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Status of Women during the Nineteenth Century in
Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*

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fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master in Anglo-
Saxon Literature and Civilization.*

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Dedications

I dedicate this work to:

My parents, my brother, all my friends, and my husband who is always caring about my studies, and helping me in every part of my life.

To my sweet and adorable
little baby Islam and my dear friend Ghizlene.

Benazza Meryem

Dedications

My deepest gratitude goes to the sun of my life -my mother- who has been always helping and encouraging me through my educational career. I always take her advice into consideration.

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to cast a wide net on Jane Austen's attitudes and portrayal of women in her novel "Pride and Prejudice." To approach the aim of this work, the researcher has invested an analytical method to depict the position of women in the eyes of Jane Austen as a British female writer. Thus, this paper has shown how women have found in literature, particularly in the novel, a solace to conjugate their existence on earth and to announce their declaration of independence that empowers them to air much of their feelings and thoughts. The feminine associations of the novel, however, have meant to rival male writers. Besides, the research has delineated the way in which the novel examines the suffering of women and how they overcome difficulties and achieve success. From this masterpiece, the researcher has noticed that Jane Austen's portrayal of her protagonist is based on her real world and experience. She establishes herself as a distinguished feminist novelist with her focus on the daily lives of genteel women, and in her treatment of the situation of women. She has also consolidated the status of the domestic female life as a proper subject for her novels, especially the matter of marriage.

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General Introduction

In the early nineteenth Century, women lived in hard situation characterized by inequality of rights in education and freedom, and they were expected to remain under the power of their fathers and husbands. Britain witnessed many changes in Victorian time that influenced English society in philosophy, economics, and politics. It was also a period of flourish in English Literature. *Pride and Prejudice*, however, was the finest work of Jane Austen masterpieces. It was first published in 1813, and it was considered as a classical novel which carried a romantic theme overlapped in love and marriage. This was the topic that Jane Austen struggled with in her own life, and she presented an important reality of English women exposing the social and moral follies of her society. This presentation included social classes, values, marriage and women's status.

Pride and prejudice presents an important theme in the late of 18th century which is marriage, and portrays life in the general rural society. In that masterpiece, the protagonist Elizabeth plays the role of an intelligent woman who rejects the social values, rules, and arts. She struggles with her own society in terms of gender inequality.

Jane Austen portrays women and especially marriage in Victorian era as a representation of her own life throughout her work *Pride and Prejudice*. Thus, in the current research, there is a stress on the position of woman and the portrayal of marriage in Victorian society to which the following questions could be raised:

- 1 How was the status of women in Victorian society delineated by Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*?
- 2 How does the novel *Pride and Prejudice* reflect Jane Austen's feminist attitudes?

This research, will adopt two main approaches; the autobiographical approach to figure out experiences in *Pride and Prejudice* that reflects Jane Austen's life, and the descriptive Feminist Approach to describe the reality of woman's disadvantages in equality and dignity compared to man, with reference to Jane Austen's *Pride and*

Prejudice. This research will be based on data gathered from books, dissertations, essays, and internet.

The present research contains a General Introduction, and two main chapters, then General Conclusion. The First chapter will give a theoretical framework of the current research putting light on the Victorian Age literature and women writers.

The second chapter will study the status of women in *Pride and Prejudice* that; recapitulate the main substantial corners especially love and marriage. Finally, the research ends with a general conclusion.

Chapter One: Reflection on the Victorian Age Literature and Women Writers

1.1 Introduction

Literature has been always human's comfort zone where he allows himself to break the bonds of reality and get into an imaginary world of fiction. In fact, literature is so versatile that it has generated genres to serve man's needs including; poetry, plays and novels. In particular, the novel has been the highest manifestation of human thinking as it licensed him to evoke his imagination freeing him from all the restrictions that have been chaining his mind. Yet, man has been always ambitious to see his thoughts alive, the impetus that has inspired him to create mediums to reflect his inner world, and what has given life to a new narrative art. However, in the Victorian or modern age, the divine right of kings is as obsolete as a suit of armor; the privileges of royalty and nobility are either curbed or abolished, and ordinary men by their representatives in the House of Commons are the real rulers of England. A woman in the Victorian age who does not have to work is a status symbol for her husband and family. The more well-off a family and the greater its economic success are the deciding factors in how much leisure a woman can afford.

Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* is a novel published in 1813, but it does not display typical Romantic characteristics. Rather, it may be said that its style and characteristics foreshadow the upcoming Victorian era. As Victorian novels often do, it portrays and comments on the social conventions of the period. It is generally known that the society of the nineteenth century England was nothing like today: class differences were more visible, polite manners were much more appreciated and, most importantly, the social status of women was determined according to the status of their family or their husband. Therefore they had to marry the most appropriate man that was sometimes even imposed on them by their family. Though they could choose whom they would marry, there was very little possibility that they would marry a man they loved; unless he is also wealthy and willing to marry her. More information will be clarified in the next title putting light on the Victorian Age.

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1.2 The Victorian Age Britain

The Victorian period formally begins in 1837 (the year Victoria has become a queen of Britain) and ends in 1901 (the year of her death). As a matter of expediency, these dates are sometimes modified slightly. 1830 is usually considered the end of the Romantic period in Britain, and thus makes a convenient starting date for Victorianism. Similarly, since Queen Victoria's death occurred so soon in the beginning of a new century, the end of the previous century provides a useful closing date for the period. The common perception of the period is the Victorians are "prudish, hypocritical, stuffy, [and] narrow-minded" (Murfin 496). This perception is (as most periodic generalizations are) not universally accurate, and it is thus a grievous error to jump to the conclusion that a writer or artist fits that description merely because he or she wrote during the mid to late 19th century. However, it is also true that this description applies to some large segments of Victorian English society, particularly amongst the middle-class, which at the time was increasing both in number and power. Many members of this middle-class aspire to join the ranks of the nobles, and have felt that acting "properly," according to the conventions and values of the time, was an important step in that direction (The Victorian Period).

Along similar lines, William Ralph Inge in his book *The Victorian Age* argued that "one great interest of the Victorian age is that it was the time when a new social order was being built up and entirely new problems were being solved" (5). This quote means that this period saw great developments and wide spread of technology. Moreover, it was the period of the Industrial Revolution; this revolution was fundamentally a technological revolution which focused on the sources of inventions (Allen 02). But, women remained at all suppressed, suffering from bad treatment of both men and society who neglected their importance. They faced many restrictions; like the inability to vote or to own property exercising accomplishments (drawing and learning piano) or factory and agricultural labor which reduced women to the eternal positions of housekeepers or housewives (ibid).

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1.3 The Victorian Age Literature

Defining the Victorian literature in any satisfactory and comprehensive manner has proven troublesome for critics ever since the nineteenth century comes to a close. The movement roughly comprises the years from 1830 to 1900, though there is ample disagreement regarding even this simple point. The name given to the period is borrowed from the royal matriarch of England, Queen Victoria, who sat on throne from 1837 to 1901. One has difficulty determining with any accuracy where the Romantic Movement of the early nineteenth century leaves off and the Victorian Period begins because these traditions have so many aspects in common. Likewise, identifying the point where Victorianism gives way completely to Modernism is no easy task. Literary periods are never the discrete, self-contained realms which the anthologies so suggest. Rather, a literary period more closely resembles a rope that is frayed at both ends. Many threads make up the rope and work together to form the whole artistic and cultural milieu. The Victorian writers exhibited some well-established habits from previous eras, while at the same time pushing arts and letters in new and interesting directions. Indeed, some of the later Victorian novelists and poets are nearly indistinguishable from the Modernists who have followed shortly thereafter. In spite of the uncertainty of terminology, there are some concrete statements that one can make regarding the nature of Victorian literature, and the intellectual world which nurtures that literature. The Victorian writers have created the literature that portrays and comments on the religious, economic, social and philosophical ideas of that time. Victorian stories, however, have been written as messages to teach the readers moral lessons.

The Victorian Age entered in a new period after the romantic revival. The literature of this era expressed the fusion of pure romance to gross realism. Though, the Victorian Age produced great poets, the age is also remarkable for the excellence of its prose. Literature of this age tends to come closer to daily life which reflects its practical problems and interests. It becomes a powerful instrument for human progress. Socially & economically, Industrialism was on the rise and various reform movements like emancipation, child labor, women's rights, and evolution. It seems to

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deviate from "art for art's sake" and asserts its moral purpose. Tennyson, Browning, Carlyle, Ruskin - all were the teachers of England with the faith in their moral message to instruct the world. It is also considered as an age of doubt and pessimism. The influence of science is felt here. The whole age seems to be caught in the conception of man in relation to the universe with the idea of evolution. Though, the age is characterized as practical and materialistic, most of the writers exalt a purely ideal life. It is an idealistic age where the great ideals like truth, justice, love, brotherhood are emphasized by poets, essayists and novelists of the age (Victorian literature 01).

1.4 The Status of Women in the 19th Century

During the nineteenth Century, women had few opportunities in many fields, as education, works, and votes. The ideal of Victorian woman was supposed to be domestic and their rights were limited. When the Victorian man and woman got married, the rights of the wife might be given over to her husband; because the married couple had become one under the law, so the only one who had the right to represent this entity was the man. When the woman became married, she must give her husband rights to what her body produced; as sex, bring children, and domestic works. She was considered as machine just to do the domestic affairs.

May be the existence of conduct rules in Victorian society was the most important aspect that restricted the freedom of women. Woman was judged in social gatherings based on her behaviours according to social norms. However, men had bigger advantages in being the privileged gender (Gran 1). The author Guen mentioned that: "feminist theory considers that woman was morally and politically opposed to marriage among the rich husbands to provide a secure financial life, family wealth automatically passed down the male line" (14). This supposed that woman was politically and morally conflicted to marriage among the wealthy husbands to grant a stable financial life, and the wealth of the family would be passed to the male because in this society, woman was not able to inherit her family's wealth only in case that she came from very rich family, she could inherit very small percentage.

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In the mid-nineteenth century, England witnessed important challenges and developments about the Women Question, where many women called-for more rights, and were emphasized on the need of ownership of greater economic, political, social and educational opportunities (Women in The Victorian Era).

1.5 Victorian Women Writers

Many women writers emerged and fought against the injustice and the bad situation of women during the Victorian era through their novels. They challenged the structure of the male who dominated society they lived in. It was also impossible to give the right and exact number of these women writers. For instance, Elaine Showalter (1977) claimed that the nineteenth century was the time of the female writers like Jane Austen, Marry Wollstonecraft, Charlotte Bronte, George Eliot and others (Salinovica 219). He said that the situation of women writers was very difficult but their novels were the only way to escape from the patriarchal society and to criticize women's oppression (ibid). In fact, these female writers used their novels to express their voices demanding equality between men and women and avoiding oppression and suffering. From this bulk of writers, one may call:

1.5.1 Mary Wollstonecraft

Mary Wollstonecraft was one of the famous female voices who fought against the dangers and social discrimination against women during the nineteenth century. She was influenced by the ideas of American and French Revolutions focusing on the necessity of women's participation in all fundamental rights as equal to man, in addition to the right of vote and owning property (Jenainati and Groves 24).

The publication of Mary Wollstonecraft's *The Vindication of the Rights of Women* is her main novel in which she depicts women's submission and stereotypes. She emphasizes on education as the best way to constitute an identity and an individual personality (ibid 27).

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1.5.2 Elizabeth Gaskell

Elizabeth Cleghorn Stevenson 1 is an English novelist. She has been very interested in social problems, industrial life workers, and women in general as she did in her novels *North and South*, *Mary Barton* and *Ruth*. Mary is an example of many women writers who echo their voice aloft especially in her novels *Ruth* and *Cranford* (Gaskell 301-311).

Accordingly, *Ruth* is a good example of women in Victorian society in which the main heroine, Ruth, suffers from the loss of her parents. With the moving events, Ruth becomes a mother, and her child is illegitimate. In the very fact, Elizabeth Gaskell writes about the “fallen women” who are rejected by people, because Victorian society does not accept women with illegitimate children (Gaskell 308). Analogously, *North and South* is an industrial novel as well as romantic in which Gaskell uses Margaret as heroine who faces a big change in her life when her family moves from the south to the north of England. Thus, this remarkable novel has fast gained a wide readership globally by being the mirror that refracts the reality of her time (ibid).

Finally, Elizabeth was a friend of Charlotte Bronte, Jane Austen and other women writers who called for equality between men and women in all fields of life (Showalter 27). An instance in the case is Charlotte Bronte who has a special way of writing characterized clearly in her literary works.

1.5.3 Charlotte Bronte

Charlotte Bronte is an English novelist who challenges the norms and conventions of her society during the Victorian era. As a feminist writer, she has used her own experience in most of her novels as in *Jane Eyre*. It is also her famous and influential work at that time, in which the main character challenges men’s authority with the courage she possesses to fight for her rights and love (Wang 1830).

As a conclusion, these women are just a few from all women writers who fought against the inferior position of women and criticized the nineteenth century’s

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social structure. As a result, they wanted to change the position of women in the Victorian society and the world despite of all the difficulties and obstacles (ibid).

1.5.4 Jane Austen

Jane Austen is one of the most famous women novelists of the nineteenth Century and the most feminist writer who gains a place in the history of English Literature, and uses her works as a tool to voice her issue about women role and gender in society especially the middle class and the upper –middle class. So, most of her novels are about women in society (Alka 134). The important themes in her novels are marriage and male dominance in all fields of life. In addition, Jane Austen has dealt with the subject of marriage as the only solution for women in the Victorian age by using her own social critical attitudes in *Pride and Prejudice* translation Studies (ibid).

In her most novels, Jane Austen portrayed the oppression of women in the nineteenth Century and explained to the reader her personal view about this dire situation. She also rebelled against the dominance of males towards women because they were treated as “second class citizens” (Alka 135). As a feminist writer, Austen explained and condemned the oppression of women. It is clear that Austen’s heroines convey her opinion that women should resist oppression and injustice in their life and search for happiness. She created female figures in order to prove that women are also capable of being reasonable and rational (Alka 135).

In her writings, Jane Austen was influenced by Mary Wollstonecraft’s *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, and her ideas about the situation of women in society. Most of Austen’s characters want to marry and always marry for love which was impossible during Austen’s time (Shring 103-105).

Jane Austen’s most famous novel *Pride and Prejudice* describes the life of young ladies. Then, the main issue in this novel is a woman who could not inherit land so for this reason the mother Mrs. Bennet searches for a wealthy husband to her daughters (Shogskola 17).

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More information about *Austen* will be given in the next title; putting light on her as a woman .

1.6 Jane Austen the Woman

Jane Austen was born on December 16th, 1775 in Steventon, Hampshire in Countryside. She was the seventh child of a family of eight, six brothers; James, George, Edward, Henry, Frank, Charles, and one sister, Cassandra Elizabeth. Her father was the Oxford-educated country person, George Austen, and her mother, Cassandra Austen (Bloom 10). Her father taught two of his sons and few students of Oxford. He had a good library and Jane benefitted from it. There was a decent arrangement of reading aloud in the family: Sonnet plays, and novels were delighted in, and the family went in for novice theatricals, organizing plays in Mr. *Austen's* animal barn. The parents obviously created a cultured atmosphere for the children to grow up in, and Jane knew French and Italian, could play the piano, sew, draw, dance, embroider, and clearly, converse very well indeed (Austen VI).

Jane and her sister Cassandra were very close, as evidenced by the many letters from Jane to Cassandra that had survived a considerable time. In 1785, Jane and Cassandra went to the Abbey boarding school for reading. More than this, the Austen girls had little formal education outside their family, and Jane left it at the age of nine, but her education continued effectively at home; nonetheless, this was uncommon for the times (Bloom 10).

Austen girls never got married. Jane proved to have been involved in a few amorous relationships. In 1802, she accepted an offer of marriage from wealthy landowner Harris Bigg-Wither, who had the resources to provide for her entire family, but she changed her mind only a day later, and decided to revoke her acceptance. She resolved never to marry for money over love. Thus, Austen remained unmarried until she died. Also Cassandra never engaged again after the death of her fiancé Thomas Fowle (Bloom11).

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Though Jane was born during the French revolution and the rise of Napoleon war which was up to turn upside down most people's ideas of social stability and the class system. But nothing of these events, which were to change England so completely in the imminent years, really touched the family of Jane Austen's nature, and conventions (qtd. in Guen 27-28). Austen's family moved several times during her later life. In 1801, Jane, her sister, and her parents moved from Steventon to Bath. In 1805, her father died. In 1806, they moved from Bath to Clifton, and then to Southampton. However, between 1801 and 1809, Austen did very little serious writings, leading many critics to suppose she was unhappy with her surroundings during this period (Bloom 11).

As she was surrounded by a lively and affectionate family, she divided her time between domestic chores and writing. Nothing much happened during her youth: she attended various social activities such as visiting friends and going to fashionable balls in the vicinity. On the whole, her life was relatively uneventful (Jane Austen's life 13).

Austen became mildly ill, she had Addison's disease in 1816, and she was forced to move to Winchester for medical reasons, although she continued writing. She died on 18 July, 1817 (Austen VII).

1.7 Jane Austen the Novelist

The first major woman novelist, Jane Austen did not have a place with any of the scholarly developments of her time. She mocked sentiment and nostalgia in the majority of her novels and satires the Gothic fashion in *Northanger Abbey* (1803). Her scope of vision is limited, for she demonstrated the connection between people in little commonplace groups, generally concentrated around the heroine's finding a husband and her discovery in the process. But the form had been always perfect, the dialogue was witty and the light cast upon the character was ruthlessly searching. Jane Austen was a comedian interested in behaviour in so far as they reflected ethics (Grellet and Valentin 190).

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Moreover, Austen made a lot of contributions to comic drama of conduct of middle class English life in her time. Her written work was noted by her plausibility, smart sensitivity, authenticity, and splendid prose style. Through her treatment of common individuals in regular life, she was the first to give the novel its uniquely modern character (Attia 128). The famous novel of Jane Austen “*Sense and Sensibility*” was published in 1811, which distinguished the personalities of the two sisters; Elinor who governed her life by sense and reasonableness, while her sister Marianne was ruled by her feelings and sensibility.

“*Mansfield Park*” was published in 1814. The novel traced the career of a *Cinderella*-like heroine, who was brought from a poor home to “*Mansfield Park*”, the country estate of her relative. She was raised with some of the comforts of her cousins, but her social level was maintained at a lower rank. Two years later, the novel “*Emma*” was published gaining unprecedented success among all literary works of the time. The plot of the story revolved around the heroine “*Emma*,” who was a girl of high intelligence, vivid imagination, and a robust desire to control others’ life. She was almost influenced by her old boyfriend who was her role-model in intelligence. In 1818, “*Persuasion*” was crafted as a well-embellished novel that was directly expressive of Jane Austen’s feelings of her own life.

1.7.1 Jane Austen’s Major Works

Jane Austen's first major novel was written in 1798-99, when she was in her early twenties. It was a comic love story set in Bath about a young reader who must learn how to separate fantasy from reality. Miss Austen sold the novel (then entitled *Susan*) to a publisher in 1803, and the work was advertised but never published. She bought it back many years later, and her brother Henry Austen published the novel as *Northanger Abbey* after her death in 1817. Interestingly enough, Austen was the polished gem of English literature reminiscent by some memorable works from which one may recall:

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1.7.1.1 *Sense and Sensibility*

Sense and Sensibility was the first of Jane Austen's novels to be published. She began to write it sometime around 1797, and she worked on it for many years before its publication in 1811. The title page said to be written "By a Lady", and only her immediate family knew that Jane Austen was the author. Impetuous Marianne Dashwood tumbled into a fairytale romance that went sour, and her practical older sister Elinor coped with the family's financial problems while she was hiding her own frustrated romantic hopes. The book was a success, and it had even earned a great profit. (The Works of Jane Austen) .

1.7.1.2 *Mansfield Park*

Mansfield Park was written between February, 1811 and the summer of 1813. It was the third novel of Jane Austen that had been published, and it first appeared on May 4, 1814. During her lifetime, it was attributed only to the author of "*Sense and Sensibility* and *Pride and Prejudice*", and the author's identity was unknown beyond her family and friends. It was Jane Austen's most complex novel that dealt with many different themes, from the education of children, to the differences between appearances and reality.

1.7.1.3 *Emma*

Emma was written in 1814-1815, and while Jane Austen was writing it, it was suggested to her by a member of the Prince Regent's household that she dedicated it to his Royal Highness. Austen took the suggestion as it was intended--as a command--and *Emma* was thus dedicated, but the dedication itself was rather slyly worded. *Emma*, however, deals with a young woman's maturation into adulthood and the trouble she gets herself into along the way.

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1.7.1.4 *Pride and Prejudice*

Pride and Prejudice was first written in the late 1700's, then rewritten in 1811-1812 and finally published in the early 1813. It was probably the most-read of all of Jane Austen's novels and was a popular favorite among many. Originally entitled *First Impressions*, the novel had dealt with the misjudgments that often occurred at the beginning of an acquaintance.

1.8 Conclusion

To sum up, this chapter has shown the characteristics of the Victorian period in different phases as well as the general conditions of the Victorian social life. It has also examined the position of women in society. Last, it has provided a short overview about the Victorian Literature which tends to examine the women's literature and the recurrent images that are presented in their novels. It is found out that Victorian women writers were influenced by the values of their conservative society, and their novels are similar to their experiences. For instance, Jane Austen's life is not particularly eventful or long lasting, but its impact on her classical literature is forever left in importance for chapping her novels to be as they are. The family, life, and circumstances all serve to influence different aspects of the novel "*Pride and Prejudice*." In all, the personal life of Austen serves as the starting point to fuel her creation. Also, this chapter has made a survey on Jane Austen's socio-historical context and her position as a woman and as a writer, and their impact on "*Pride and Prejudice*." The following chapter will be encountered with the different aspects of marriage Austen's characters.

Chapter Two: The Status of Women in "Pride and Prejudice"

2.1 Introduction

In Jane Austen's novel "Pride and Prejudice", there was an examination of the lives of women living in the late 18th to the early 19th-Century. During this period in time, women had a very specific role in society and were expected to be both subservient and innocent. Their primary role was to get married, have children and maintain a household for their husband. Rarely were women acknowledged for their intelligence or for having an opinion. In the novel, the heroine, Elizabeth Bennet, was in contrast to this definition an epitome of an ideal woman. She was clever and opinionated, but, in the end, chooses the life of a 19th century wife. However, there did seem to be a message portrayed by Austen in this story. Women during this period often deferred to decisions made by men, regardless of their own feelings. In "Pride and Prejudice," although they were often treated as inferior to their male counterparts, the women in this story represented different characteristics to demonstrate how the ideal was not necessarily the most desirable. This novel might start off with the anonymous figure of a rich, single man, but the novel was actually concerned with the plight of the poor, single woman.

2.2 Summary of "Pride and Prejudice"

"Pride and Prejudice" tells the story of a big and middle-class family, Mr. Bennet, Mrs. Bennet, and their five unmarried daughters; Jane, Elizabeth, Mary, Lydia, and Katherin. They all live in a small country called Hertfordshire. The mother looks all the time for finding a suitable husband for her daughters. When a single rich man with a good fortune, Charles Bingley comes to the country with his two sisters Louisa and Caroline Bingley, and his friend Fitzwilliam Darcy, Mrs. Bennet wants to marry one of her daughters to him (Guen 36).

The Bennet's daughters met the visitors in the first Ball, and their father introduced them. Everyone liked Mr. Bingley, he and Jane started to flirt, and they danced with each other all the party, while his friend Mr. Fitzwilliam Darcy refused the proposal of Elizabeth to dance with him. Then he said to Bingley: "She is tolerable, but not handsome enough to tempt me"(Austen 15), and he thinks that there would be

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other girls, who were more interesting than her. When Elizabeth heard those words, she had no doubts that he was proud with a hard heart, cold, serious, and strange personality. Mr. Bengely's sisters and Mr. Darcy, concerned that this affection for Jane developed very quickly, and they could not tolerate her lower status, and the manner of her family especially her mother. Mr. Darcy, in spite of his better wisdom he became obsessed and attracted to the charm and intelligence of Elizabeth ("Overview").

Jane was invited to Nether field by the sisters of Mr. Bengley, and on her way, she caught in the rain; she came down with a bad cold. Mrs. Bennet was delighted, because this put Jane near to Mr. Bingley and his wealth. Jane became in a poor health, and her sister Elizabeth went to Nether field to nurse her. Mr. Darcy liked the concern for her sister and the strength of her character, but he was afraid of his obsession with someone who was economically inferior. Then the girls returned home when Jane's health improved ("Overview").

When they returned home, they found Mr. Collins at their house visiting their family. Mr. Collins was a young clergyman who stood to inherit the property of Mr. Bennet which had been entailed, meaning that it could only be passed down to male heirs, because Mr. Bennet had only daughters. Shortly after his arrival, he made a proposal of marriage to Elizabeth. However, Elizabeth refused his proposal. Meanwhile, the Bennet girls had become friendly with a handsome young soldier Sir. Wickham who was close to toward Elizabeth told her how Darcy cheated cruelly him out of an inheritance (SparkNotes Editors).

The Bingleys and Mr. Darcy leave Nether field for London and Caroline Bingley writes to Jane to inform her that they will not return until winter. She hints in her letter that Mr. Bingley intends to marry Darcy's sister. Elizabeth correctly recognizes that Bingley's sisters and his friend are trying to keep him from the Bennets because her family is not outstanding enough for their aspirations ("Overview"). Another shock comes with the news that Mr. Collins has become engaged to Charlotte Lucas; the best friend of Elizabeth, and the poor daughter of a local man. Charlotte explains to Elizabeth that she is getting older and needs the match for financial

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reasons. Charlotte and Mr. Collins get married and Elizabeth promises to visit them at their new home. As winter progresses, Jane visits the city to see her friends, also she hopes to see Mr. Bingley. Though Bingley's sister visits her and behaves impolitely, Mr. Bingley fails to visit her at all.

When spring comes, Elizabeth visits Charlotte and Collins's home; which is near the home of patron of Mr. Collins, Lady Catherine de Bourgh. Catherine is also Darcy's aunt. Darcy goes to Lady Catherine's home and encounters Elizabeth; her presence leads him to make a number of visits to the home of Collins where she is staying just to meet her. One day, he makes a shocking proposal of marriage to her, which Elizabeth quickly refuses. She tells Darcy that she considers him selfish and unlikable, then scolds him for steering Bingley away from Jane, and treating Wickham poorly. Darcy leaves her, but soon after that, he sends her a letter. He confesses in the letter that he supported Bingley to distance himself from Jane, because he thought that their romance was not serious. As for Wickham, he informs Elizabeth that Wickham is a liar, and the real cause of their disagreement is the attempt of Wickham to escape with his sister, Georgiana Darcy.

Shortly, Elizabeth receives a letter from Jane, in which she tells her that Lydia and Wickham have eloped, and they live together without marriage. In a shock, Elizabeth informs Darcy about what Wickham has done. Meanwhile, Mr. Gardiner sends a letter, saying that the couple has been found and that Wickham has agreed to marry Lydia. The Bennets are thought that Mr. Gardiner has paid off Wickham. Later on, they realize that it has been Darcy's work.

Bingley and Darcy return to Nether field and call on the Bennets. Bingley displays genuine affection to Jane and asks for her hand. Darcy remains distant until her aunt; Lady Catherine visits the Bennets and demands that Elizabeth denies any connection between her and Darcy. Elizabeth refuses his proposal. A little later, Elizabeth and Darcy go out walking together and he tells her that his feelings have not altered since the spring. She gently accepts his proposal, and both sisters, Jane and Elizabeth are married at the end (SparkNotes Editors).

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2.3 The Status of Women in "Pride and Prejudice"

In Jane Austen's novel, "Pride and Prejudice," there was an examination of the lives of women living in the late 18th and early 19th century. During this period in time, women had a very specific role in society and were expected to be both subservient and innocent. With the imposition of entailment in the novel, women were forced to marry and search for a husband to attain a better life (Austen 91). In the very fact, the novel projects on the status of women from different angle to which one can recall:

2.3.1 Sisterhood

The theme of sisterhood or female friendship is visualized in scenes involving Elizabeth and her sister Jane (Sales 20). This status has been delineated by the two sisters sleeping together in the same bed, discussing their evening, and also in the blind confidence of Jane in her sister when she confesses her secret admiration to Mr. Bingley. For instance, Bingley said that "he is just what a young man ought to be", she said "sensible, good-humored, lively; and I never saw much happy manners! So much ease with such perfect good breeding" (Austen 18). The aforementioned quote proves the close relationship of those sisters, Jane is so confident in her sister that why she tells her the secret of her great admiration to Mr. Bingley.

The close relationship between Elizabeth and Jane is very similar to Jane Austen and her sister Cassandra. They have been confidant to each other, especially because they are the only two girls in the family, and the two are described as inseparable. Also, Jane Bennet and Cassandra Austen were the two older sisters as the Bennets. In the eyes of Austen, Jane is like Cassandra generous and kind and she always thinks the best of everyone as it is mentioned in the novel "to take the good of everybody's character and make it still better and say nothing of the bad" (Austen 19). Elizabeth claims that Jane likes to take only the good things of what characterize everybody, and she does not say anything bad about others (Bloom 23).

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2.3.2 Pride

Pride is a prominent feature in the characters of "Pride and Prejudice." First, that is significantly noticeable in Mr. Darcy's behaviors at the assembly party when he arrogantly ignores the Bennets when they have been introduced to him by Mr. Bingley. On the other hand, Elizabeth behaves in the same manner when she refuses Mr. Darcy's proposal to dance replying "indeed, sir, I have not the least intention of dancing. I entreat you not to suppose that I moved this way in order to beg for a partner" (Austen 32). Yet, the author makes it a statement that "first impressions" could be no more than prejudices that lead to feuds and miscomprehensions which become clearer through the stages of the story when things got explicit mainly between the major couple Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy. This could be scrutinized in the quote: "I certainly have not the talent which some people possess," said Darcy, "of conversing easily with those I have never seen before. I cannot catch their tone of the conversation, or appear interested in their concerns, as I often see done" (ibid 42). At last, the author successfully conveys a life lesson of morals and manners throughout the confrontations between the characters of the story.

2.3.3 Love

"Pride and Prejudice" is a story about romantic love, because love is so central theme in the story. It contains one of the most cherished love stories in English literature; the courtship between Darcy and Elizabeth. 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 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

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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 realistic 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 (SparkNotes Editors).

2.3.4 Education

Nandana defines education in his article "Emphasis on education in Jane Austen's Novels" as:

The largest sense is any act or experience that has a formative effect on the mind, character or physical ability of an individual. In its technical sense, education is the process by which society deliberately transmits its accumulated knowledge, skills, and values from one generation to another (1)

Jane Austen was very interested in education and reading, as she largely stresses this in her characters, Elizabeth and Marry. An essential part of this education is on the other hand to obtain the ability to read (Sales xvii). Also the novel "Pride and Prejudice" focuses around this idea of an educated woman, and how she plays a great role in society by her education (Austen 306).

Women in the beginning of 19th Century in Britain were not allowed to continue their higher education, so private tutors, governesses, and private schools were the extent of structured education open to them. For example, a clever woman as Elizabeth Bennet with an energetic mind is always able to get her education independently through reading (Benrabé 330). Jane Austen's father had a library around fifty hundred books, she did a fair amount of reading, and she wrote that she and her family were very interested in reading novels, and not ashamed of being so.

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However, in a proper way, she chose to be in her own novel "Pride and Prejudice" ("Biography: Life and Family" (1775-1817). She said in the novel: "What say you, Mary? For you are a lady of deep reflection I know, and read great books, and make extracts" (Austen 10). This quote shows that Mary is book smart and she is deep thinker, and Austen compares herself to Mary Bennet's self-independence and intellectual ambition (Todd 23). Also, Marry reflects Austen's admiration to education and reading, because she has spent her life in reading books and creating her own creative writings.

2.3.5 Women and Marriage

"It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife" (Austen 01). From these opening lines, it is clear that marriage is the main theme of Austen's "Pride and Prejudice" which depends on economic basis providing social as well as financial stability (Gast 5). Furthermore, David Owen claims in his book "Reading Between The Lines" that the first sentence of "Pride and Prejudice" gathers marriage as the main theme, and irony as the tone in a romantic novel (72). Thus, marriage is the ultimate goal of most young girls, because women have been generally limited to home and family, and females have little opportunity for employment (Chin-Yi 933).

Also, marriage at the time of Jane Austen was basically a synonym for economic security within society (ibid). As a result, wives had a special place and a decent position while daughters or unmarried women remained neglected and ignorant (Gast4). For instance, Lydia confirmed that: "Ah, Jane, I take your place now and you must go lower because I am a married woman (Austen265). This means that Lydia is secured after marriage. Moreover, Mrs. Bennet insists to marry her daughters, particularly Elizabeth, to a wealthy man because she is worried about her daughters' future and considers marriage as an appropriate solution to get wealthy and secured(99). Accordingly, in her article "The Feminist Bias of Pride and Prejudice", Marian Fowler deems marriage as the only available career for women as its chief aim (48). In fact, Jane Austen insists on marriage and family as the essential

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framework of moral life (Pearce ix). On the other hand, Elizabeth is convinced that her future happiness must rest in large part upon the character of her husband as a matter of chance (Austen 24). For her, the character of husband is more important than wealth or prestige.

In short, women have to depend on their husbands for living; this kind of dependence has forced them to take marriage as a career. Moreover, Austen has learned from her experience as unmarried woman that marriage and building a family are the most important things in life (Pearce IX). In fact, marriage is essential at that period as Mary Wollstonecraft declares in his book "Thoughts on the Education of Daughters": "so if a woman did not marry nor was from a wealthy family that could support her financially, she did not have an easy existence ahead of her"(110-112). Marriage in the Nineteenth Century has been related to the class the woman comes from which leads her to be domestic and oppressed.

2.3.6 Wealth

Jane Austen expresses the ideas of the influence of wealth and money on marriage instead of real love through the character Mrs. Bennet, and this can be seen in the following quotation: "Oh! Single, my dear, to be sure! A single man of large fortune; four or five thousand a year. What a fine thing for our girls!" (Austen 06). Mrs. Bennet recurrently presses her daughters, especially Elizabeth and Jane the idea of marriage from a wealthy man. Jane Austen and Elizabeth Bennet, the two recognize that the ideas of the mother are wrong and the truth is to find a suitable love. An instance from the novel, "Mr. Bennet had very often wished, before this period of his life, that, instead of spending his whole income, he had laid by an annual sum, for the better provision of his children, and of his wife, if she survived him" (Austen 336). Jane Austen has experienced childhood in a town in a family not exactly well off in society; Mr. Bennet and his wife are excited to have their girls wed those that are richer so that some inheritance can go to the family (Dickie 04). This is what Austen has been struggling with in her own time when she has accepted the proposal of a rich man with a large wealth.

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2.3.7 Deception and Prejudices

Along the story, Jane Austen has made it clear more than once that appearance can be deceiving, and this is probably the major theme of the whole novel. In fact, that is noticeable from the beginning of the story in the tense relationship between Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth. In detail, Elizabeth recklessly judges Mr. Darcy out of his attitude and appearance considering him as an arrogant and conceited person saying "how strange!" cried Elizabeth. "How abominable! I wonder that the very pride of this Mr. Darcy has not made him just to you! If from no better motive, that he should not have been too proud to be dishonest—for dishonesty I must call it" (50).

However, Elizabeth realizes by the end of the story how mistaken she has been in her judgment of Mr. Darcy. By the mid of the story, Mr. Wickham comes out as a devil in the disguise of a handsome gentleman for nothing but to hurt. The first one to fall in his trap was Elisabeth Bennet when she has been attracted by his appealing look and manipulative manners. Wickedly, the former instantly tries to ruin M. Darcy's reputation weaving and telling Elizabeth lies and stories about him for the sake of keeping them apart. Although Elizabeth falls delicately in his net, she has been smart to survive and start second-guessing his credibility. Searching a more vulnerable prey, wicked Wickham turns his eye to Elisabeth's little sister Lydia to sculpturally manipulate and take her away to make profits out of her (Alka254).

All in all, "Pride and Prejudice" is a story of self-deception and the problem of Elizabeth is to undeceive herself, and absolutely, her main problem is that she idealizes and generalizes things. She is a very independent thinker, as she is a woman who does not accept the conventions and expectations of her time as decisive rules by which she would lead her life.

2.4 Conclusion

To conclude this chapter, it can be said that Jane Austen's novel "Pride and Prejudice" is considered as a classic novel. It focuses mainly on a mother who wants her unmarried daughters to become married not just for financial reasons, but also

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because it is socially expected. The story revolves around choosing whether to marry for love or to marry for money and security; ultimately the daughters decide who they want to marry.

Mrs. Bennet wants her daughters just to be married, and she does not care about the personality of the husband. On the other hand Mr. Bennet does not like to push them into relationships they do not want to be in. Elizabeth and Jane experience love, but not without sorrow. And Jane Austen writes this novel to criticize the bad thinking of the society of her time by using those couples portraying the main theme of that time which is marriage.

General Conclusion

To conclude, this research of paper has delineated a portrayal of the Victorian Society, and shows how the Victorian literature reflects most of the historical and the social norms of Victorian England putting light on the novel as a distinguished literary genre. It also focuses on English women writers and the major themes that women are concerned about. Then, the chapter shows the background of the author Jane Austen and the novel “Pride and Prejudice.” Thus from this analysis, it is observed that there is a common point between Jane Austen and her protagonist Elizabeth Bennet, and that the work includes many aspects and events from the life of Jane Austen which means that the novel reflects Austen’s real social life. Through the analysis of the characters of the novel, Jane Austen portrayals the main theme of her time which makes her suffer so much because she believes in love and self-independent, for that she chooses Elizabeth Bennet to be her mirror that reflects her personality.

In this novel, Jane has presented an important theme in the Nineteenth society, which is the division of women personalities according to their attitude. Jane Austen’s writings are always defending women; their main focus is on their personalities, manners and their intention toward each other. In the nineteenth century patriarchal England, women generally do not have as many rights as they do today; they have no possessions of their own and since they do not want to waive their social status and the way of living they have been used to, the only way to keep it is to marry a man of the same or of a higher social status. That way they could preserve the status they acquire at their birth and the reputation they have. Because of these reasons, marriage has been a central social concern and has been often entered into for economic reasons rather than for love as shown on numerous examples in “Pride and Prejudice.”

Jane Austen has tried to depict the society of her time as faithfully as she could in this novel, and considering the fact that she is a woman, one may say that she has understood women’s position better than any other male author. Therefore it is no wonder that on multiple occasions through the voice of the novel’s narrator, she explicitly states that marriage is first and foremost an institution through which women are able to find security and respect. It is enough for them to be able to stand the chosen man in order to give birth to his heirs, and perhaps, someday, to learn to love him. This is their socially constructed vision of happiness. Also, when the role of the woman in the family and society has been analyzed in the novel

“Pride and Prejudice,” this could conclude that the author makes use of such resource not only as a mechanism to call the reader’s attention for a determined aspect of the work, but mainly to criticize the English society in the end of the 18th century. The novel shows not only inappropriate behaviors and values, or unprincipled people of this society but also different views on marriage. For the society, marriage is not a result of passion; it is more a result of economic security or a moral and social choice of a companion for wife. Thus, young middle class women of the period want to marry a handsome rich aristocrat. Then, the researcher has noticed that the role of the woman is not only to enjoy special privileges of a high social status, rather women’s feelings prove to play an important role for the society. When Elizabeth and Darcy finally get engaged, they have both learn the wisdom of humility and tolerance. Therefore, the role of the woman is not only to be by the side of a wealthy man’s; her feeling such as love plays also an important role.

At last, it can be said that Jane Austen is one of the famous novelists of English literature history. As a future perspective, this study could be used as the starting point of a future master or doctoral research, since the research does not undertake the whole themes of this literary work. In doing this analysis of the major themes of the novel “Pride and Prejudice” it could be helpful to students and researchers of British Literature to work deeply in this theme or to make analysis to all the characters of the novel.

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