

For the Love of Money: An Analysis of Elizabeth Bennet's Motives for Marriage in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*

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In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, it was a truth universally acknowledged, that a single, middle-class woman in possession of little fortune, must have been in need of a husband. Inheriting property from a spouse or father after death was a precarious business; while inheriting enough to be financially secure was nearly impossible, especially if there were other siblings or children involved. It stands to reason that marriage for single, middle-class women was extremely important for financial stability. The necessity of gaining a husband for the financial benefit was such an integral part of that time period that the main character in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, Elizabeth Bennet, followed that same, sensible path of marrying for money. The notion that Elizabeth Bennet would be more concerned about marrying for love, rather than financial security, seems highly unlikely given her position in society and lack of inheritance. The only commonsensical way to view marriage from Elizabeth's position would have been based on who could have provided the best financial situation for her. Understanding this, and through closely examining *Pride and Prejudice*, we can begin to see evidence that Elizabeth had less of an emotional connection with Mr. Darcy, and was concerned more with his ability to raise her social position and provide for her financially.

At the opening of the novel, we are told that a single, rich man "must be in want of a wife." Although this may lead us to focus on a man's search for matrimony, we are quickly introduced to a woman's quest for financial security when Austen writes "[this new man] is considered as the rightful property of some one or other of [the surrounding families'] daughters," (Austen 43). There can be no doubt after reading the first two paragraphs of the novel that the idea of marriage is an important one, and it is of no greater importance than in the Bennet household. Upon first being introduced to the Bennet family, we learn that it consists of Mr. and Mrs. Bennet and their five daughters. The absence of a son would have quickly informed readers of the time that the Bennet daughters would be in desperate need of a husband. This desperation is made clear through the character of Mrs. Bennet when we are told "the business of her life was to get her daughters married; its solace was visiting and news" (Austen 45). Although she may seem quite silly, she is completely right: "marriage was the economic and social building block for the middle class" (Davidoff and Hall 322). Mrs. Bennet's excitement over the occupation of Netherfield by a gentleman with a substantial income becomes understandable given her daughters' situation.

The situation the Bennet daughters were in, specifically, could not have gotten much worse. In normal circumstances, with no son to inherit the property after the death of Mr. Bennet, the estate would have most likely been placed in the hands of a trustee to hold the property for the children; however, there was no son in the Bennet family (Davidoff and Hall 211). In this situation, "estates were often sold to facilitate the creation of annuities," and although these annuities were a relatively secure form of income, they weren't always reliable (Davidoff and Hall 212). The practice of selling the estate to create a source of income via annuities for the Bennet daughters sounds enticing, but it is interesting to note that, even though both sexes used this form of income, it was more heavily depended upon by women, and "in a census sample from two areas, 63 per cent of all middle-class female household heads were 'independent' as an occupational classification (and 70 per cent of those so designated could be regarded as lower middle class)" (Davidoff and Hall 212). Therefore, if annuities were created for the Bennet daughters, they would have a hard time living independently in a middle class position based solely on income from an annuity generated from the sale of the Bennet estate. These facts alone could lead one to understand the importance of a suitable marriage for any one of the Bennet daughters, and yet their situation gets even worse. We soon learn that the estate of Mr. Bennet, as a result of there being no male heirs, has been entailed to his cousin, Mr. Collins, (in an attempt to keep the estate in the male side of the family) who, upon the death of Mr. Bennet, becomes the owner of the Bennet estate and would hold the power to remove the daughters of Mr. Bennet from the household should they still remain. This entailment would make the sale of the estate, and therefore the creation of annuities, impossible and beget an even more desperate need for a financially secure husband.

Mr. Bennet was well aware of the poor situation he was leaving his daughters and it is told to the reader that Mr. Bennet had never saved money that would be able to support his widow or his daughters. We are told that upon marrying Mrs. Bennet, he expected they would soon have a son to divert the entail from Mr. Collins and that his other children, along with his wife, would be cared for; however, after some time Mr. and Mrs. Bennet had given up on having a son. It is explained that Mrs. Bennet has no financial resources and that it was only her husband's fiscal responsibility that prevented them from bankrupting the family. The Bennet's state of affairs, with Mr. Bennet wishing "more than ever" that he had saved for his daughters, shows just how desperate a position the Bennet girls were in, and why marriage was of such great importance to Mrs. Bennet, and, in turn, her daughters (Austen 314). The only other alternatives for the Bennet daughters were to either become a burden to some other male member of their family (which was looked down upon), or to enter into business themselves, which brought with it very little esteem. During the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, women were considered to be part of the domestic sphere and would only enter into business if they were forced by the need for income. By entering into the economic sphere, a woman was making it clear that she "was a woman without either an income of her own or a man to support her." Not only did her entering the economic sphere make a statement about her financial situation, but a woman working to support herself also suffered disrepute from her community, which could also affect opinions of those who associated with her. This prejudice against a working class woman therefore created a "structured inequality [making] it exceedingly difficult for a woman to support herself on her own, much less take on dependants" (Davidoff and Hall 272). By entering into the economic sphere, a woman was making it clear that she had no financial worth, which lowered her position in society, and in turn lowered her chances of marrying a man with favorable social connections and financial resources. This is best said from the period itself, where a Mrs. Ellis wrote, "gentlemen may employ their hours of business in almost any degrading occupation and, if they but have the means of supporting a respectable establishment at home, may be gentlemen still; while, if a lady but touch any article, no matter how delicate, in the way of trade, she loses caste, and ceases to be a lady" (Davidoff and Hall 315). Understanding these aspects, which readers of that time most certainly would have, leads us to believe that securing a husband of financial and social worth would have been top priority for the Bennet daughters.

If, however, marriage was of the utmost importance, why did Elizabeth reject the proposal of Mr. Collins? Mr. Collins's design in coming to the Bennet home was to secure a wife in order to improve his relations with his relatives, and by marrying Mr. Collins, Elizabeth would have made the financial situation better for her sisters, who would then have been less likely to be removed from the home after the death of their father. Although Mr. Collins is sometimes loquacious to the point of being embarrassing, his manners are not extremely terrible (especially when compared to those of Mr. Darcy) and he makes it extremely clear that he has some substantial social connections that Elizabeth could possibly benefit from; however, there is one thing Mr. Collins lacks: land. Mr. Collins does not, in fact, possess any land of his own, but lives in a residence provided to him by Lady Catherine De Bourgh. During the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, England was still controlled by those who owned land and "ownership of landed property remained the greatest source of wealth, power and social honour," while those who were invested in the market were often seen as "creatures of passion and fancy" (Davidoff and Hall 198). We can see this attitude reflected in the novel when the narrator describes the Bingley sisters as spending more money than they should, associating with people of rank (implying that they are not people of rank), and relying more on making it clear that they were a respectable family from north England, than the fact that their fortune had come from trade (Austen 54).

Because Mr. Collins did not actually own his land, Elizabeth could have been removed from the property by Lady Catherine upon the death of Mr. Collins, and although Elizabeth's marriage to Collins would have resulted in her family still being in

possession of her father's estate, it may not have been possible for Elizabeth to live on that property if she outlived Mr. Collins. In this instance, if Elizabeth and Mr. Collins had children, the estate could have been sold to generate annuities as mentioned before or it could have been placed into the hands of a trustee in order to save the property for the children, which would still not guarantee Elizabeth's financial security. An example of this would be Armaretta Argent, who was a widow of a Witham farmer and a trustee of an estate; however, she shared her trusteeship with her two brothers-in-law. Mrs. Argent inherited horses, cattle, and other paraphernalia associated with the livestock, but "the trustees were instructed to sell all the rest and divide it between the seven children. Her share, even of the household goods, was not to exceed £100" (Davidoff and Hall 211). Clearly, if a situation of this type arose for Elizabeth, her pecuniary future would not have been very secure. Not to mention that Mr. Collins's profession was one of the few in which the widow could expect to inherit very little, if anything. In 1827, Rev. Richard Cobbold from a Suffolk village wrote that he was upset because he could not leave his wife a "residence of any independent kind" after his death, and later went on to lament that "few people suffer more from change of circumstances than clergyman's widows." This same complaint was also paralleled by a Congregational minister in Essex who, upon being threatened with termination, told his congregation that he did not have a trade, exactly, and therefore had nothing to fall back on if he was removed from his position.

We can assume that it was for the above reasons that Elizabeth rejected Mr. Collins. In her rejection, Elizabeth states that she is "very sensible of the honour of [Mr. Collins'] proposals" but claims that it would be impossible for her to accept him. The fact of the matter is, there wouldn't be much honor for Elizabeth to be the wife of a clergyman, and so it appears that this sentence is more of an insult to Mr. Collins' pride rather than a compliment of his proposal. Aside from this statement, Elizabeth gives no real reasons as to why she is rejecting Mr. Collins, which leads him to believe that she is rejecting him purely out of modesty. In this scene, it appears that Elizabeth creates excuses for her rejection, as we see when she claims that Lady Catherine would not like her (which would be completely presumptuous of Elizabeth, seeing as she had neither heard of, nor met, Lady Catherine at this point in the story) and when she claims that there is no way Mr. Collins could make *her* happy, and she certainly could not make *him* happy; however, this is rather pretentious, for Mr. Collins finds Elizabeth to be very amiable, and there is little doubt in Elizabeth's ability to make Mr. Collins happy, seeing as he is only concerned with marrying a sensible woman that he could show off to the Lady De Bourgh. Again Mr. Collins attempts to persuade Elizabeth to accept his proposal by making it clear that his situation should be desirable because of his connections with her family as well as his other connections, and that she has very little chance of receiving a proposal from anyone, let alone someone better than Mr. Collins. He makes it very clear to her that her small inheritance, along with the small dowry her family could provide, will most certainly undo any charm she may have. Elizabeth, however, was very astute and would have been aware of the financial implications of being a clergyman's wife. She would have understood that her financial future would have been very limited and could have possibly been no better than her current situation. For those reasons alone she chose to reject the proposal of Mr. Collins.

The ending of this possible relationship puts the focus on two others. The first of these relationships being between Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy, which becomes very interesting when viewed in terms of the different emotions felt by both. Mr. Darcy's introduction into the novel tells us that he is far more attractive than his friend, but his manners are abhorrent and he is disliked by the entire company in attendance at the ball. It is the wish of almost all in attendance (Elizabeth included) that Mr. Darcy never returns (Austen 50). Elizabeth is first put off by Mr. Darcy when she overhears him saying that he doesn't find her at all attractive, or good enough to dance with. We later discover that Mr. Darcy's lack of desire for dancing stems from an insecurity of interacting with those who he is not intimately acquainted. Not only this, but upon further studying Elizabeth's features, he begins to find her very attractive and wants to get to know her better. This, however, is lost upon Elizabeth who has become determined to dislike Mr. Darcy despite any effort he may make in changing her mind; however, one question does arise. If Elizabeth is supposedly so focused on the pursuit of a suitable companion, why did she not begin to pursue Mr. Darcy from his very introduction? Elizabeth is first introduced to Mr. Darcy before she receives the advice of Charlotte Lucas, and her opinions consequently are already settled before she begins to seriously think of the pursuit of a husband. Not only this, but it is not long after her introduction to Mr. Darcy that Mr. Collins makes his proposal, and Wickham makes his appearance. For Elizabeth, it seems there is no shortage of suitors, and she finds herself in no need of pursuing a man who she finds so disagreeable when she is the object of Wickham's attention, regardless of that other man's income.

Upon first meeting Wickham, we are told that Elizabeth was happy to talk to him, even about the least interesting subjects because he was such a pleasant person (Austen 110). Furthermore, the way in which her feelings about him are described by the narrator become interesting when later compared to the way in which her feelings toward Mr. Darcy are described. Elizabeth talks of Wickham being handsome and holds her tongue for fear of going too far when she almost compliments him on his "wonderful countenance" (Austen 114). This flirtatious, visible behavior is directly opposite of her emotions concerning Darcy, especially when Elizabeth is described as leaving the party of Mrs. Philips with "her head full of [Wickham]"; however, the infatuation with Wickham is brought to an abrupt halt by two events, the most interesting being a conversation between Elizabeth and her aunt, Mrs. Gardiner (Austen 118). Mrs. Gardiner, upon seeing and hearing of the affection Elizabeth has for Wickham, tells her that she should "not involve [herself], or endeavour to involve [herself] which the want of fortune would make so very imprudent," and continues by telling Elizabeth, "you must not let your fancy run away with you. You have sense, and we all expect you to use it" (Austen 172). This "sense" of which Mrs. Gardiner speaks is soon displayed to the fullest by Wickham (and surprisingly defended by Elizabeth) when Wickham loses interest in Elizabeth and begins to pursue a Mary King, who has just received a large amount of money by way of inheritance. This event with Miss King ultimately puts an end to Elizabeth's potential relationship with Wickham, and the narrator explains that Elizabeth's heart had been "but slightly touched" although she still felt that she would have been Wickham's choice for a wife "had fortune permitted it" (Austen 177). Of course this reference to "fortune" has a dual meaning, implying both luck and Wickham's financial situation. The focus by Mrs. Gardiner on Wickham's finances suggests to the reader that Elizabeth is being instructed to focus more on the promise of financial stability and less on affection; however, the fact that Wickham chose to give up on Elizabeth for a woman with more money is looked down on by Mrs. Gardiner, but Elizabeth defends Wickham's choice. When Mrs. Gardiner says Wickham is simply being mercenary Elizabeth responds by saying, "Pray, my dear aunt, what is the difference in matrimonial affairs, between the mercenary and the prudent motive?" She then goes on to defend Wickham's behavior and claims that if this Mary King does not mind Wickham's interest in her money, why should anyone else? This defense of Wickham shows that Elizabeth now identifies with Wickham's struggle more than she or the narrator let on. The ending of the relationship with her last suitor, as well as her conversation with her aunt, forces Elizabeth to begin actively thinking of employing more prudent motives, just as Wickham has, when a suitor is concerned (although Wickham's motives ultimately turn out to be more mercenary than Elizabeth's). The idea of marriage prudence was not an uncommon one. By the early nineteenth century, individuals were given more choice (albeit closely monitored) in their marriage partners; however, peer pressure often resulted in a marriage "when [a woman] would have preferred to remain single" (Davidoff and Hall 325). Even with more freedom to choose a partner, those looking for marriage "were less willing to start a marriage without sufficient resources" (Davidoff and Hall 324). We can see clearly that Elizabeth (as well as her family) is focused on marrying to gain resources as indicated through her rejection of Mr. Collins and her warning against pursuing Wickham. This idea of prudence ties very distinctly back to the opening of the novel; a rich man may be in want of a wife, but a middle-class woman needed a husband. "If marriage was thus an 'important crisis' in a man's life, it could be the key to a woman's future" (Davidoff and Hall 325). That "key" for Elizabeth ultimately turns out to be Mr. Darcy, but it is a choice that is made without the influence of emotion.

Very often in the story, we are led to believe that Elizabeth tries to judge everyone around her based on their character, absent of any emotions she may possess; however, the reader learns that Elizabeth's ability to judge objectively is rather flawed. One such instance can be seen in her support of Wickham over Mr. Darcy, but the most important of these misjudgments occurs during Mr. Darcy's proposal to Elizabeth. There is no sensible way to explain why Elizabeth refused Mr. Darcy's proposal, because her decision was based purely on strong emotions. The one thing we gain from this prejudiced emotion is an understanding of Elizabeth's true feelings toward Mr. Darcy. Elizabeth's dislike for Mr. Darcy ultimately defines her rejection of him, and it is stated that "in spite of her deeply-rooted dislike, she could not be insensible to the compliment of such a man's affection... [but] her intentions did not vary for an instant," and the reader is led to understand that Elizabeth is not even considering Mr. Darcy's proposal, even though she understands what it means. She goes even further, telling Mr. Darcy that she has never desired approval from him (Austen 211). But perhaps the most interesting statement comes when she explains to Mr. Darcy that "it is not merely this affair [his involvement in the separation of Jane and Mr. Bingley]...on which my dislike is founded. Long before it had taken place, my opinion of you was decided" (Austen 212). Elizabeth is very aware that Mr. Darcy possesses a large fortune, but his proposal was made at a very inopportune time. Her fresh emotions, as well as the heated conversation following Mr. Darcy's confessions of love result in a stubbornness on the part of Elizabeth. The next day, Elizabeth is the recipient of a letter from Mr. Darcy, which explains his position in relation to Mr. Bingley and Jane, as well as his involvement with Wickham. Elizabeth's reaction to the information contained in the letter further clarifies her lack of desire to be associated with Mr. Darcy any longer. Although this letter was meant to improve her opinion of Mr. Darcy, it ultimately does not serve its purpose. The reader finds that Elizabeth is more upset with herself for her inability to discern Wickham's avaricious motives than her loss of Mr. Darcy's proposal (Austen 226). She even goes as far to say "she could not approve him; nor could she for a moment repent her refusal, or feel the slightest inclination ever to see him again," which leaves no doubt whatsoever that Elizabeth harbors no true love or affection for Mr. Darcy, but is more concerned with vanity and her own shortcomings (Austen 231). Elizabeth only realizes the extent of her mistake when plans during a trip with her aunt and uncle inadvertently result in making a trip to Mr. Darcy's estate in Devonshire.

Elizabeth's desire to visit Pemberley was contingent on Mr. Darcy not being present in the country, for fear that she may be forced to see him while touring his grounds. Upon learning that Mr. Darcy was indeed not currently residing at Pemberley, Elizabeth agreed to go. The fact that Elizabeth only desired to see Pemberley absent of Mr. Darcy makes clear to the reader that her opinions of him have not changed, and that she is still resolute in her promise to never see Mr. Darcy again; however, her opinions interestingly and drastically change upon seeing Pemberley for the first time. Austen's phraseology is extremely telling of Elizabeth's prudent motives when she writes, "*at that moment* [italics mine] she felt that to be mistress of Pemberley might be something," (Austen 259). Elizabeth realizes in one instant what she gave up by not accepting the proposal of Mr. Darcy, and, although she finds herself in awe of his estate, we still find Elizabeth hoping that Mr. Darcy is not present. We again see Austen using duality of definition to convey a point to the reader. She describes Elizabeth as "after slightly surveying [a room], went to a window to enjoy its prospect." The word prospect catches the eye for not only does it refer to the view of the window, it also refers to the "prospect" of being mistress of Pemberley. We find that Elizabeth is not just touring Pemberley for the entertainment, but she is indeed viewing the property from the perspective that it all could have been hers. She begins to acknowledge her mistake in rejecting Mr. Darcy, not because she has had a change of heart, but because she has realized the extent of the wealth she gave up. Elizabeth finds herself thinking, "of this place...I might have been mistress! With these rooms I might now have been familiarly acquainted! Instead of viewing them as a stranger, I might have rejoiced in them as my own, and welcomed to them as visitors my aunt and uncle." These thoughts are purely focused on two objects: Elizabeth, and Pemberley House. We see no mention of a relationship with Mr. Darcy or any member of his family, we see no mention of affection toward Mr. Darcy or happiness that a marital union between the two would have brought. We do, however, see a clear description of the overwhelming happiness an estate of such grandeur, as well as the prospect of entertaining family in the estate, would have brought to Elizabeth (Austen 260). For the very first time since Mr. Darcy made his ill-fated proposal, we see Elizabeth experience some form of regret. This regret is in no way based on emotions or feelings toward Mr. Darcy, and in fact, we see that her opinion of Mr. Darcy up to this point has not changed at all; however, a change in opinion does begin to occur when Elizabeth discovers the power which Mr. Darcy possesses: "As a brother, a landlord, a master, she considered how many people's happiness were in his guardianship! – How much of pleasure or pain it was in his power to bestow!" (Austen 264). We would, however, expect that her warming up to Mr. Darcy would result in her wanting to see him again, but this turns out to not be the case. It soon becomes apparent while they tour the grounds, that Mr. Darcy has returned early and catches sight of Elizabeth and her relatives. The emotions which Elizabeth experience upon seeing Mr. Darcy seem contradictory to statements made by herself only a few pages prior. She laments that their trip to Pemberley was "ill-judged," and "most unfortunate," which hardly conveys an eagerness to meet the man whose proposal she has only moments before come to regret rejecting.

The interactions that follow between Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth contain rather strange descriptions of her feelings toward Mr. Darcy. When Mr. Darcy and his sister come to visit Elizabeth and her relatives the next day, Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner find themselves interested in the relationship between their niece and Mr. Darcy. Ultimately, they come to the conclusion "that one of them at least knew what it was to love" (Austen 273). The fact that neither Mr. nor Mrs. Gardiner could discern any form of love on the part of Elizabeth speaks volumes, and when it is realized by Elizabeth that Mr. Darcy is still madly in love with her, she finds herself to be extremely perplexed. Eventually, Mr. Darcy and his sister leave and Elizabeth is left to her own thoughts. Again, the way in which Elizabeth describes the situation cause one to have an interest in her motives. Elizabeth explains that "it was evident that he [Mr. Darcy] was very much in love with her," and yet we see no mention of her feelings toward Mr. Darcy, save one description explaining that her feelings toward him had not yet been determined (Austen 276). Later that night, Elizabeth lay awake trying to make sense of the new developments between herself and Mr. Darcy, and comes to a very prudent conclusion. She decides that she no longer views Mr. Darcy as "repugnant," but rather she views him with a "friendlier nature." Although the reader may be hoping for a love to blossom between Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth at this point, it is important not to read too far into what Austen has written. The fact that Elizabeth describes her own feelings toward Mr. Darcy as friendly may suggest many things, but it certainly does not suggest an overwhelming passion or love for Mr. Darcy. At long last, we see Elizabeth develop in to the prudent woman when she channels the advice of Charlotte Lucas that was given to her in the opening of the novel and states:

Such a change in a man of so much pride, excited not only astonishment but gratitude – for to love, ardent love, it must be attributed; and as such its impression on her was of a sort to be encouraged, as by no means displeasing, though it could not be exactly defined. She respected, she esteemed, she was grateful to him, she felt a real interest in his welfare; and she only wanted to know how far she wished that welfare to depend upon herself, and how far it would be for the happiness of both that she should employ the power, which her fancy told her she still possessed, of bringing on the renewal of his addresses. (Austen 277)

This description of her decision as to how to handle the affections of Mr. Darcy could not make Elizabeth's motives clearer. She acknowledges that Mr. Darcy does indeed love her, and that it is the type of love to be encouraged just as Charlotte Lucas suggested that love needed to be encouraged, but more importantly she acknowledges an array of feelings she has toward Mr. Darcy; respect, esteem, gratefulness, and interest are all well and good, yet none of these are synonymous with love. She

ultimately decides that she will “shew more affection than she feels” in order to secure a second proposal from Mr. Darcy.

One major question does emerge, however, and that is, why does Mr. Darcy want to marry a woman of a lower position in society? It would seem that someone of Mr. Darcy's position could have any companion that he chose, and that logically he would choose a woman who would add wealth and status to his house. But, during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the practice of marrying for love rather than money or status for the aristocracy had a lot of support (Trumbach 109-113). There was also a rise after 1750 of a “constant but small-scale mingling of men of elite status with the daughters of men of business” which would further support Mr. Darcy's pursuit of Elizabeth based solely on his affection for her; however, the situation was not quite the same for women. “Novelists from Samuel Richardson to Jane Austen also made it [the English social paradigm] one of the two basic themes in the English novel, the second being closely related issue of love versus money and status as the deciding factor in the business of marriage” (Stone 14). This idea that men could easily become members of the elite while a woman “took her husband's social standing, [meaning] her marriage was of greater moment to her than a man's to him,” helps to support the differences in climbing the social ladder through marriage between Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy (Trumbach 97). Essentially, while Mr. Darcy's position in society granted him the leisure to choose whomever he liked, Elizabeth was not so fortunate.

Subsequent events involving Wickham and Elizabeth's sister, Lydia, delay Elizabeth securing the proposal that she seeks. But Elizabeth's despair over what she considers to be the end of her association with Mr. Darcy give great insight into her emotions. Elizabeth says in despair that “never had she so honestly felt that she could have loved him, as now, when all love must be vain” (Austen 288). One word contained in this lamentation characterizes Elizabeth's emotions, and that is the word “could.” Her use of this tense clearly tells the reader that Elizabeth does not currently love Mr. Darcy, but upon securing his proposal (and Pemberley as a result) she could have loved him, and the esteem which she had previously felt for Mr. Darcy became, for her, something to be jealous of “when she could no longer hope to be benefitted by it” (Austen 317). Eventually, it becomes clear to Elizabeth that her sister's actions have not affected Mr. Darcy's opinion of her, and that Mr. Darcy had even taken it upon himself to secure the desired marriage between Wickham and Lydia. One would think that the extent to which Mr. Darcy went to prove his love for Elizabeth would result in her returning his feelings, but it does not. After all that Mr. Darcy has done, Elizabeth describes herself as only having a “change of sentiment toward him” which can hardly be equated to the “ardent love” which Mr. Darcy is known to possess (Austen 337). Following this “change of sentiment” is a description of Elizabeth's overwhelming anxiety over the obligation she feels to repay Mr. Darcy for his involvement in her sister's affairs. There is incessant talk of what her family owes Mr. Darcy, and how their ignorance of Mr. Darcy's actions pained her.

The circulating rumors of Mr. Darcy's expected engagement to Elizabeth warrant a visit from Mr. Darcy's aunt, Lady Catherine De Bourgh, who Elizabeth had become acquainted with when visiting Mr. Collins and his new wife, Charlotte. Lady Catherine attempts to dissuade Elizabeth from accepting Mr. Darcy's impending proposal. She explains to Elizabeth that it has been her plan that Mr. Darcy would marry her daughter in order to unite the two estates. Elizabeth refuses to either confirm or deny the rumors, and Lady Catherine accuses Elizabeth of using “arts and allurements [to]...draw him in,” to which Elizabeth slyly replies “If I have, I shall be the last person to confess it” (Austen 355). Elizabeth, although acknowledging her use of encouragement by her statement, does not wish to confirm it outright, for this may (if reported back to Mr. Darcy) have an adverse affect on her relationship. But perhaps the most telling moment in the conversation between Lady De Bourgh and Elizabeth occurs when Lady De Bourgh threatens Elizabeth with her being “censured, slighted and despised, by every one connected with [Mr. Darcy],” to which Elizabeth, in a moment showing her brutal honesty and prudent motives, shockingly replies, “These are heavy misfortunes...but the wife of Mr. Darcy must have such extraordinary sources of happiness necessarily attached to her situation, that she could, upon the whole, have no cause to repine” (Austen 356). Austen chooses to use the word “misfortunes” as a pun, because as Elizabeth clearly states, she could buy her own happiness with Mr. Darcy's immense fortune. Elizabeth is making it perfectly clear to Lady Catherine that she is “only resolved to act in that manner, which will, in [her] own opinion, constitute [her] happiness, without reference to [Lady Catherine], or to any other person so wholly unconnected with [her]” (Austen 359). The point is made, and the matter ultimately left unsettled between the two women. Elizabeth soon secures Darcy's proposal, but is “agitated and confused, [and] rather knew that she was happy, than felt herself to be so,” which in no way conveys to the reader the image of a fiancé overflowing with joy. Furthermore, Elizabeth makes no form of an apology to Mr. Darcy for her previous accusations, and during the few times it is brought up by Mr. Darcy, she attempts to change the subject which suggests that Elizabeth's opinions of the events, and therefore Mr. Darcy's behavior, have not undergone any change. Elizabeth's descriptions of her own emotions show a great contrast to Mr. Darcy, who explains to Elizabeth that he cannot name the exact day in which he loved Elizabeth; however, we have already seen Elizabeth telling Jane “I believe I must date it [her change of opinion] from my first seeing his beautiful grounds at Pemberley,” which is interesting in itself because it shows that Mr. Darcy's altered manner were not what changed Elizabeth's opinion, but it was “upon seeing his beautiful grounds at Pemberley” that she experienced her change of heart (Austen 372). In fact, Elizabeth must convince her whole family that she does have feelings of affection for Mr. Darcy. The hardest person she has to convince is her father, who, upon hearing of the engagement, asks Elizabeth “what are you doing? Are you out of your senses, to be accepting this man? Have not you always hated him?” To this Elizabeth wishes that she had better concealed her opinions of Mr. Darcy (Austen 375). Then, when Elizabeth relays the story to Mr. Bennet of Mr. Darcy's involvement in Lydia's affairs and the extent to which the family was indebted to him, Mr. Bennet then tells Elizabeth that the family will benefit by her marriage to Mr. Darcy, and that “I shall offer to pay him to-morrow; he will rant and storm about his love for you, and there will be an end of the matter,” showing that Mr. Bennet then sought to take advantage of the situation to satiate his parsimonious nature, giving Elizabeth a pass from Mr. Bennet's questions. At long last we see Elizabeth's motives come full circle when she is able to live out one of her desires. When she first visited Pemberley, she explained how she wishes she could have invited her aunt and uncle, and before she has even been married to Mr. Darcy, or moved into Pemberley, she takes it upon herself to invite both Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner to Pemberley for Christmas (Austen 380).

Although the dénouement in Jane Austen's novel may at first leave us with a feeling of finality, deeper questions start to come into view about Elizabeth and her happiness. Perhaps one thing that we never quite grasp is if Elizabeth will truly be happy living in Pemberley with Mr. Darcy. The story ends with the cliché happily-ever-after ending, but it leaves one longing to find out how the story ends for the real world Elizabeth. By simply reading *Pride and Prejudice* as though it were love story for both characters, the reader is forced to do away with all questions pertaining to the future of the relationship between Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth; they are both in love, and they are pictured as remaining ardently in love with each other at the closing of the novel, giving the reader no cause for concern that their relationship could take a misfortunate turn. On the other hand, if we view the relationship as it has been shown in the preceding pages, the novel takes on a whole new light. There is now a discussion to be had on the future of the union between the two, if Elizabeth eventually grows to love Mr. Darcy, and if Elizabeth really does find her happiness at Pemberley. It can be argued that the novel in itself is a critique on the system as a whole, suggesting that women were in desperate need of ways to make their life their own, instead of perpetually depending on a man throughout their lives. Austen's novel takes on deeper meaning, and explores more the questions of a woman's role in society, instead of just commenting on the average ideas of propriety and love. There is a statement to be made when viewing the book in such a way, even if Elizabeth Bennet found her happiness with Mr. Darcy, even if the social modes of the time worked favorably for Elizabeth, it did not for many women. There were many women of the time that were forced into marry the Mr. Collinses of the world, that did not find happiness, but were forced to settle with the mediocre, rather than pursue the extraordinary. Perhaps, through answering these questions, we can begin

to find ourselves seeing but a glimpse of the life for a woman during the early nineteenth century, the unique challenges that the time posed for those who lived in it, and find ourselves seeing that many women shared Elizabeth's views when she said, "the more I see of the world the more I am dissatisfied with it; and every day confirms my belief of the inconsistency of all human characters, and of the little dependence that can be placed in the appearance of either merit or sense," (Austen 164). We may never know if Elizabeth was truly satisfied, but we do know that Austen set out to do more than write a novel about propriety, she set out to let the reader know that women were dissatisfied, and through Elizabeth Bennet, attempted to change the minds of the people.

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