

Study on Jane Austin's Original Views toward Marriage in *Pride and Prejudice*

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Abstract. Through the mouths and minds of her characters in *Pride and Prejudice*, Jane Austen unfolds various views toward marriage such as true love, modest fortune, and independent thinking. At the same time, Jane Austin speaks highly of women's rights oppressed and disregarded in the previous literature.

Jane Austin (1775-1817) is a most well-known female writer in the history of English literature. First published in 1813, *Pride and Prejudice* has consistently been Jane Austin's most popular novel[1]. It is a novel that explores the difficulties for unwedded women seeking a husband. Through this process marriage is represented in a variety of forms, but what also exist are Jane Austen's views on society and ultimately, her view of the ideal marriage[2]. Every society has different views on the importance of marriage and what characteristics need to exist in order to make a perfect marriage.

Represented are a number of important marriages, all possessing different characteristics, yet combining to provide responders with something to compare with the marriage between Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth Bennet[3]. Charlotte Lucas is Elizabeth's dear friend. Pragmatic where Elizabeth is romantic, and also six years older than Elizabeth, Charlotte does not view love as the most vital component of a marriage. She is more interested in having a comfortable home. Thus, when Mr. Collins, a pompous and generally idiotic clergyman who stands to inherit Mr. Bennet's property, proposes, she accepts. Lydia Bennet, the youngest Bennet sister, is gossipy, immature, and self-involved. Unlike Elizabeth, Lydia flings herself headlong into romance and ends up running off with George Wickham, a handsome, fortune-hunting militia officer and playboy. Jane Bennet (Elizabeth Bennet's beautiful elder sister) and Charles Bingley (Fitzwilliam Darcy's wealthy best friend) engage in a courtship that occupies a central place in the novel. They are spoken of as a potential couple throughout the book, long before anyone imagines that Darcy and Elizabeth might marry. Their principal characteristics are goodwill and compatibility, and the contrast of their romance with that of Darcy and Elizabeth is remarkable. Jane and Bingley exhibit to the reader true love unhampered by either pride or prejudice, though in their simple goodness, they also demonstrate that such a love is mildly dull. Elizabeth Bennet is the novel's protagonist. As the second daughter of Mr. Bennet, Elizabeth is the most intelligent and sensible of the five Bennet sisters. She is well read and quick-witted, with a tongue that occasionally proves too sharp for her own good. Her realization of Darcy's essential goodness eventually triumphs over her initial prejudice against him. Fitzwilliam Darcy is a wealthy gentleman, the master of Pemberley, and the nephew of Lady Catherine de Bourgh. Though Darcy is intelligent and honest, his excess of pride causes him to look down on his social inferiors. Over the course of the novel, he tempers his class-consciousness and learns to admire and love Elizabeth for her strong character. Mr. Bennet, the patriarch of the Bennet family and a gentleman of modest income with five unmarried daughters, has a sarcastic, cynical sense of humor that he uses to purposefully irritate his wife. Though he loves his daughters (Elizabeth in particular), he often fails as a parent, preferring to withdraw from the never-ending marriage concerns of the women around him rather than offer help. Mrs. Bennet is Mr. Bennet's wife, a foolish, noisy woman whose only goal in life is to see her daughters married. Because of her low

breeding and often unbecoming behavior, Mrs. Bennet often repels the very suitors whom she tries to attract for her daughters[4].

True love, the foundation of marriage, is the most important in the authoress' views. This is the just basis of a perfect marriage. One who betrays his or her heart will never own true love that is beyond money and social position. The Bennet couple is the only old couple described in *Pride and Prejudice*. There is nothing in common such as personality, savor and hobby between Mr. Bennet and Mrs. Bennet, whose combination was just Mrs. Bennet's lost beauty[5]. Their marriage without any true feelings is quite miserable, which make Mr. Bennet never manages to earn the respect of the reader. The heroine in this fiction, Elizabeth, is a loyal follower of her own affection. As in any good love story, the lovers must elude and overcome numerous stumbling blocks, beginning with the tensions caused by the lovers' own personal qualities. Elizabeth's pride makes her misjudge Darcy on the basis of a poor first impression, while Darcy's prejudice against Elizabeth's poor social standing blinds him, for a time, to her many virtues. Austen, meanwhile, poses countless smaller obstacles to the realization of the love between Elizabeth and Darcy, including Lady Catherine's attempt to control her nephew, Miss Bingley's snobbery, Mrs. Bennet's idiocy, and Wickham's deceit. In each case, anxieties about social connections, or the desire for better social connections, interfere with the workings of love. Darcy and Elizabeth's realization of a mutual and tender love seems to imply that Austen views love as something independent of these social forces, as something that can be captured if only an individual is able to escape the warping effects of hierarchical society. Austen does sound some more realist (or, one could say, cynical) notes about love, using the character of Charlotte Lucas, who marries the buffoon Mr. Collins for his money, to demonstrate that the heart does not always dictate marriage. Yet with her central characters, Austen suggests that true love is a force separate from society and one that can conquer even the most difficult of circumstances. In this novel, women begin to realize that marriage is not their only target of life, so they will not marry against their true heart. Elizabeth might have had an unknown future without Darcy, but she won't live regretfully without Collins. The fact that an authoress who mainly worked on love and marriage never got married shows that she takes feelings seriously and divinely: she hopes to enjoy the satisfied marriage, but never yielded to matrimony without true love[6].

Marriage is a real life, not a fairy imagination. From the perspective of social evolution, mental world is constructed on the base of material situation. Love is indispensable to happy life but not always a right to any pain we may encounter, of which Austen has a keen perception. Modest fortune, the guarantee of marriage, is always necessary to maintain a marriage[7]. Firstly, in the authoress' narration, the girls are all from the gentry families which, though not very rich, keep them in a decent life and secure the opportunity and time of meeting with excellent young men such as Darcy and Bingley. What's more, at that time, a girl with the amount of fortune had more opportunities of getting a good marriage than those owing little, which even now still works. Secondly, love without bread is never lasting. Lydia's marriage is much less fortune than her two elder's because Wickham's inferiority to Darcy and Bingley in both morality and wealth. Even Elizabeth is attracted by Wickman's charm in her first meeting with him unaware of his infamy, but she also tell her aunt she will not have the intention of marrying him, for both of them have no enough money to support their life if they are united. Here, Austin implied money-hunt was the common run in the marriage making of middle and upper societies'. However, she thinks money is needlessly in a large amount for women to possess, because women don't have to support family alone and too much gold likely make one blind to one's self. Such an example is made in Miss Bingley and Lady Catherine de Bourgh whom the authoress looked with some awe. These two women take it for granted that they are more highly educated than others just from their descent and fortune, ignorant of their imprudence and insolence that only bring about despise from others. Austen came from a modest family, and knew how money could actually matter. Here, she takes a reasonable and prudent attitude toward marriage.

In Austen's mind, independent thinking, having great influence on marriage in reality, can make people more charming, for good brainwork gives a splendid outlook that reflects a peculiar character[8]. This is best illustrated in Elizabeth. In Jane's novels, hypocrisy is prevailing in the

middle and upper class; most judge others from their fortune position, and facial performance. But Elizabeth never wants to compromise with this atmosphere. She puts forward her true reflections about what she feels through her own thinking, free from the influence established canon. She doesn't behave humble for her humble descent as her cousin Mr. Collins. Though often blamed by her mother for her "stubbornness", she is proud of her ground, in line with what her heart permits, and amiable to anyone deserving true respect, no matter whatever others say. Elizabeth's sincerity and difference from the commonplace run greatly draw Darcy's attention. This couple of young people is standing out in the public occasion, and this independent spirit makes them experience from misunderstanding to attraction with each other. And Darcy's frankness and integrity correct Elizabeth's prejudice against him and start her reflection upon what she goes through.

Literature is the spirit of the time. In a sense, Jane Austen has a bit of modern spirit. Her feminine and realistic perspective for love and marriage surpasses the limit of her time, so what she wanted to deliver is familiar with us living today. She depicted the daily life in the serene and picturesque rural England during the early nineteenth century, which indicates the realistic content in the romantic background[9, 10]. Hence, such a combination of reason and emotion in the authoress' mind leaves much we can dwell on, which may be the cause why so many people are enchanted with this masterpiece during two hundred years or so. Jane Austen showed us what an ideal marriage with true love, modest fortune and independent thinking is like in her mind by telling five different marriages. It is worth noting that the marriage between Charlotte and Collins resulted as a utilitarian but criticized case; the one between Lydia and Wickham carnal and shameful; Jane and Bingley moral but tedious; Elisabeth and Darcy perfect and blessed; Mr. Bennet and Mrs. Bennet so-so and tragic.

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