy vnímají manželství, jak k němu přistupují a jaké jsou jejich důvody pro získání manžela/manželky. Tato práce také rozebírá různé typy manželství, jako například manželství ze sociálních důvodů, manželství z lásky a manželství z nutnosti. První kapitola nám poskytne všeobecný přehled o historickém období novel, a jak bylo manželství v té době vnímáno. Zjistíme, jaký byl nejobvyklejší důvod pro manželství na konci osmnáctého století a zda byla láska jeho součástí. Následující dvě kapitoly budou podrobně rozebírat novely *Pýcha a předsudek* a *Rozum a cit*. Práce je zakončena krátkým přehledem zjištěných výsledků a popisem pohledu Jane Austen na manželství a jeho důsledky.