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Laughing at the World

Comedy and Gender in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*

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Introduction

The novel *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) by Jane Austen negotiates the reality of women during the 19th-century through comedy. Matrimony was overpoweringly the only acceptable way for middle and upper class women to gain a socially and financially secure future. Irony, satire and other forms of humour that produce comedic effects are used in Jane Austen's novel to criticise the institution of marriage. Jane Austen's usage of irony has been well documented in all her published works from her juvenilia to her later texts. In her earlier novels, Jane Austen criticises the wealthy upper class through humour.[1] The aristocracy maintains restricting literary and social conventions. Jane Austen distanced her writing from the sentimental novel and its demands of perfection and virtue. The genre is satirised through the depictions of imperfect heroines. The sentimental novel is generally placed in a domestic setting that relies on an ordered domestic structure.[23] The sentimental family was a construction of the sentimental novel. This defined family relations and women's position within the nuclear family.[4] Jane Austen's comedic tone has a twofold purpose, to offer social criticism and to break from a literary past.[5] Through the portrait of Mrs Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice,* the novel is able to masquerade criticism of patriarchal notions of women.[6] The heroine mocks the woman, which results in the portrait of Mrs Bennet as the hysteric mother.[7]

Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* deals with the upbringing of the five Bennet sisters whose lives are shaped by the laws of entailment and property. Through the primogeniture act, the first-born son or the nearest male relative will inherit the family estate as a way of maintaining property within the aristocracy and preserving patriarchal authority. Mrs Bennet attempts to marry off her daughters knowing that the Longbourn estate will pass to Mr Bennet's cousin Mr Collins. Throughout the narrative, Mrs Bennet is depicted as a comic character due to her many attempts to form advantageous matches for her daughters in order to avoid the result of her daughters becoming destitute when Mr Collins acquires their

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[1] Marvin Mudrick, *Jane Austen: Irony as Defence and Discovery,* Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1952, p. 180.
[2]Audrey Bilger, *Laughing Feminism: Subversive Comedy in Frances Burney, Maria Edgeworth, and Jane Austen,* Michigan, Wayne State University Press, 1998. p. 21.
[3] Gabriela Castellanos, *Laughter, War and Feminism: Elements of Carnival in Three of Jane Austen's Novels,* Peter Lang, New York, 1994, p. 3.
[4] Bilger, p. 22.
[5] Mudrick, p. 180.
[6] Soghra Nodeh, "Dialogic Narrative Discourse in Austen's Emma: A Bakhtinian Review." *K@ta*, 2013: 15, p. 2.
[7] Nodeh, p. 2.

home. Mrs Bennet eagerly wants her daughters to avoid becoming old maids. The text deals with the relationship between economic realities and matrimony in a small, rural community in England. *Pride and Prejudice* culminates in marriage and the novel's comic ending is either read by literary scholars as the upholding of conservative values or an ironic way of displaying that women were limited to either marriage or spinsterhood.[8]

Pride and Prejudice follows the trajectory of the marriage plot but it criticises the marriage market of the 19th-century. The criticism of matrimony is expressed through the characters that do not share the heroine's path. Through the existence of Bakhtinian fools who exhibit the dialogic existence of conflicting discourses, the novel opposes misogynistic language. Moreover, the portrait of Mrs Bennet relies on sexist stereotypes. But, through the depiction of the character, Jane Austen is able to disguise criticism of the social order and oppression of women.[9] During the 17th-century and onward, comedy altered to a polite form of intellectual humour.[10] However, Jane Austen differentiates her comedy from this type of humour with the existence of Bakhtinian fools in her literary works. These figures rely on boisterous humour and ridicule in order to express criticism of English 19th-century society. The Bakhtinian fool functions as a mask for the author and furthermore as a foil character for the heroine.[11] The figure disturbs the official narrative of the text and creates an ambivalent attitude toward the marriage plot in *Pride and Prejudice*.

This study strives to explain the role of the rogue, clown, and fool in Jane Austen's novel and will therefore employ Mikhail Bakhtin's collection of essays *The Dialogic Imagination* (1975). Furthermore, the terms heteroglossia and double-voiced discourse will be clarified. The figures have been formative in the development of the novel as a genre.[12] Comedy functions as an important entrance into studying the genre as laughter and parodying language are central to the evolution of the novel. Parody and irony are further two categories of double-voiced discourse that are used in Jane Austen's novel.[13] Mikhail Bakhtin writes "[t]hese distinctive links and interrelationships between utterances and languages, this movement of the theme through different languages and speech types, its dispersion into the

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[8] Candace Ward, "Note", in *Pride and Prejudice,* Dover Publications, New York, 1995, p. v.
[9] Nodeh, p. 2.
[10] Stuart M. Tave, *The Amiable Humorist: a Study in the Comic Theory and Criticism of the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries,* The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1960. p. Viii.
[11] Nodeh, p. 4.
[12] Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination,* University of Texas Press, Austin, 2014, p. 158.
[13] Pearce, Lynne, "Bakhtin and the Dialogic Principle", in *Literary Theory and Criticism: an Oxford Guide*, ed. Patricia Waugh, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2006, p. 227.

rivulets and droplets of social heteroglossia, its dialogization – this is the basic distinguishing feature of the stylistics of the novel".[14] Understanding the function of the rogue, clown, and fool therefore constitutes a greater comprehension of the existence of several hierarchized discourses in the novel.

Aim and Method

This essay aims to display the effects of comedy in *Pride and Prejudice* through the portrait of Mrs Bennet. The study will exhibit the use of irony and satire in the novel. The text employs humour to discuss socio-political realities. Dialogue is used to deliver comedic effect and this technique is utilised throughout Jane Austen's literary texts including her juvenilia, which will be discussed in this study.[15] Additionally, this study will apply Mikhail Bakhtin's figures of the rogue, clown, and fool. This essay attempts to place *Pride and Prejudice* in the broader landscape of comedy in English fiction as well as the theoretical field of comedy in Jane Austen's literary texts. The various terms used to denote comedy will be defined. Furthermore, it will explore how Jane Austen has used comedy to criticise misogyny and discuss women's position in 19th-century English society. The text has been chosen as it reflects on women's lives through humour. This essay will focus on how Mrs Bennet is portrayed as well as reflect on how her role affects the outcome the text.

The analysis will be structured in several parts. In the "Previous research" section, the studies that will be presented are limited to the scholarly essays used in this study concerning the relationship between gender and comedy as well as studies on dialogic narrative discourse in Jane Austen's novels. The analysis will be divided into eight parts. Primarily, the study will describe Mrs Bennet's role in *Pride and Prejudice* including the dynamic between her and the heroine. Furthermore, how the narrator's depiction of Mrs Bennet contributes to making the novel dialogic. Consequently, the novel reveals the conflict between authoritative and opposing discourse in the text. The following two sections will regard the entailing of estates and the marriage market in the 19th-century in relation to how Mrs Bennet contributes to the criticism of these conventions in the novel. The subsequent parts concern the heroine's process of development and its dialogic relation with other

[14] Bakhtin, p. 263.
[15] Janet Todd, *The Cambridge Introduction to Jane Austen,* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2006, p. 4.

characters' plots.[16] Lastly, this study will examine Jane Austen's parody of the sentimental novel.

While this essay is primarily concentrated on Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of dialogism and the main source to the theoretical approach in the study is *The Dialogic Imagination,* the theory section will involve a short description of carnival and Mikhail Bakhtin's text *Rabelais and his World* (1968). The historical and literary context in which Mikhail Bakhtin discusses carnival is vastly different from the one depicted by Jane Austen in *Pride and Prejudice.* However, the figures of the rogue, clown, and fool also appear and have a significant role within carnival. This theoretical text therefore serves an important background for understanding the figures' roles in later literary texts. The difference and similarities between their functions in the two theoretical texts will be briefly explained. Additionally, the theory section will include a feminist approach to carnival, which Mary Russo examines in *The Female Grotesque: Risk, Excess and Modernity* (1995). Furthermore, the novel has been selected for analysis as it contains various forms of humour but more importantly employs the figure of the Bakhtinian fool. Humour is one of Jane Austen's primary tools to defy societal and literary conventions. This leads to the essay's research question: how does the novel use the portrait of Mrs Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice* to negotiate the reality of women in 19th-century England through comedy?

Literary Terms of Comedy

Comedy is both a type of drama and a general term for a source of amusement. This study is concerned with the latter. Comedy will be used to denote the tools that are applied to deliver enjoyment in Jane Austen's novel *Pride and Prejudice.* Humour is consequently utilised to signify a type of communication that aims to produce laughter.[17] Comedy exists in the form of many categories such as irony, satire, burlesque, farce, and parody. There are additionally literary subgenres of comedy that are relevant for this study namely comedy of manners and the sentimental comedy. The comedy of manners has its background in the ancient Greek literary tradition and reached popularity in England during the Restoration period. The genre

[16] Barbara K. Seeber, *General Consent in Jane Austen: A Study of Dialogism,* McGill-Queen's University Press, Montreal, 2000, p. 26.

[17] Arthur Koestler, "Humour", *Encyclopaedia Britannica,* 2016. Accessed from https://www.britannica.com/topic/humor 2018-03-16.

uses satire to criticise social conventions and the conduct of the society's members that it depicts. The characters one encounters in the genre either live up to or digress from social expectations. The texts negotiate human folly in relation to society's demands and established social codes.[18] An example of a comedy of manners is William Congreve's drama *The Way of the World* (1700). The sentimental novel and the sentimental comedy were developed during the 18th-century. The genres are characterised by an emphasis on emotions above reason. Many of the elements that shaped the sentimental novel were implemented by writers of the Romantic era.[19] The sentimental comedy is a type of drama that originated from the genre of tragedy. The protagonist in this form of comedy triumphs over a set of moral setbacks. Later the protagonist returns to a virtuous life.[20] Jane Austen parodies the two genres in her novels.

In *Alchemy of Laughter* (2000), Glen Cavaliero studies comedy and what comedy does. He reflects on comedy both as a genre and comical aspects of several texts including five of Jane Austen's major novels and her juvenilia. He defines comedy as "an experience *of* experience".[21] Glen Cavaliero continues to write that comedy rebels against the monolith. The monolith denotes homogenous and normative values. He defines humour as a form of defamiliarisation and writes "[c]omedy exposes the fallacy inherent in every monolithic interpretation of human experience: it refutes exclusiveness, points out inconsistencies, and harmonises them in a renewed pattern of relationships. It deconstructs the monolith in order to breathe life into it".[22] Glen Cavaliero defines parody, irony, satire, and wit in relation to the monolithic.

Glen Cavaliero describes parody as a mirror that emphasises the strange aspects of the monolith. It includes imitation and only functions if the object of parody is familiar to the reader.[23] Parodies adopt elements of one or several genres and mock it by adopting and ridiculing a common component of the genre or genres.[24] It further involves the imitation of

[18] "Comedy of manners", *Encyclopaedia Britannica,* 2016. Accessed from https://www.britannica.com/art/comedy-of-manners 2018-05-10.
[19] "Sentimental novel", *Encyclopaedia Britannica,* 2012. Accessed from https://www.britannica.com/art/sentimental-novel 2018-03-03.
[20] "Sentimental comedy", *Encyclopaedia Britannica,* 2018. Accessed from https://www.britannica.com/art/sentimental-comedy 2018-03-03.
[21] Glen Cavaliero, *The Alchemy of Laughter: Comedy in English Fiction,* Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2000, p. ix.
[22] Cavaliero, p. 4.
[23] Cavaliero, p. 23.
[24] "Parody", in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature: The Romantic Period,* Volume D, Ninth edition, ed. Stephen Greenblatt, Deidre Shauna Lynch and Jack Stillinger, W.W. Norton and Company, London and New York, 2012, p. A21.

another literary text in an exaggerated manner.[25] Irony is a stylistic figure and it means the opposite of a statement, which is usually said for the sake of enjoyment. This means that irony involves an incongruity between a statement and a situation that subverts the declaration.[26] It furthermore encompasses an inconsistency between words and their significance.[27] This type of comedy can further take the form of a stylistic device in the text; namely, structural irony, which utilises an unreliable narrator or a protagonist who is bewildered about the world he or she inhabits. It is connected with dramatic irony, in which the reader has more awareness about a protagonist's situation than the character does. Irony further has an important function within satire.[28] The meaning of wit has shifted greatly over time and it partly means cleverness and type of humour that often involves word play.[29] Wit relies on the dynamic aspects of language that is able to create meaning beyond face value and it is therefore related to irony.[30]

Satirical texts have a longstanding tradition within literary history and it is both a literary genre as well as a mode that involves social criticism.[31] Satire tackles contemporary societal issues usually in an overtly critical way and it is typically targeted to a specific audience. It further often represents human error in an amusing way.[32] The Menippean satire is an important subgenre that has shaped later forms of satire and the genre has influenced the authors François Rabelais and Jonathan Swift. In *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics,* Mikhail Bakhtin writes that the Menippean satire is identified by "*an extraordinary freedom of plot and philosophical innovation*".[33] He further describes it as an unrestricted genre that often includes fantastic elements. The Menippean satire examines a philosophical thought, societal conventions, or a contemporary issue. It is often depicted through an adventure plot that is usually filled with many contradictions and includes a utopian ending.[34]

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[25] Andrew Bennet and Nicholas Royle, in *Literature, Criticism and Theory,* Routledge, New York, 2015, s. 325.

[26] "Irony", in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature, p. A18.*
[27] Bennet and Royle, p. 323.
[28] "Irony", in *The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms,* 3rd ed, Oxford University Press, 2008. Accessed from http://www.oxfordreference.com.ludwig.lub.lu.se/view/10.1093/acref/9780199208272.001.0001/acref-9780199208272-e-615?rskey=PClMLA&result=615 17-05-2018.
[29] Cavaliero, p. 35.
[30] Cavaliero, p. 37.
[31] "Satire", in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature, p. A23* and Cavaliero p. 30.
[32] Bennet and Royle, p. 326.
[33] Morris, Pam, "Folk Humour and Carnival Ambivalence", in *The Bakhtin Reader: Selected Writing so Bakhtin, Medvedev, Voloshinov",* ed. Pam Morris, Arnold, London, 2003, p. 188 f.
[34] Morris, p. 191 f.

These types of humour and comic genres all have a presence within Jane Austen's literary texts. Comedy has various effects but primarily this study is concerned with the defamiliarising element of humour. Glen Cavaliero writes that "[t]raditionally the ingredients of comedy have been in dynamic relation with normative monolithic values, and are this to that extent dependent on the taboo".[35] Humour is therefore able to actualise the unmentionable and the forbidden. This is relevant in understanding the comic function of the rogue, clown, and fool, which will be discussed in the theoretical section of this essay.

Theory:

The Bakhtinian Fool

Mikhail Bakhtin investigates the roles of the rogue, clown, and fool and their relationship to heteroglossia in *The Dialogic Imagination* (1975). The figures have been formative for the evolvement of the novel as a genre and have had a presence in culture and literary history since ancient times.[36] The three figures can exist as the protagonist of a novel either transparently or as a disguise and they have generally been male characters in literary history.[37] The rogue, clown, and fool are not what they appear to be. On the surface, these figures can seem to be theatrical, villainous, senseless, and emerge as outcasts. But on closer reading, the figures are truth tellers who greatly affect the outcome of literary texts. They therefore encourage the reader to be more perceptive when reading as the figures go through a transformation throughout the text.[38] The fool is a device for the author as the figure helps the author position her or himself in the text.[39] The figures reside in an allegorical state and their function is therefore to display the human condition of uncertainty.[40] But, the role of the rogue, clown, and fool is principally to estrange reigning ideology. Mikhail Bakhtin writes that "[o]pposed to convention and functioning as a force for exposing it, we have the level-headed, cherry and clever wit of the rogue (…), the parodied taints of the clown and the

[35] Cavaliero, p. 20.
[36] Bakhtin, p. 158.
[37] Bakhtin, p. 163.
[38] Bakhtin, p. 160.
[39] Bakhtin, p. 161.
[40] Bakhtin, p. 161 f.

simpleminded incomprehension of the fool".[41] The figures of the rogue, clown, and fool consequently undermine the official ideology of the novel.

Language constitutes a way of seeing the world according to Mikhail Bakhtin.[42] Heteroglossia means multivoicedness and literary translates to "a mixture of tongues".[43] It involves the interaction of various stratified speech types and their entrance in the novel. Heteroglossia denotes the stratification of language on both a national and a cultural level. Stratification is a process that occurs due to resistance to unifying forces within languages, such as the establishment of the concept of a homogenous national language. Various strata therefore constitute languages and denote the diverse languages spoken by different social groups that are currently named sociolects. The individual speech type of a character can further stratify language. The interaction of these languages in the novel is dialogic.[44] In turn, dialogism signifies the arrangement of stratified languages in the text.[45] The novel as a genre represents all languages and ultimately takes part in heteroglossia.[46] The novel consists of a diversity of both languages and individual speech types.[47] Consequently, novelistic discourse contains several voices that are always dialogised, which means that several meanings continuously interact within the text.[48]

Utterances are affected by their social and historical context and therefore contain several meanings.[49] An utterance is therefore contradictory and filled with several intents and conflicts.[50] Each utterance is spoken with a recipient in mind, and operates in relation to the answer and it is therefore dialogic in nature.[51] Instead, a monologic utterance belongs only to the speaker.[52] Mikhail Bakhtin names poetry as a monologic literary form as it does not display or engage with the diversity of language.[53] He further defines heteroglossia when expressed through a character as "another's speech in another's language".[54] This is an example of double-voiced discourse as it "serves two speakers at the same time and expresses

[41] Bakhtin, p. 162.
[42] Bakhtin, p. 333.
[43] Pearce, p. 229.
[44] Sue Vice, *Introducing Bakhtin,* Manchester University Press, Manchester and New York, 1997, p. 18 f.
[45] Vice, p. 50.
[46] Bakhtin, p. 411.
[47] Bakhtin, p. 262.
[48] Bakhtin, p. 426.
[49] Bakhtin, p. 428.
[50] Vice, p. 20.
[51] Bakhtin, p. 280.
[52] Pearce, p. 220.
[53] Bakhtin, p. 297 f.
[54] Bakhtin, p. 324.

simultaneously two different intentions: the direct intention of the character who is speaking, and the refracted intention of the author".[55] An ironic statement reflects on the presence of both the literal and the opposite meaning of the utterance expressed by a character it therefore displays the author's intention. Mikhail Bakhtin does not differentiate between the author and the implied author in *The Dialogic Imagination*.

In *Introducing Bakhtin* (1997), Sue Vice describes the difference between dialogism and heteroglossia and writes that "[d]ialogism describes the way languages interact, while heteroglossia describes the languages themselves".[56] Heteroglossia enters the novel, in which several voices, words, and intentions interact dialogically. The mixture of stratified languages produces various effects in the text that have social and political implications.[57] Mikhail Bakhtin writes that heteroglossia:

> represents the co-existence of socio-ideological contradictions between the present and the past, between differing epochs of the past, between differing socio-ideological groups in the present, between tendencies, schools, circles, and so forth, all given a bodily form.[58]

The novel therefore actualises the existence of several discourses from several social groups as well as political tendencies of both the past and contemporary society. Stratified languages exist in a hierarchy depending on class, race, gender, age, as well as profession and they negotiate their place within said structure.[59]

Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of dialogism explains the socio-political components that are inherent in language. Several feminist literary critics have appropriated the theoretical approach to discuss the opposition to misogynistic language in literary texts. In *The Dialogic imagination,* Mikhail Bakhtin does not mention the gender as a factor concerning the stratification of language. But, his text has been used to discuss the subject in several fields of research. In "Discourse, Gender, and Gossip: Some Reflections of Bakhtin and *Emma*" (1996), Christine Roulston discusses the gender erasure in his theoretical texts. She writes that due to his claim that language is always ideologically charged his theoretical approach lends

[55] Vice , p. 19.
[56] Vice, p. 20.
[57] Vice, p. 20 f.
[58] Vice, p. 21.
[59] Vice, p. 19.

itself well to feminist literary criticism.[60] In *Honey-Mad Women* (1988), Patricia Yeager names the concept of heteroglossia as an emancipatory strategy for women writers. She writes that the dialogic interaction between muted and dominant discourses in women's writing displays disparities between men and women and acts as a narrative strategy for political emancipation.[61] In *Feminism, Bakhtin, and the Dialogic* (1991), Dale M. Bauer and S. Jaret McKinstry discuss the gendered divide between the public and the private sphere in relation to dialogism.[62] They write that institutionalised, public language is in a conflict with concealed, private language and that feminist literary critics should discuss the opposition between the two.[63] Furthermore, they assert that the differences between silence and speech are marked by misogyny. Moreover, the dialogic communication between discourses expressed by characters, narrators, and the implied author displays authoritative language and resistance to it within texts.[64]

The rogue, clown, and fool defy official language and the symbolic figures embody dialogised heteroglossia in the novel.[65]. There are centripetal and centrifugal forces in any language. The centripetal forces aim to unify languages while centrifugal powers have a decentralising effect in languages. National languages contain jargon, dialects, and vernacular language spoken by certain social groups as well as authoritative language.[66] The three figures oppose dictating language through mimicking and jokes, which results in the existence of parodying literary genres that oppose official language.[67] Parodying language is an example of double voiced discourse as two meanings are actualised by the same sentence. It may include the values of both one character and the narrator, meaning that two world-views are embedded within the sentence, which make it dialogic.[68] This means that the role of the rogue, clown, and fool constitute a centrifugal force as they expose authoritarian discourse and decentralise ruling powers.[69]

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[60] Christine Roulston, "Discourse, Gender, and Gossip: Some Reflections of Bakhtin and *Emma*", *Ambiguous Discourse: Feminist Narratology and British Women Writers,* ed. Kathy Mezei, The University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill and London, 1996, p. 40.
[61] Patricia Yeager, *Honey-Mad Women: Emancipatory Strategies in Women's Writing,* Columbia University Press, New York, 1988, p. 256.
[62] Dale M. Bauer and S. Jaret McKinstry, *Feminism, Bakhtin, and the Dialogic,* State University of New York Press, New York, 1991, p. 1.
[63] Bauer and McKinstry, p. 2.
[64] Bauer and McKinstry, p. 3.
[65] Bakhtin, p. 405.
[66] Bakhtin, p. 262 f.
[67] Bakhtin, p. 273.
[68] Bakhtin, p. 324 f.
[69] Bakhtin, p. 425.

Stratification of language has been imperative for the comic English novel. Moreover, the mimicking speech of the three figures is fundamental to comic language.[70] Parody displays the influence of several discourses existing in one sentence. The English comic novel appropriates various forms of authoritative language to mock it and therefore strip it of its sanctioned status.[71] Moreover, jokes exhibit the coupling between the discourse and a certain speaker. Jokes are therefore full of possibilities in the Bakhtinian view.[72] The Bakhtinian rogue mocks and deceives authoritative language through jokes:

> Opposed to the language of priests and monks, kings and seigneurs, knights and wealthy urban types, scholars and jurists – to the languages of all who hold power and who are well set up in life – there is the language of the merry rogue, wherever necessary periodically re-processing any pathos but always in such a way as to rob it of its power to harm, 'distance it from the mouth' as it were, by means of a smile or a deception.[73]

The figure of the fool is used to oppose and undermine the overt ideology that permeates through texts.[74] This figure can either be the narrator or a character that fails to understand the conventions of the world.[75] Furthermore, the fool estranges normative views and values through his or her naiveté, as the fool's stupidity is able to poke holes in the official ideology of the text. Mikhail Bakhtin names the estrangement of conventional ways of perceiving that world that occurs through the eyes of the fool as an essential part of novels and a way of approaching heteroglossia. He writes "[s]tupidity (incomprehension) in the novel is always polemical: it interacts dialogically with an intelligence (a lofty pseudo intelligence) with which it polemicizes and whose mask it tears away".[76] The fool's incomprehension constitutes a failure to understand accepted language and the author often mocks the fool. Consequently, the reader may view the fool as absurd and laughable, but the figure has an

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[70] Bakhtin, p. 308.
[71] Bakhtin, p. 301.
[72] *Folklore: An Encyclopaedia of Beliefs, Customs, Tales, Music, and Art,* ed. Thomas A. Green, ABC-Clio, Santa Barbara, 1997, p. 472. Accessed from https://books.google.se/books?id=S7Wfhws3dFAC&printsec=frontcover&dq=folklore:+and+encyclopedia+of+beliefs+customs&hl=sv&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjIgeSsrtzZAhXqDZoKHY2mAOEQ6AEILTAB#v=onepage&q=folklore%3A%20and%20encyclopedia%20of%20beliefs%20customs&f=false 2018-03-08.
[73] Bakhtin, p. 401 f.
[74] Gabriela Castellanos, *Laughter, War and Feminism: Elements of Carnival in Three of Jane Austen's Novels,* Peter Lang, New York, 1994, p. 33.
[75] Bakhtin, p. 2.
[76] Bakhtin, p. 403.

essential role in the text as he or she prompts a scrutinising and intelligent reading of the novel and brings forward new ways of seeing the world.[77]

Carnival is built on laughter and clowns and fools are representative of the carnivalesque spirit.[78] The rogue, clown, and fool had important roles in folk culture and the tradition of carnival during the Middle Ages. Mikhail Bakhtin's discusses their roles during this tradition in his text *Rabelais and His World* (1965). In the text, he examines carnival as a part of folk culture that opposes official culture. The laughter that is evoked during carnival is a powerful force and represents the laughter of all people.[79] Carnivalesque laughter is ambivalent in its nature it is simultaneously abusive and benevolent.[80] Mikhail Bakhtin traces the changing significance of laughter from the Middle Ages through the Renaissance. The carnivalesque laughter is unconstrained and has a utopian element. Laughter and carnival held an important function during the Middle Ages but the universal and ambivalent elements of laughter were lost after the Renaissance. The individualistic laughter of irony and sarcasm then replaced carnivalesque laughter.[81] In comparison with the effect of sarcastic humour, the enjoyment of carnival is shared and diverse.[82] Many literary scholars have argued that during the 19th-century, the culture of carnival represented the customs of the *Other*.[83] However, Mark M. Hennelly Jr. claims that carnival was still intact as a tradition during the Victorian era.[84] He argues that the images, symbols, and themes of carnival prevailed in the 19th-century novel.[85] While the Victorians had replaced the bawdy humour of the Middle Ages, the figures of the rogue, clown, and fool remain in literature. Laughter still emanates from the novel and the symbolic figures continue to subvert authoritarian voices by masquerading as figures of authority.[86]

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[77] Bakhtin, p. 403 f.
[78] Morris, p. 198.
[79] Morris, p. 194.
[80] Hallila, Mika, "How the Novel Laughs: Comparing the theories of Kundera, Bakhtin, and the Young Lukács", in *Histories of Laughter and Laughter in History: HistoRisus,* ed. *Rafał Borysławski, Justyna Jajszczok*, Jakub Wolff, and Alicja Bemben, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016, p. 110. Accessed from https://books.google.se/books?id=Quj6DAAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&hl=sv#v=onepage&q&f=false
[81] Morris, p. 194 f.
[82] Mary Russo, *The Female Grotesque: Risk, Excess and Modernity,* Routledge, New York and London, 1995, p. 61.
[83] Mark M. Hennelly Jr., "Victorian Carnivalesque", in *Victorian Literature and Culture,* Cambridge University Press, USA, 2002, p. 365.
[84] Hennelly Jr., p. 366.
[85] Hennelly Jr., p. 373.
[86] Hallila, p. 111.

There are three elements of particular importance in folk culture; spectacles, parodying literature, and billingsgate, which means foul language that is used in a specific context. During the ritual spectacles, clowns and fools dressed as knights, kings, and queens and emulated sanctioned rituals such as coronations.[87] Gods were also mocked during the humorous festivities. Parody and other comic literary forms adopted the images of carnival and the carnivalesque spirit. Pam Morris writes that "[t]he influence of the carnival spirit was irresistible: it made a man renounce is official state as monk, cleric, scholar, and perceive a world in its laughing aspect".[88] This laughing element enables one to perceive the world genuinely.[89] The literature of the Middle Ages offers comic interpretations of religious scriptures and parodies of prayers, wills, psalms, and liturgies. Other Latin scholarly texts were also parodied. The genre that prevailed from this tradition is the parody of the medieval epic. During carnival, insulting language and ribaldry was used as a form of comradely jargon and utilised to mock authority figures and deities. The billingsgate of carnival was both abusive and benign and its ambivalent nature was its distinguishing feature.[90]

The meaning of carnival is extracted from the material body.[91] The grotesque body is the central image of carnival and it represents the "undying body of all the people".[92] The representation of it is named grotesque realism and the grotesque body is described as a protruding and secreting body that represents a process of renewal.[93] It is contrasted with the classical body, which is unmoving and monumental. Carnival actualises another realm that exists outside the official reality. Carnival involves imitation of society and clowns and fools in comic spectacles mock its traditions.[94] The clown's role during carnival is to bring official traditions to the material realm.[95] Yet, the comic rituals of carnival are different from the satire and parody that exists today.[96] Carnival distinguished itself from other traditions as it created a different reality outside the official world.[97] Carnival is a communal ritual in which everyone participates. Mikhail Bakhtin writes that the essence of carnival is its universal spirit; "it is a special condition of the entire world, of the world's revival and renewal, in

[87] Morris, p. 196.
[88] Morris, p. 201.
[89] Hallila, p. 109.
[90] Morris, p. 202 f.
[91] Morris, p. 21.
[92] Morris, p. 195.
[93] Russo, p. 63 and Morris, p. 21.
[94] Morris, p. 196.
[95] Morris, p. 206.
[96] Morris, p. 200.
[97] Morris, p. 197.

which all take part".[98] The hierarchical society of the Middle Ages in Europe was harsh, but during carnival everyone was equal. Mikhail Bakhtin writes that "carnival celebrates temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order; it marked the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms, and prohibitions.[99] Carnival has a spiritual element and it is actualised by the highest ideals of human life.[100]

Mary Russo adopts Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of carnival with a feminist approach. She writes in *The Female Grotesque* (1995) that feminists have been consumed with norms and their demands of normality. Instead, she wants to focus on the grotesque in order to oppose oppression. Mary Russo defines the grotesque as deviance against the normative and it is a bodily category.[101] Consequently, the female body that strays from standards placed on women is seen as grotesque, which includes the pregnant female body. She names two kinds of grotesque categories; namely, the uncanny and the carnival. The uncanny denotes the peculiar and unlawful. The uncanny involves an individual experience with the grotesque. It encompasses the fantasy and terror of an individual. The grotesque as carnival involves the public as a whole and is situated in a certain historical context. Both ideas of the grotesque as uncanny and carnival rely on the body, the social body and the material body. The grotesque figure is connected with low culture and revolution.[102] Moreover, it had been connected with feminist movements, the suffragettes were notably named the "shrieking sisterhood", and the women of the feminist movement of the 1960s were called "the bra burners".[103]

Mary Russo concludes that the image of the female grotesque involves making a spectacle of oneself and she writes: "For a woman, making a spectacle out of herself had more to do with a kind of inadvertency and loss of boundaries: the possessors of large, aging, and dimpled thighs displayed at the public beach, of overly roughed cheeks, of a voice shrill in laughter, or of a sliding bra strap-a loose dingy bra strap especially-were at once caught out by fate and blameworthy".[104] But nonetheless, carnival has a place within dominant culture.[105] Mary Russo further asserts that "carnival and the image of carnivalesque women 'undermined

[98] Morris, p. 198.
[99] Morris, p. 199.
[100] Morris, p. 198.
[101] Russo, p. ix.
[102] Russo, p. 8 f.
[103] Russo, p. 14.
[104] Russo, p. 53.
[105] Russo, p. 56.

as well as enforced' the renewal of the existing social structure".[106] The female grotesque is furthermore an image projected by men as a way of establishing boundaries for women.[107] The female grotesque is seen but not heard, she is a threatening image that both subverts and maintains misogynistic values.[108]

The figures of the clown, rogue, and fool both function to oppose conventions and further take on an existential meaning as they pose questions of the authenticity of human life.[109] The clown, rogue, and fool act out human desires and needs that are not approved by the reigning ideology. Mikhail Bakhtin writes that opposed to the ways of convention real life therefore "becomes crude and bestial".[110] The fool is consequently used in literature to describe the relationship between our outer and inner selves. Mikhail Bakhtin further writes that the masks of the clown and the fool "grant the right *not* to understand, the right to confuse, to tease, to hyperbolise life; the right to parody others while talking, the right not to be taken literally, not 'to be oneself'".[111] The relationship between the image of the female grotesque and the figures of the clown, fool, and rogue is significant as they often share a similar position as outcasts but they also have a notable difference. The image of the female grotesque is often used to establishing boundaries and the female grotesque consequently remains unredeemable. In comparison, the transgressions of conventions made by the male Bakhtinian fool are repeatedly sanctioned.

Previous Research

The literary scholarly work regarding the effect of comedy in Jane Austen's literary works is a vast field. This section will encompass the primary theoretical texts used in this essay and focus mainly on the ones that incorporate Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of dialogism in Jane Austen's novel *Pride and Prejudice.* The dominant approach to Jane Austen's use of comedy has generally concentrated on the instances of irony in her texts. Many theoretical texts focus on Jane Austen's use of comedy in relation to gender and the satirical elements in her literary works. The texts that analyse this relationship tend to be placed in relation to the broader

[106] Russo, p. 58.
[107] Russo, p. 59.
[108] Russo, p. 68.
[109] Bakhtin, p. 163.
[110] Bakhtin, p. 162.
[111] Bakhtin, p. 162.

discussion within Austen studies concerning Jane Austen's novels as either subversive or conservative.

Marvin Mudrick wrote *Jane Austen: Irony as Defence and Discovery* in 1952 and it was the first comprehensive study on irony in Jane Austen's texts. He conducts research on all her published works and starts with her juvenilia that was written between 1787-1793 and ending with *Sandition* that was published in 1817. He discusses Jane Austen's use of irony as discrimination in *Pride and Prejudice* and irony as form in *Emma.* Marvin Mudrick writes that Elizabeth places herself in a position as an ironic spectator.[112] Elizabeth categorises everyone she encounters and places them in two categories of people who are easy to read and those who are more obscure.[113] This broad categorisation of characters leads her to make mistakes in judgement.

Last Laughs: Perspectives on Women and Comedy (1988) is a collection of essays concerning the relationship between gender and comedy in literary texts. The writers explore the subject within a variety of fields. Rachel M. Brownstein has contributed the essay "Jane Austen: Irony and Authority" to the volume. She discusses the existence of different kinds of power in *Pride and Prejudice* and that the onset of Mr Darcy and Elizabeth's relationship is marked by a power imbalance. This is negotiated through comedy and laughter in the text. In her essay, she discusses whether Jane Austen conforms to or parodies stereotypical images of women during the 19th-century. She writes that the changes in the financial state of England after the Industrial revolution lead to the ideals of femininity during the period due to the discourse surrounding class divisions.[114] She discusses this in relation to patriarchal authoritative discourse adding that she argues that Jane Austen subverts it by depicting its representatives as comic figures. This is also enhanced due to the fact that Jane Austen placed herself outside the prevailing literary tradition.[115] Rachel M. Brownstein notes that the novel shifts in tone and this is a method used to debase authoritative language. She further concludes that women bond through laughter in the novel and this is significant for its happy ending.[116] Patricia Meyer Spacks continues to discuss the element of laughter in the same volume in her essay "Austen's Laughter". She investigates the function of Mr Bennet and Elizabeth's shared laughter and discusses the relationship between morality and humour

[112] Mudrick, p. 94.
[113] Mudrick, p. 95.
[114] Brownstein, Rachel M., "Jane Austen: Irony and Authority", *Last Laughs: Perspectives on Women and Comedy, ed. Regina Barreca,* Gordon and Breach, New York, London, Paris, Montreux, Tokyo, Melbourne, 1988, p. 58.
[115] Brownstein, p. 63.
[116] Brownstein, p. 67.

in *Pride and Prejudice*. She argues that Mr Bennet's laughter should not direct the reader's interpretation of the text. She further asserts that Elizabeth and her father's laughter functions as a defence mechanism.[117]

Gabriela Castellanos discusses three of Jane Austen's novels in relation to Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of carnival and the carnivalesque in *Laughter, War and Feminism* (1994). Specifically, in *Northanger Abbey, Pride and Prejudice,* and *Emma* she displays how the laughter that emanates from these texts functions as a subversive force. She writes that she aims to discuss the novels as a carnivalesque response to patriarchal discourse surrounding women's place in society and ideas about women stemming from sentimental novels. She concludes that the heroines' processes of growth require comedy. [118] Gabriela Castellanos asserts that the humiliation of the heroines involves humour and that this is imperative for their personal development.

Audrey Bilger discusses the portrait of women in comedic text in 18th-century English literature in *Laughing Feminism: Subversive Comedy in Frances Burney, Maria Edgeworth, and Jane Austen* (1998). She argues that women writers placed themselves in the debate regarding women's position in society through comedy. She focuses on the subversive effects of comedy but writes that comedy can be used to maintain the dominant social order.[119] Audrey Bilger furthermore discusses humour in 18th-century women writer's texts as a criticism of conduct books and the ideal of the angel in the house.[120] She uses the term comedy to "designate a mode of writing, speech, or behavior that plays with cultural conventions either to affirm them or reveal their inadequacies".[121] She further maintains in "Goblin Laughter" that women authors use violent humour to dispute oppressive systems.[122] She defines violent comedy as a form of relenting painful events through laughter and it is used as a way of coping with taxing experiences. She argues that comedy mirrors the condition of women in 19th-century literature in England.[123] Authors were able to stretch norms and values using comedy and comic portraits of both women and men.

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[117] Patricia Meyer Spacks, "Austen's Laughter", *Last Laughs: Perspectives on Women and Comedy, ed. Regina Barreca,* Gordon and Breach, New York, London, Paris, Montreux, Tokyo, Melbourne, 1988, p. 72.

[118] Castellanos, p. 4 f.
[119] Bilger, p. 9.
[120] Bilger, p. 85.
[121] Bilger, p. 11.
[122] Audrey Bilger, "Goblin Laughter: Violent Comedy and the Condition of Women in Frances Burney and Jane Austen*". Women's Studies,* 1995: 24, p. 323.
[123] Bilger, "Goblin Laughter", p. 323.

Eileen Gillooly writes in *Smile of Discontent: Humor, Gender, and Nineteenth-Century British Fiction* (1999) that feminine humour constitutes a discursive resilience in Jane Austen's literary works. She discusses why laughter is evoked through comedy. In the same volume, Catharine R. Stimpson writes that humour "'signifies both a cognitive, psychological process and its textual product' (…). They make us aware that a particular sociocultural stimulus provokes at least two conflicting interpretative contexts. This doubled reading in turn breeds a sense of incongruity and amusement".[124] They discuss comedy as a narrative strategy and not as something that is a part of her texts as selective instances. Eileen Gillooly argues that to diminish Jane Austen's humour to irony is a mistake. Her humour is instead a narrative strategy and should not be reduced to singular comedic instances in her texts. She further concludes that women authors often have been excluded in works regarding theory of comedy. Moreover, this reality has lead to the lack of recognition of Jane Austen's comedy as a primary tool of social criticism. She focuses on discourse of humour rather than humour of plot and character. She further relies on Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of dialogism and her text is based on a notion that Jane Austen's texts relate "competing textual voices".[125] The multivoicedness of her novel displays realities regarding gender during 19th-century England.

Barbara K. Seeber writes in *General Consent in Jane Austen: A Study of Dialogism* (2000) about Mikhail Bakhtin's theories using both *The Dialogic Imagination* and *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (1994) to interpret Jane Austen's six novels and the epistolary novel *Lady Susan* (1871). She places her analysis in relation to the scholarly debate on Jane Austen's texts as either conforming to or advocating against the prevailing system and she attempts to offer a new insight to the discussion. She focuses on minor women characters in the texts, cameo appearances that reveal characters' troubled pasts, and acts of violence in the novels. She discusses these plots in relation to the main narrative and how their interaction display the dialogic nature of the texts.

Soghra Nodeh discusses the presence of carnivalesque characters in *Emma* in her text "Dialogic Narrative Discourse in Austen's *Emma*" (2013). She writes "[s]uch narratives could be created through using the disguise of carnivalesque character whose discourse is intentionally dialogized by means of an ironic discourse which embeds a potential unfolded dialogue of two (opposing) world views".[126] The novel was an unofficial genre during Jane Austen's literary career and was generally read and written by women

[124] Eileen Gillooly, *Smile of Discontent: Humor, Gender, and Nineteenth-Century British Fiction,* the University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 1999, p. ix.
[125] Gillooly, p. xxiii.
[126] Nodeh, p. 1.

during the period. Soghra Nodeh argues that through the multivoicedness of the novel Jane Austen is able to subvert the patriarchal authoritative word that stands for reason.[127] Soghra Nodeh names Miss Bates as a Bakhtinian fool whose function in the novels is to deliver subversive criticism through the "disguise of 'the clown and the fool'".[128]

Jane Austen: Literary History and the Politics of Language

Pride and Prejudice was first titled *First Impressions* and was published in three instalments in 1813. Jane Austen published the novel anonymously under the pseudonym "A Lady". *Pride and Prejudice* reached popularity and was published for a second time shortly after the first publication date.[129] Her novels were renowned as they provided a new narrative in comparison with the melodramatic texts that dominated the literary texts that were published at the time. Jane Austen shaped the novel and implemented realistic elements and developed the genre of comedy of manners.[130] The position of the narrator is important for the satirical effects in the text. This is a tradition stemming from preceding novel writers and specifically in Samuel Richardson's writings. In his texts, Jane Austen could have "noted not only the power of parody but also the combination of third-person narration with an intrusive opinionated narrator, now omniscient, now mock-omniscient, who influences and distorts the story and allows multiple readings".[131] Jane Austen's novels are described as a fusion of genres "romance and comedy, satire and sentiment, fairy tale and realism".[132] There is a distance between the narrator and the heroine in order to fuse genres and combine a traditional marriage tale with satire. The heroine and the narrator are observers but they possess different points-of-views to display a tension between private and public lives.[133].

[127] Nodeh, p. 1 & 3.
[128] Nodeh, p. 2.
[129] Southam.
[130] Southam.
[131] Todd, p. 20.
[132] Todd, p. 25.
[133] Todd, p. 28.

During the period of when the novels were written, England was stricken by wars. The effects of the wars lead to an increase in poverty and unemployment rates. This resulted in a greater divide and hostility between social classes. The wars are seldom mentioned in her novels but the economic effects are visible in Jane Austen's texts.[134] The domestic lives reflected in *Pride and Prejudice* and *Emma* reveal anxieties regarding class of the period. The connection between her novels and the historical context of when they were written is clear. Jane Austen employed comic effects and satirical elements in her novels in order to offer a criticism of the dominant social order. Jane Austen placed her texts consciously in the midst of both the increase in social mobility after the Industrialisation and the debate surrounding the change during the period. A new reformation of manners transpired due to the increased interaction between classes, which led to a new demand of civility and politeness.[135] By adopting the genre comedy of manners Jane Austen parodies her contemporary society and social conventions.

Bharat Tandon explains the role of dialogue in Jane Austen's novels in his text Jane Austen and *The Morality of Conversation* (2003). Conversation is critically significant in Jane Austen's texts as the demands of politeness and decorum regarding communication displays hierarchies and strict rules of conduct that were abided by in 19th-century English society. Conversation also relents a state of ambivalence due to historical change as Bharat Tandon writes:

> Growing up at the end of the century in which much had been hoped for and feared from the practices of talk and manners, Austen bore personal and aesthetic witness to a culture of 'polite' conversation which was increasingly feeling the weight of linguistic and social diffusion, and which could no longer take much for granted about what that conversation might represent or achieve.[136]

The period was marked by a reformation of conduct brought by the growing impact of political texts and the increased significance of periodical journalism during the beginning of the 18th-century. Particularly, with the great influence of the periodicals *The Tatler* and *The Spectator* created by Joseph Addison and Richard Steele. It replaced the contrived writing of the past and embedded the new manner of politeness and ease in print.[137] According to Bharat Tandon, this new mode of writing constituted a communal identity with which the English

[134] Todd, p. 15.
[135] Joseph Wiesenfarth, "The Revolution of Civility in *Pride and Prejudice*", *Journal of the Jane Austen Society of North America - Persuasions,* 1994: 16, p. 111.
[136] Bharat Tandon, *Jane Austen and the Morality of Conversation,* Anthem Press, London, 2003, p. 3.
[137] Tandon, p. 5.

polite society defined itself.[138] Bharat Tandon references Lawrence E. Klein who names this change in writing as "a centripetal rather than a centrifugal force".[139] Jane Austen explores the relationship between morality and conversation in her works and distances herself from the mode of writing that flourished in periodical journals during the beginning of the 18th-century.[140] This new genre of periodical journalism constitutes an important backdrop for Jane Austen's writing and she investigates the effects of rules of conduct on communication as well as relationships between characters through dialogue. Bharat Tandon discusses the community depicted in Jane Austen's text as primarily a linguistic one.[141] Moreover, Jane Austen negotiates the change brought by the new demand of civility in her texts. Bharat Tandon continues to write that due to this historical and linguistic change it led to stricter rules regarding courtship. The novels counter an overtly moralistic stance in comparison with other popular fictional texts during the period and an irony accentuates the marriage plot in Jane Austen's novels.[142]

Women and Comedy in 19th-century England

Comedy was seen as potentially disruptive to the social order during the 18th and 19th-centuries.[143] Humour was a part of a larger social and political historical change in literary texts during the period.[144] The new set of conventions that occurred due to the reformation of civility resulted in a new comedic tone. In *The Amiable Humorist* (1960), Stuart M. Tave names this form of comedy amiable humour. It diverted from the satire and ridicule that distinguished Restoration comedy, which was marked by a use of imitation to mock and expose absurdity. The ridicule in comedic literary text of the 16th and 17th-centuries was considered to have radical social implications.[145] Satire was therefore rejected and it was a part of a bigger dismissal of an attitude that was considered uncivil and unmannered.[146] Consequently, by the beginning of the 19th-century, a more restraining culture of expression

[138] Tandon, p. 5.
[139] Tandon, p. 6.
[140] Tandon, p. 5 & p. 15.
[141] Tandon, p. 86.
[142] Tandon, p. 88.
[143] Bilger, p. 15.
[144] Tave, p. vii.
[145] Tave, p. 27.
[146] Tave, p. 24.

resulted in the diminution of ribaldry and bawdy humour.[147] Conventions and demands of propriety were harshly enforced. Novels were encouraged to present characters of admirable qualities and whose morals did not stray through the narrative. This demand of virtue muted bawdy humour and raillery in literature.[148] Certain varieties of comedy were further associated with different classes and genders.[149] Wittiness was considered an intellectual form of comedy and was seen as a male type of humour.[150]

Despite Stuart M. Tave's stance, Audrey Bilger asserts that Jane Austen's works are more closely related to satire than amiable humor as her works offer a criticism of women's situation and the society that she lived in. Audrey Bilger asserts the reader is meant to sympathise with the heroines in her works who negotiate their existence in a sexist society.[151] Comedy writing was further considered improper for women writers as it was considered a male pastime. Yet, many women authors and dramatists such as Aphra Behn and Jane Austen established themselves in a comic literary tradition.[152] The domestic novel was further considered as an acceptable genre for women to write. Comedy is combined with a realistic narrative and a domestic setting in Jane Austen's works.[153] Women writers employed strategies to convey domestic life humorously and critically in an acceptable manner.[154]

Rules of conduct were more harshly enforced on women, and the magnitude of this demand is displayed in the amount of conduct books aimed at women that were published during the period. The dichotomies between male and female as well as nature and culture were more strictly established in the 18th-century.[155] James Fordyce who wrote the conduct book *Sermons to Young Women* (1766) advised young men not to marry witty women. He writes that witty women are fine for entertainment for an evening but not as a companion for a lifetime. Conduct books restricted and made women self-aware of their laughter since laughing too much was considered inappropriate.[156] Stereotypical portraits of women were present in satirical literature during the time of Jane Austen's literary career. These texts included "stereotypes that highlighted women's vulnerable social status. Along with other caricatures, such as the spinster, the prude, the coquette, the learned lady appeared as a stock

[147] Gillooly, p. 3.
[148] Tave, viii.
[149] Tave, p. 16.
[150] Bilger, p. 20.
[151] Bilger, p. 71.
[152] Gillooly, p. 2.
[153] Bilger, p. 28.
[154] Gillooly, p. 4.
[155] Gillooly , p. 2.
[156] Bilger, p. 23.

comic character throughout the eighteenth century".[157] Jane Austen used comic strategies to defy misogynistic stereotypes.[158] Laughter and gender discrimination has a clear connection in *Pride and Prejudice.* Laughter both evades and sparks discrimination. The novel invites the reader to be aware of laughter and why it is produced.[159]

Jane Austen estranges misogynistic values through comic characters.[160] Janet Todd concludes that male characters are rarely comic targets in literary texts.[161] Characters who uphold sexist values are painted as ridiculous in Jane Austen's literary texts. Furthermore, entitled male suitors appear as comic figures.[162] Jane Austen absolves the myths of superiority that men have created around themselves and the positions of power and importance that men hold are revealed as unearned in Jane Austen's novels.[163] This is further accomplished through Jane Austen's use of female trickster characters. Audrey Bilger argues that Jane Austen offers criticism in the form of satirical commentary but that the most subversive form of social criticism is depicted through secondary comic character that take on the role as tricksters. The writers she focuses on all employ trickster "who defy all rules of conduct, mocking male authority and laughing as they do so".[164] Restrictions placed on women therefore appear foolish as they are expressed through comic characters.[165]. Much like Audrey Bilger, Eileen Gillooly notes that women writer's humour often lies on the distinction between women's outer selves and their actual beings:

> In this appropriating the cultural construction of femininity for its own purposes, their humor accomplishes what could have been achieved by either satiric attack or sober means: it coyly contrives to undermine the authority of that construction even as it faithfully records the conditions, virtues, and behaviors required of life in the feminine position.[166]

This denotes the incongruity between women's private and public selves and also the difference between the images of women and women's actual beings. Eileen Gillooly names the humour used by women authors to defy misogyny as feminine humour. She asserts that

[157] Bilger, p. 39.
[158] Bilger, p. 57.
[159] Bilger, p. 71.
[160] Bilger, p. 141.
[161] Bilger, p. 111.
[162] Bilger, p. 120.
[163] Bilger, p. 141.
[164] Bilger, p. 89.
[165] Bilger, p. 97.
[166] Gillooly, p. 12.

feminine humour hides behind stereotypes in order to estrange and disillusion them. Consequently, feminine humour exposes misogynistic stereotypes as ridiculous.[167] Eileen Gillooly further argues that it has a subtle air and is devoid of ribaldry and overt satire. Feminine humour exists in a concealed form and is not openly displayed.[168] She argues that while Jane Austen's writing is satirical and infused with irony her social criticism remains inconspicuous.[169] While Eileen Gillooly asserts that feminine humour is subtle, it still manages to challenge the status quo. 19th-century women writers parody genres that follow the marriage path trajectory and fairy tales. Feminine humour involves intertextuality and its referential element curves literary conventions. Consequently, it is also a narrative strategy, which takes on the narrative formats of plots that are dependent on female submission and reveals its flaws and inconsistencies.[170]

According to Audrey Bilger, women have formed communities outside of public life due to the exclusion of women in the public sphere. Women express solidarity, companionship and ultimately form communities through comedy and it functions as a way of tying communities together.[171]. Feminist comedy involves an awareness of oppression against women. Humour functions as a code that women and other oppressed groups use to illuminate oppression and to maintain the continuation of communities of women that exist outside larger society.[172] Nina Auerbach concludes that communities are maintained through codes, male communities tend to be explicit while codes used by communities of women are concealed and used temporarily.[173] Jane Austen negotiates women's existence in a sexist society through humour. In *Pride and Prejudice,* comedy is used both to form and hinder relationships between women.

[167] Gillooly, p. 17.
[168] Gillooly, p. 21.
[169] Gillooly, p. 18.
[170] Gillooly, p. 19 f.
[171] Bilger, p. 112.
[172] Bilger, p. 33.
[173] Nina Auerbach, *Communities of Women: An Idea in Fiction,* Harvard University Press, Cambridge and London, 1978, p. 9.

Analysis:

Pride and Prejudice

The primary scene in the text begins with Mrs Bennet pleading to Mr Bennet to make his acquaintance with the new resident at Netherfield Hall named Mr Bingley. The comic onset of the text sets the tone of the rest of the narrative. The difference between Mr and Mrs Bennet's approach to the fact that there is a wealthy man who has taken up residence in their neighbourhood is suggestive to their general dispositions and attitudes toward their daughters' future. Immediately, Mrs Bennet appears relentless and absurd for wanting her daughters to be introduced to Mr Bingley. Marvin Mudrick writes "[h]er obsession with material security overrides every consideration of kindness or solicitude toward her husband and her daughters".[174] Marvin Mudrick's analysis of Mrs Bennet is a common reading of her character. However, while Mrs Bennet's attempts to make her daughters marry well at times appear unkind to her daughters and especially Elizabeth; Mr Bennet appears less concerned with his daughters' future prospects and security. Both Mr and Mrs Bennet are comic figures but it becomes clear that Mrs Bennet is portrayed as laughable, while Mr Bennet is in control of the comic relief he creates through facetiousness and sarcastic comments.

The likeness between Elizabeth and her father is apparent. Jane Todd argues that Mr Bennet seems to have replaced Mrs Bennet with Elizabeth has his partner, since "[s]he is to join him in looking at life as entertainment, a way of distancing painful truths and avoiding emotional involvement".[175] They share the same sarcastic tone and judge other characters together. Joining her father, Elizabeth often mocks her mother for her ridiculous behaviour. Early on, Mrs Bennet appears absurd through the jokes and comments made by Mr Bennet. He relents parental responsibility to Mrs Bennet and as a result, she appears as an overbearing parent. The reader is consequently persuaded to assume Mr Bennet and the heroine's views of Mrs Bennet. Laughter is Elizabeth and her father's primary reaction in most situations. Additionally, the reader is meant to accept their laughter as a response of reason and an intelligent mind.[176] This is both significant for the depiction of Mrs Bennet and her role in the text as well as the development for the heroine. The comic elements in the novel always reside in relation to societal and personal issues that undercut its humorous aspects.

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[174] Mudrick, p. 98.
[175] Todd, p. 67.
[176] Patricia Meyer Spacks, "Austen's Laughter", *Last Laughs: Perspectives on Women and Comedy, ed. Regina Barreca,* Gordon and Breach, New York, London, Paris, Montreux, Tokyo, Melbourne, 1988, p. 72.

Mr Bennet pretends not to know that Mr Bingley has arrived and that he has already paid a visit to Netherfield, seemingly for the sake of irritating his wife. Mrs Bennet notes that Mr Bennet seems to enjoy vexing her but he is unable to take her seriously and responds sarcastically. Mr Bennet even makes it known that he believes Mrs Bennet complains for the sake of enjoyment. The narrator then describes the couple: "Mr Bennet was so odd a mixture of quick parts, sarcastic humour, reserve, and caprice, that the experience of three and twenty years had been insufficient to make his wife understand his character. *Her* mind was less difficult to develop. She was a woman of mean understanding, little information, and uncertain temper.[177] Mrs Bennet is described as temperamental and nonsensical. The narrator further defines her character: "[t]he business of her life was to get her daughters married; its solace was visiting and news".[178] This short description of Mrs Bennet is simultaneously accurate and diminishing of her character.[179] She appears as a caricature whose only characteristic is her desire to find an eligible husband for her daughters. This portrayal knowingly leaves out the reasons behind her actions.

Mrs Bennet embodies the role of the Bakhtinian fool in the text and the author does not need to sympathise with the figure.[180] Moreover, the narrator often openly scorns the fool.[181] Mrs Bennet appears senseless and lacking in self-awareness by the narrator's description and the other characters' portrayal of her. But, Mrs Bennet's absurdity has several functions in the text. Soghra Nodeh writes that Austen's "real intention is hidden behind the voice of the narrator who mocks the comic female character used as a mask for giving voice to the author's criticisms".[182] She continues to assert that this masquerade constitutes a double voiced narrative in the text. Jane Austen uses Mrs Bennet to expresses criticism of patriarchal structures inherent in 19h-century society; consequently, the comic figure of Mrs Bennet functions as a disguise in the text.

The first scene in the text displays the imbalanced dynamic between Mr and Mrs Bennet. The couple has two conflicting opinions regarding the need for their daughters to marry. The primary sentence of the text sets the tone for the rest of the narrative; "[i]t is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in

[177] Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice,* Dover Publications, New York, 1995, p. 3.
[178] Austen. p. 3.
[179] Brownstein, p. 64.
[180] Bakhtin, p. 404.
[181] Nodeh, p. 2.
[182] Nodeh, p. 2.

want of a wife".[183] Mrs Bennet later refers to Mr Bingley as a single man with a large fortune. The narrator and Mrs Bennet utter similar statements, yet they profess two different opinions and intents. The narrator is ironic while Mrs Bennet's statement is said seriously; consequently, there are different values imbedded in their voices.[184] In *Narrative as Rhetoric: Technique, Audiences, Ethics, Ideology* (1996), James Phelan defines a voice as "*the fusion of style, tone and values*".[185] The text links the individual speech type of a character with ideology and the institution of marriage is discussed in relation to authoritative language. As the text displays several varying opinions regarding marriage, the reader is meant to doubt not only the universal truth of the first sentence in the text, but also other established conventions and social structures.

The primary sentence in *Pride and Prejudice* is an authoritative sentence.[186] Yet, the authoritative discourse is proven to be unstable. Consequently, Jane Austen points to the deficiencies and confines in authoritative language.[187] In "Jane Austen: irony and authority" (1988), Rachel M. Brownstein writes that the novel "laughs at authoritative sentence-making. As everyone has pointed out, it is full of logical holes: a truth universally acknowledged is proven less than true; the truth at issue here is not really that single men want girls (…) but that poor girls need husbands".[188] Rachel M. Brownstein further asserts that while Mrs Bennet acts as if this sentence is true she might not believe in it, therefore the novel suggests "the power of discourse to determine action".[189] Consequently, Jane Austen subverts authoritative discourse through the existence of several ideologically encoded voices in her novels. Furthermore, *Pride and Prejudice's* structural irony constitutes a dialogic category of writing.[190] Jane Austen consequently displays the socio-political elements inherent in language. Moreover, by depicting the courtship between Mr Darcy and Elizabeth Jane Austen displays the relationship women have to authoritative language.[191] This is portrayed in the onset of Elizabeth and Mr Darcy's relationship, which is marked by an

[183] Austen, p. 1.
[184] James Phelan, *Narrative as Rhetoric: Technique, Audiences, Ethics, Ideology,* Ohio State University Press, Columbus, 1996, p. 45.
[185] Phelan, p. 45.
[186] Austen, p. 1.
[187] Brownstein, p. 58.
[188] Brownstein, p. 64.
[189] Brownstein, p. 64.
[190] Brownstein, p. 68.
[191] Brownstein, p. 58.

imbalance in power. They meet at a ball, which is a traditional setting for courtship.[192] In this setting, their relationship promptly gets an unstable start. Notably, the novel argues that the traditional ways of forming marriages is determined by an inequity in power between men and women.

A Fool's Incomprehension

Pride and Prejudice deals with the primogeniture act and the entailing of properties. The Bennet daughters' situation is grim as they are to be disinherited from the estate:

> Mr. Bennet's property consisted almost entirely in an estate of two thousand a year, which, unfortunately, for his daughters, was entailed in default of heirs male, on a distant relation; and their mother's fortune, though ample for her situation in life, could but ill supply the deficiency of his.[193]

Sandra MacPherson argues that the laws of entailment and property drive the plot in *Pride and Prejudice.*[194] She asserts that is it the land law that form the relationships in the novel rather than connections based on matrimony and social class.[195] She further maintains that the laws of entailment are more complex than what historians generally claim and that entailment have more consequences besides the linear succession of patriarchal rule.[196] Jane Austen uses Mrs Bennet to discuss the laws of entailment. Sandra MacPherson argues that Mrs Bennet's lack of understanding of the land law points to Jane Austen's view of entailment. The fee tail meant that property was legally kept within the family generation after generation. The law lead to a chain of succession that was established to maintain the estate. Mrs Bennet blames Mr Collins and Mr Bennet for the disinheritance of her daughters and the narrator comments on Mrs Bennet's lack of understanding the entailing of estates:

> Jane and Elizabeth attempted to explain to her the nature of an entail. They had often attempted it before, but it was a subject on which Mrs. Bennet was beyond the reach of reason and she continued to rail bitterly against the cruelty of settling an estate away from a family of five daughters, in favour of a man

[192] Brownstein, p, 57.
[193] Austen, p. 18.
[194] Sandra MacPherson, "Rent or Own; or, What's Entailed in *Pride and Prejudice", Representations,* 2003: 82, p. 2.
[195] MacPherson, p. 2.
[196] MacPherson, p. 2.

whom nobody cared anything about.[197]

But, Sandra MacPherson argues that Mr Collins merely is a part of a system that will prevail irrespective of his existence. She argues that while the novel offers a critique of patriarchal succession of property she writes "[e]ntailment is an escape from sentimental and contractual or volitional models of affiliation. Its role in *Pride and Prejudice* is to suggest a way out of the sentimental economy that has caused so much trouble in the novel".[198] Consequently, the novel is criticising sentimental feelings of entitlement.

While Sandra MacPherson argues that Mrs Bennet's incomprehension of the law of entailment displays the flaws in Mrs Bennet's sentimental approach it also serves another purpose. Mrs Bennet is unable to recognise why Mr Collins should be allowed to inherit Longbourn and why the estate cannot pass to one of her daughters. The primogeniture act and the entailment fee were longstanding English laws during the period. They were an established way of ordering the passing of properties and land. Yet, Mrs Bennet cannot comprehend the structure of the law even though Elizabeth and Jane has attempted to explain the nature of the entailment to her several times. In this scene, Mrs Bennet cannot grasp one of the bases of English society. The fool's failure to understand is used by Jane Austen to deliver criticism of men's financial power over women. Mrs Bennet's incomprehension displays the disparities between men and women in 19th-century England. Sandra MacPherson quotes Alistair Duckworth who writes "the estate as an ordered physical structure is a metonym for other inherited structures – society as a whole, a code of morality, a body of manners, a system of language".[199] The structure has a feudal background and is representative of other conventions that are maintained by the gentry.[200] Her inability to understand the entailing of estates displays the misogyny intact in the system of entailment and opens for the possibility of seeing other established conventions as oppressive, dated, and precarious.

The fool's incredulity is a dialogic category as it interacts with two ways of seeing the world. Mikhail Bakhtin writes: "stupidity (incomprehension) in the novel is always implicated in language, in the word: at its heart always lies a polemical failure to understand someone else's discourse, someone else's pathos-charged lie that has appropriated the world

[197] Austen, p. 42.
[198] MacPherson, p. 17.
[199] MacPherson, p. 1.
[200] MacPherson, p. 3.

and aspires to conceptualize it".[201] The Bakhtinian fool is consequently used to oppose the language of oppressive structures and their representatives in the text. Mikhail Bakhtin writes that the fool stands in opposition to the language used by the poet, the scholar, the priest, the lawyer, and the holy man.[202] Mrs Bennet's failure to understand the system of entailment exposes its patriarchal foundation. Patriarchal discourse is translated and filtered through Mrs Bennet and is estranged through her comic features. It is through the disguise of the Bakhtinian fool that the novel can establish a critical stance toward the entailment.[203] The Bakhtinian fool is consequently used to mock contemporary society and the writer needs the fool in order to make social conventions seem odd.[204]

To Mrs Bennet's dismay, Mr Collins announces his arrival to Longbourn in a letter. She exclaims: "I cannot bear to hear that mentioned. Pray do not talk of that odious man. I do think it is the hardest thing in the world, that your estate should be entailed away from your own children; and I am sure if I had been you, I should have tried long ago to do something about it".[205] She blames Mr Bennet for his lack of action regarding their daughters' situation and does not think they should be pleasant to a man who will inherit the property in favour of her five daughters. In return, Mr Bennet responds sarcastically and says "nothing can clear Mr. Collins from the guilt of inheriting Longbourn".[206] He refers to the fact that their daughters will not inherit the estate irrespective of what their opinions of the matter may be. Mr Collins is in accordance with Mrs Bennet regarding the estate and during their dinner, he apologises profusely for inheriting the property. Elizabeth in turn finds him strange for apologising for inheriting the estate.

Upon the insistence of his patroness Lady Catherine de Bourgh, Mr Collins has decided that he will marry one of the Bennet sisters: "This was his plan of amends – of atonement – for inheriting their father's estate; and he thought it an excellent one, full of eligibility and suitableness, and excessively generous and disinterested on his own part".[207] Mr Collins compliments Mrs Bennet on her beautiful daughters and assures Mrs Bennet that there is no doubt that they will one day be married. Her daughters are affronted by the compliment but Mrs Bennet replies "[y]ou are very kind, sir, I am sure; and I wish with all my

[201] Bakhtin, p. 403.
[202] Bakhtin, o. 403.
[203] Nodeh, p. 2.
[204] Nodeh, p. 2.
[205] Austen, p. 42.
[206] Austen, p. 42.
[207] Austen, p. 48.

heart it may prove so; for else they will be destitute enough. Things are settled so oddly".[208] She references the estate and implies that she will not discourage Mr Collins if he should atone for inheriting the estate by marrying one of her daughters. He fixes his eye on Jane but when he learns from Mrs Bennet that she is likely to be engaged he picks Elizabeth instead. Mrs Bennet then quickly changes her mind about Mr Collins and she "trusted that she would soon have two daughters married; and the man whom she could not bear to speak of the day before, was now high in her good graces".[209] The novel mocks the reason why marriages were formed during the 19th-century. It displays the need for women to marry for material reasons and marriage is established as a structure for maintaining property and fiscal power.

Later in the novel, Mr Collin's asks to be alone with Elizabeth. She responds that she does not want to alone with him but her mother prompts her to stay. During his proposal, Mr Collin's recites his reasons for asking Elizabeth to marry him. He says that he selected her almost immediately upon his arrival, but also reminds her that he came to Longbourn with the intention of choosing a woman to marry. He further tells her that when they are married she would be able to visit his patroness. Additionally, he is aware that since he is next in line to inherit the Longbourn estate Elizabeth should be likely to marry him, adding that choosing among the Bennet daughters is an act of resolving the entail issue. Mr Collin's proposal is humorous and Elizabeth almost begins to laugh during his speech. But, Audrey Bilger writes that Jane Austen's "recognition of the power of convention, however, allows for only a partial victory. Even in the midst of the comic proposal, Austen lets us know that the odds are stacked in Mr. Collin's favor. Elizabeth's own mother takes his side and agrees with him on the advantages of his proposal". [210] While Jane Austen's depiction of Mr Collin's character is a comic one the reader is meant to recognise Mr Collin's privileged position in the situation.

Despite its comic overtones, Mr Collins' proposal follows the rules of etiquette that were established by conduct books. He tells her that he has asked her parents for their consent, informs her of his affluent position with his connection to Lady Catherine, and talks of their financial means that would be joint upon their marriage.[211] Even though Mr Collins

[208] Austen, p. 44.
[209] Austen, p. 48.
[210] Bilger, p. 125.
[211] Martha C. Nussbaum and Alison L. LaCroix, "Proposals and Performative Utterance in the Nineteenth-Century Novel: The Professional Man's Plight", *Subversion and Sympathy: Gender, Law, and the British Novel,* 2013, p. 10.

follows the proper rules of a proposal, Elizabeth turns him down. She has to refuse his offer of marriage several times and insist on her being adamant in her decision. He even suggests that her rejection stems from a modest disposition. Mr Collins believes that merely by proposing they are as good as engaged. As Martha C. Nussbaum and Alison L. LaCroix suggests in their text "Proposals and Performative Utterance in the Nineteenth-Century Novel: The Professional Man's Plight" (2013), Mr Collins mistakes the performative utterance of his proposal with the intended result of his speech.[212] Mr Collins' disbelief of Elizabeth's rejection allows the reader to understand the satirical aspects of the proposal and its inherent criticism of male entitlement. His attempt to let language govern fails; consequently, the novel estranges the misogynistic language found in conduct books. In this scene, Mr Collins appears ridiculous and strange and Elizabeth is the one pressing him to adopt a reasonable approach.

Mr Collins' offer of marriage exhibits several realities of the status of women in 19th-century England including women's lack of financial independence. Mr Collins assures Elizabeth:

> To fortune I am perfectly indifferent, and I shall make no demand of that nature on your father, since I am well aware that it could not be compiled with; and that one thousand pounds in the 4 per cents, which will not be yours till after your mother's decease, is all that you may ever be entitled to. On that head, therefore, I shall be uniformly silent; and you may assure yourself that no ungenerous reproach shall ever pass my lips when we are married.[1]

This speech displays that Mr Collins has inquired on how much he would receive upon their marriage and it displays the economic factors that drove the institution of marriage. The entailment causes many predicaments for the Bennet family. The family had expected to have a son and the family's lack of financial means is a result of having only daughters. Judith Lowder Newton writes "almost every reference in the novel to economic necessity is relegated to Mrs. Bennet, a woman whose worries we are not allowed to take seriously because they are continually undermined by their link with the comic and the absurd".[213] The reader is not meant to take Mrs Bennet's reminders of the imposing financial threat as a grave matter. But, later in the novel when Mr Wickham demands money to marry Lydia, Mr Bennet is unable to pay him. Mr Bennet then regrets not taking the matter of their financial security

[212] Nussbaum and LaCroix, p. 10.
[213] Judith Lowder Newton, "'Pride and Prejudice': Power, Fantasy, and Subversion in Jane Austen", *Feminist Studies*, 1978: 4, p. 33.

more seriously, as the narrator notes: “Mr. Bennet had very often wished, before this period of his life, that, instead of spending his whole income, he had lain by an annual sum, for the better provision of his children, and of his wife, if she survived him. Now he wished it more than ever.”[214] The existence of a son would have hindered the difficult issue, as it would have made it possible to sell the estate and the Bennet family would then have the financial means to save Lydia’s future. The reader is consequently meant to resist the novel’s treatment of Mrs Bennet.

Charlotte Lucas

The novel discusses what the consequences are for making marriage a social necessity for young women. Charlotte’s pragmatism influences her take on Jane and Mr Bingley’s potential match. She advises Elizabeth to tell Jane to show Mr Bingley more affection than she feels and says “[w]hen she is secure of him, there will be leisure for falling in love as much as she chuses”.[215] Elizabeth assures her that Jane is not acting according to a scheme. Charlotte will later act on this attitude in marrying Mr Collins and se believes that “[h]appiness in marriage is entirely a matter of chance”.[216] Charlotte Lucas considers the threat of spinsterhood too great to decline Mr Collins despite the fact that she finds him neither sensible not agreeable and she therefore accepts his proposal:

> Without thinking highly either of men or of matrimony, marriage had always been her object; it was the only honourable provision for well-educated young woman of small fortune and however uncertain of giving happiness, must be their pleasantest preservative from want.[217]

The narrator notes that the only acceptable future for a woman of a small fortune is marriage. After Elizabeth has declined his offer of marriage, Charlotte attempts to get Mr Collin’s attention and her efforts are described as a scheme that “led him to escape out of Longbourn House the next morning with admirable slyness, and hasten to Lucas Lodge to throw himself

[214] Austen, p. 206.
[215] Austen, p. 14.
[216] Austen, p. 14.
[217] Austen, p. 85.

at her feet".[218] The match is considered an eligible match for Charlotte. As Mrs Bennet has suspected, Lady Lucas even estimates the number of year that Mr Bennet is expected to live to know when Charlotte and Mr Collins will have access to Longbourn. Later when Mrs Bennet hears the news of Charlotte and Mr Collin's engagement, she is inconsolable and scolds Elizabeth whenever she sees her despite her previous declaration that she would never speak to her again after her rejection of Mr Collin's proposal. Charlotte's younger brothers are relived that she will not become an old maid. Elizabeth considers spinsterhood to be a better option than to marry someone incompatible despite the fact that her situation is more unstable than Charlotte's position. Lucas Lodge will be passed to one of Charlotte's brothers after the death of their father and the estate will therefore remain within the immediate family.

Charlotte is content with her decision to accept Mr Collins, but is hesitant because of Elizabeth's potential reaction. When Elizabeth hears the news, she declares the match inconceivable. The two women argue and Charlottes says that all she wants is a comfortable home and tells Elizabeth that she is not a romantic. Elizabeth then feels "the pang of a friend disgracing herself and sunk in her esteem, was added the distressing conviction that it was impossible for that friend to be tolerable happy in the lot she had chosen".[219] Elizabeth is gravely unhappy for her closest friend and her decision to marry someone for whom she does not feel any affection. After Charlotte and Mr Collin's marriage, there is a distance between the two friends and Elizabeth even feels "persuaded that no real confidence could ever subsist between them again".[220] Elizabeth things this is a matter of personal happiness and she argues that Charlotte should value her personal gratification above social convention. Charlotte believes that the contentment that comes with having material security is all anyone can ask for in marriage and the novel therefore displays the financial incentives to marry. The narrative shows that Charlotte is forced to marry Mr Collins to be relieved of a future as a spinster. In "Charlotte and Elizabeth: Multiple Modernities in Jane Austen's P*ride and Prejudice*", Melina Moe notes that "Charlotte detaches marriage from a timeline of improvement".[221] Moreover, she uncouples personal growth and happiness with marriage and goes against the sentiment that tied women's development with marriage professed by 18th and 19th-century novels.

[218] Austen, p. 84.
[219] Austen, p. 87.
[220] Austen, p. 89.
[221] Melina Moe, "Charlotte and Elizabeth: Multiple Modernities in Jane Austen's P*ride and Prejudice*", *ELH,* 2016: 83, p. 1091.

Mrs Bennet's Matchmaking

Jane has been invited to dine with Mr Bingley's sisters Caroline Bingley and Mrs Hurst. Mrs Bennet urges her to go on horseback instead of taking the carriage because then she will have to stay the night at Netherfield. Elizabeth calls it a good scheme and calls matchmaking her mother's life purpose. Jane therefore has to travel on horseback and Mrs Bennet cheerfully tells her that it is likely to rain. Her sisters are then worried about her well being of Jane due to the heavy rain but her mother is thrilled "as if the credit of making it rain were all her own".[222] The next morning Elizabeth receives a letter from Jane who writes that she is ill and has a cold. Mr Bennet tells Mrs Bennet "if your daughter should have a dangerous fit of illness, if she should die, it would be a comfort to know it was all in pursuit of Mr Bingley".[223] Mrs Bennet's attempts to get her daughters married are criticised throughout the narrative. Her acts often have disastrous results for how her daughters are perceived by other members of their community. Yet, Mrs Bennet is more than a ridiculous figure and her concern for her daughters' future is not due to a selfish attitude. *Pride and Prejudice* criticises the institution of marriage through the depiction of Mrs Bennet's matchmaking and displays the dire consequences that followed if a woman did not comply with the demand of matrimony.

In several occasions, Mrs Bennet lacks self-awareness and does not comprehend social conventions. During a visit to Netherfield, Elizabeth says that she perfectly understands Mr Bingley's personality. She further says that she enjoys making observations of people's character. She tells Mr Bingley that she knows his true nature but that people who are more complex are harder to distinguish. Then her mother sharply tells her not to act in the wild manner that she usually does. Mr Darcy tells Elizabeth that it must be difficult to make any detailed observations due to the unvaried and small society that lives in the countryside. Mrs Bennet is offended at his comment and assures him that the country has an equally varied community as the town. Mrs Bennet thinks that she has triumphed Mr Darcy's argument, but the others react to her embarrassing manner and "[n]othing but concern for Elizabeth could enable Bingley to keep his countenance. His sister was less delicate, and directed her eye towards Mr. Darcy with a very expressive smile".[224] Mrs Bennet then assures Mr Darcy that they dine with twenty-four families. In vain, Elizabeth attempts to explain Mr Darcy's point-

[222] Austen, p. 20.
[223] Austen, p. 21.
[224] Austen, p. 29.

of-view to her mother. Elizabeth is further humiliated when her mother says that another gentleman was interested in Jane who wrote poetry in her honour. Elizabeth attempts to save the situation and says "[a]nd so ended his affection. (…) There has been many one, I fancy, overcame in the same way. I wonder who first discovered the efficacy of poetry in driving away love".[225] Elizabeth is worried that her mother will expose herself again. But, Mrs Bennet is unaware that she has embarrassed herself and feels "perfectly satisfied; and quitted the house under the delightful persuasion that, allowing for the necessary preparations of settlements, new carriages and wedding clothes, she should undoubtedly see her daughter settled at Netherfield".[226] Mrs Bennet ardently believes that her attempts to marry off her daughter will be successful.

During a ball at Netherfield, Elizabeth finds herself fighting with Mr Darcy about his treatment of Mr Wickham. She tries to forget their argument when she turns her attention to her sister and Mr Bingley who seems to greatly enjoy the evening and Elizabeth is happy knowing that they might form a marriage based on true affection. Throughout the evening, Elizabeth attempts to avoid her mother but overhears her speaking to Lady Lucas "freely, openly, and of nothing else but of her expectation that Jane would soon be married to Mr Bingley. (…) His being such a charming young man, and so rich, and living but three miles from them, were the first points of self-gratulation".[227] Elizabeth tries to make her mother speak quietly, but Mr Darcy overhears her speech. Afterwards, Mr Darcy objects to the match between Mr Bingley and Miss Bennet because he thinks she is indifferent to him. Furthermore, her family's behaviour has led him to believe that it would be an advantageous match for Jane. Later in the novel, Elizabeth accuses Mr Darcy of opposing the match because of Jane's low status since their uncle is in trade. Mr Darcy replies "[t]he situation of your mother's family, though objectionable, was nothing in comparison to that total want of propriety so frequently, so almost uniformly betrayed by herself, by your three younger sisters, and occasionally even by your father".[228] Ironically, Mrs Bennet is close to achieving the opposite of what she is striving for.[229]

Simultaneously, The novel shows that Mrs Bennet is condemned for behaviour that is encouraged and even saluted in other characters. In an act as matchmaker, Mr Darcy

[225] Austen, p. 30.
[226] Austen, p. 71.
[227] Austen p. 69.
[228] Austen, p. 134.
[229] Bilger, p. 161.

forms the matrimony between Lydia and Mr Wickham, which saves Lydia and the Bennet family from being publicly ruined. This act effectively means that Elizabeth and Mr Darcy can marry later in the novel.[230] Furthermore, even if Mr Bennet laughs at Mrs Bennet for her pragmatism he introduces himself to Mr Bingley and ultimately benefits from his daughters' marriages to Mr Bingley and Mr Darcy.[231] Furthermore, the novel shows that Mrs Bennet resembles many other characters in the novel including the heroine. Despite Elizabeth's affinity with her father, there are many similarities between the mother and daughter. Much like her mother, Elizabeth is talkative, argumentative, and at times unrefined in her manner.[232] When Elizabeth decides to go to Netherfield to tend to her sister, she arrives dishevelled and exalted. The Bingley sisters consider her unmannered for walking all the way from Longbourn and when she leaves; "Miss Bingley began abusing her as soon as she was out of the room. Her manners were pronounced to very bad indeed, a mixture of pride and impertinence; she had not conversation, no stile, no taste, no beauty".[233] They later apply the same values to the rest of the Bennet family. The behaviour Elizabeth dislikes and tends to discourage in her mother she herself often takes after.

Mrs Hurst declares that due to Jane's family and low connections it will be hard for her and her sisters to be well settled. They discuss their mother's low status as her brother is an attorney and her other brother lives in Cheapside, which they heartily laugh at. The Bingley family's means exceeds the Bennet family's fortune. But much like Mr Gardiner, the Bingley siblings' wealth has been acquired through trade. The narrator adds this information about them after describing their accomplishments and why they think well of themselves. Furthermore, Mr Bingley's father did not own an estate and Mr Bingley therefore intends to purchase an estate but settles on renting Netherfield. His sisters on the other hand eagerly want him to purchase a home. The reader is meant to recognise the similarities between the Bennet and the Bingley sisters' situation and note that the only difference in their position is wealth.

The Bakhtinian fool invokes a double reading of the text as the figure often presents opposite views of events and characters in the narrative than those of the hero or

[230] Auerbach, p. 55.
[231] Susan Fraiman, "The Humiliation of Elizabeth Bennet", *Critical Insights: Pride and Prejudice,* Salem press, 2011, p. 257.
[232] Todd, p. 67.
[233] Austen, p. 23.

heroine.[234] Mrs Bennet instantly appears as exaggerated and ridiculous to the reader. Her way of speaking is hyperbolic and she constantly reminds her family of the need for her daughters to marry. She is further a comic figure due to her contradictory statements. She declares in the same sentence that she will never speak of Jane and Mr Bingley's separation, but also that she has enquired everyone of his whereabouts. She attempts to make her daughters marry for most of their lives, yet she does not wish to be parted from them. As the Bakhtinian fool, Mrs Bennet's role is not fixed in the narrative and her contradictory ways further establishes her shifting position in the text. Even when Mrs Bennet relents serious concerns about grave matters such as the material security of her daughters, she appears absurd to the reader. However, her incessant insistence on marriage becomes strange and inconsistent. Since a foolish character expresses the demand of matrimony, the reader accepts a doubtful attitude toward marriage and the novel's ending. The Bakhtinian fool has a twofold role in Jane Austen's novels, as the woman in question often conforms to patriarchy, yet functions as a criticism of it.[235] Mrs Bennet's absurdity is important for the novel's narrative and her presence subverts the marriage plot of the text.

Lady Catherine

When Mrs Bennet finds out that Mr Darcy and Elizabeth are to be married, she forgets her dislike of his character and that Lizzie is her least favourite daughter.[236] She exclaims: "What pin-money, what jewels, what carriages you will have! Jane's is nothing to it - nothing at all. I am so pleased - so happy. Such a charming man! - so handsome! so tall! - Oh, my dear Lizzy!".[237] The material aspects of the forthcoming marriage are all she can think about.[238] Likewise, Lady Catherine de Bourgh cannot fathom that the match is made for any other reasons than for the financial and social improvement that the matrimony means for Elizabeth and the Bennet family.[239] Throughout the novel, Lady Catherine speaks out of turn and Mr Darcy is often embarrassed by his aunt's impropriety. The novel displays that her behaviour is

[234] Nodeh, p. 2.
[235] Nodeh, p. 3.
[236] Wiesenfarth, p. 107.
[237] Austen, p. 225.
[238] Wiesenfarth, p. 107.
[239] Wiesenfarth, p. 107.

not unlike Mrs Bennet's.[240] Lady Catherine speaks of her daughter similarly to way that Mrs Bennet speaks of Jane, as Mr Collins restates; "Lady Catherine herself says that in point of true beauty, Miss de Bourgh is far superior to the handsomest of her sex; because there is that in her features which marks the young women of distinguished birth".[241] Lady Catherine expects her daughter to marry Mr Darcy and is willing to hinder a match between him and anyone else. Joseph Wiesenfarth argues that her attitude is a dated approach to the relationship between Mr Darcy and Elizabeth. He argues that the changes in English class society and the growing middle class that occurred due to the Industrialisation lead to a new demand of civility between classes. The novel reflects this transformation through the new relationships made between characters of different social status and the text argues against Lady Catherine's outmoded values.[242]

Mr Wickham tells Elizabeth that "Miss de Bourgh has a very large fortune, and it is believed that she and her cousin will unite the two estates. The structure of maintaining estates during the 19th-century again drives the union of a potential match. Mr Wickham describes the possible union between Miss de Bourgh and Mr Darcy first and foremost as a merging of two properties rather than two people. Later in the novel during her visit to Mr and Mrs Collins' home, Elizabeth is invited to Rosings the home of Lady Catherine de Bourgh and her daughter. Their home is grand and has vast grounds. Lady Catherine reminds her guests of their inferior rank.[243] Mr Collins instructs Elizabeth to put on her best garment and adds that "there is no need for anything more. Lady Catherine will not think the more of you for being simply dressed. She likes to have the distinction of rank preserved".[244] Throughout the novel, Lady Catherine appears odd for insisting in preserving their difference in status. Sir William and Maria Lucas are nervous before their visit to Rosings but Elizabeth is not fearful of "the mere stateliness of money and rank".[245] She notes that Lady Catherine is not welcoming to her guests as they are of an inferior status and speaks to them in an authoritative manner. Elizabeth also notes that Lady Catherine assertively states her opinions, so Elizabeth concludes that her opinions are rarely contended. During the entire dinner, Lady Catherine does not speak to Elizabeth. But later in the evening, she begins asks Elizabeth about her situation and states her opinion on personal matters. Elizabeth then feels "all the impertinence

[240] Brownstein, p. 60.
[241] Austen, p. 112.
[242] Wiesenfarth, p. 111.
[243] Wiesenfarth, p. 108.
[244] Austen, p. 110.
[245] Austen, p. 110.

of her questions".[246] Much like Mrs Bennet, Lady Catherine does not see a reason why estates should be entailed away from the female line. However, she decisively shares her views on the Bennet sisters' fate only to assert their inferior status, adding that entailing the estate was considered unnecessary in Sir Lewis de Bourgh's family.

Shortly after Mr Bingley and Jane are engaged, a carriage arrives early in the morning to Longbourn. Lady Catherine de Bourgh enters the Bennet family's home despite that her visit was completely unexpected to the family. She asks Elizabeth to accompany her outside. Elizabeth refuses to start the conversation, as Lady Catherine is more impolite than usual. To her astonishment, Lady Catherine says that she must surely know why she has arrived. Elizabeth tells her that she does not and is then told that news has reached Lady Catherine of the most pressing matter; namely, that Elizabeth would soon be married to her nephew Mr Darcy. She asks Elizabeth to discredit this information, but Elizabeth refuses to deny the claim. Lady Catherine is astounded that Elizabeth declines to give her an answer adding that she is not one to be discouraged from getting what she wants. She tells her "[t]hey are destined for each other by the voice of every member of their respective houses; and what is to divide them? The upstart pretentions of a young woman without family connections, or fortune. Is this to be endured!"[247] Much like Mrs Bennet, Lady Catherine is frank and attempts to form beneficial matches for her daughter. She claims that her daughter and Mr Darcy's union has been planned since they were young children. In return, Elizabeth says that she will not be hindered by the fact that Mr Darcy's mother and aunt have decided who he will marry. She also asserts that she is a gentleman's daughter, but Lady Catherine questions her on her mother, aunt, and uncle's status and accuses Elizabeth of enticing Mr Darcy.

Throughout their conversation, Elizabeth refuses to give into Lady Catherine's assertions. Lady Catherine exclaims: "You refuse to oblige me! You refuse to obey the claims of duty, honour, and gratitude. You are determined to ruin him in the opinion of all his friends, and make him the contempt of the world".[248] Nonetheless, Elizabeth responds that her marrying Mr Darcy could not violate any principle. The novel proposes that by the denying the authoritative speeches made by Lady Catherine, Elizabeth is able to suggest a method of challenging conventions of rank, decorum, and propriety that would hinder a match between Mr Darcy and Elizabeth. Lady Catherine is proud of her frankness and decided manner. But,

[246] Austen, p. 112.
[247] Austen, p. 239.
[248] Austen, p. 241.

Elizabeth refuses to give into her demands and when Lady Catherine asks her if she did not know that Mr Darcy is intended to marry his cousin she says:

> Yes, and I had heard it before, But what is that to me? If there is no other objection to my marrying your nephew, I shall certainly not be kept from it, by knowing that his mother and aunt wished him to marry Miss de Bourgh. You both did as much as you could, in planning the marriage. Its completion depended on others. If Mr. Darcy is neither by honour not inclination confined to his cousin, why is not he to make another choice? And if I am that choice, why may I not accept him?[249]

She asserts her own and Mr Darcy's ability to choose who they want to marry despite Lady Catherine's insistence that it is against principles of decorum. Elizabeth directly opposes authoritative language. Moreover, this further establishes the link between Mrs Bennet and Lady Catherine. Despite what Lady Catherine thinks her wealth and status say about her character, she appears as foolish as Mrs Bennet as Nina Auerbach argues: "Lady Catherine's authority is not inherent, but derived in arbitrary and misplaced fashion from accidents and contrivances outside herself; she is a pastiche of external projections, an embodiment of that power without selfhood that threatens to make all authority ridiculous".[250] By masquerading the blunt, commanding voice of Lady Catherine through Mrs Bennet, the narrative destabilises Lady Catherine's insistence on the preserving of rank established by the wealthy upper class.

The Bildungsroman Narrative and Dialogism in *Pride and Prejudice*

Mikhail Bakhtin argues that the novel should represent all voices of the social and ideological context from which it stems. This imperative is inherent to the development of the novel including the Bildungsroman genre. Mikhail Bakhtin writes that this rule takes on a new significance concerning the Bildungsroman since "the very idea of a man's becoming and developing – based on his own choices – makes necessary a generous and full representation of the social worlds, voices, languages of the era, among with the hero's becoming – the result of his testing and his choices – is accomplished".[251] He consequently argues that the Bildungsroman requires a comprehensive representation of all stratified languages in order to

[249] Austen, p. 239.
[250] Auerbach, p. 51.
[251] Bakhtin, p. 411.

display the hero or heroine's development of becoming.[252] The female Bildungsroman and the traditional marriage plot tend to be intertwined. A female Bildungsroman is a novel about a woman's progress and growth process to maturity. Lorna Ellis complicates the narrative of development, while the traditional Bildungsroman encourages personal growth and independence patriarchal norms hinder women's development, which is reflected in 18th-century novels with a woman protagonist. Lorna Ellis argues that the plot of the female Bildungsroman is often a narrative of diminishment rather than development since the texts often conclude in marriage.[253] The marriage plot of the 18th and 19th-century novel has deeply affected values of marriage.[254] Romance novels generally depict matches formed due to love and affection rather than marriages formed because of social and financial expectations. The narrative of the genre was fabricated as the foundation of all marriages.[255] Consequently, the romance novel's resolution in marriage meant that matrimony became synonymous with a happy ending. As a result, the heroine's final goal of development tends to be represented in the union between a man and a woman.

However, Lorna Ellis also maintains that the genre consists of two narratives; the protagonist's narrative of development and a concealed plot that rivals the official narrative of the text.[256] This submerged plot is made visible through the existence of the Bakhtinian fool. The fool enlightens the instability of the official narrative of the text. Elizabeth's storyline follows the trajectory of the marriage plot. However, her narrative interacts dialogically with other minor character's storylines.[257] Jane Austen's novels display an ambivalent stance to the traditional trajectory of the marriage plot through their comic resolutions. The reader learns to hold an ambivalent attitude to the endings of the novels.[258] Gabriela Castellanos argues that this constitutes one of the carnival aspects of Jane Austen's literary texts. She asserts that the endings of the novels offer a utopian happiness. But, the reader learns that few characters find happiness in marriage given the primary function of matrimony as a social and financial contract.[259]

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[252] Bakhtin, p. 411.
[253] Ellis, p. 17.
[254] Mary-Catherine Harrison, "Reading the Marriage Plot*", Journal of Family Theory and Review,* 2014: 6, p. 112.
[255] Harrison, p, 114.
[256] Ellis, p. 17.
[257] Seeber p. 26.
[258] Castellanos, p. 8.
[259] Castellanos, p. 19 f.

Lydia's trajectory functions as a framework for Elizabeth's marriage and comments dialogically on Elizabeth's match with Mr Darcy. The reader is meant to find it amusing when Lydia and Kitty grieve when the militia has left Meryton. Lydia is asked to follow Mr and Mrs Forster to Brighton, which is the new residency for the militia. Mr Bennet's passivity reaches its height when Lydia is on her way to go to Brighton and Elizabeth advises him not to let her go. He does not realise the seriousness of the situation and says: "Lydia will never be easy till she has exposed herself in some public place or other".[260] Elizabeth ardently attempts to refuse to let Lydia go. Her father says in response to Elizabeth's fears of Lydia's trip that "[t]he officers will find women better worth their notice. Let us hope, therefore, that her being there may teach her own insignificance".[261] This cruel comment is telling of her father's general approach toward his daughters and particularly his youngest children. Mrs Bennet on the other hand is happy about her up and coming journey and wishes her a happy trip. Later, when Lydia has eloped with Mr Wickham Elizabeth declares that she may be lost forever. Without mentioning her parents by name, Elizabeth blames the situation on their lack of parenting as the cause of the situation.

Despite the nature of Mr Wickham's character, Lydia and Mr Wickham have to marry; otherwise, she will be considered a fallen woman. When Elizabeth has learnt about her sister's elopement she tells Mr Darcy "[s]he has no money no connections, nothing can tempt him to – she is lost for ever".[262] Elizabeth concludes that her sister's situation is grim. But, when Mary declares that a loss of virtue in a woman means she is ruined forever, Elizabeth is unable to respond to her comments because finds her speech too harsh. Mary is portrayed as both a comic and a harsh figure for her insistence that Lydia's virtue is irreparable after her elopement with Mr Wickham.[263] Moreover, Mr Collins pays his grievances to Mr Bennet in a letter and writes that the death of his daughter would have been a blessing in comparison with her current situation. He continues and writes that this situation will be injurious to her other sisters. Mary and Collins' moral stances are portrayed as an oddity in the text. The novel maintains that characters that insist on misogynistic and moralistic values appear strange and are consequently ridiculed in the text. The narrative displays that despite Mr Wickham's several attempts to exploit young women and Mr and Mrs Bennet's lack of parenting, 16-year-old Lydia takes the blame. The parodying of the moralising popular literature in *Pride*

[260] Austen, p. 156.
[261] Austen, p. 156.
[262] Austen, p. 185.
[263] Brownstein. p. 63.

and Prejudice comprises a dialogic category, as the novel employs the misogynistic discourse of the texts and subverts it by letting it be spoken by characters that appear foolish in their rigid manner.

Lydia's situation displays the flaws in making marriage the primary goal for women, which Elizabeth notes: "'How strange this is! And for *this* we are to be thankful. That they should marry, small as is their chance of happiness, and wretched as is his character, we are forced to rejoice!".[264] Mrs Bennet on the other hand is happy, she does not fear that Lydia will be unhappy in her marriage and immediately forgets her former misconduct. She says: "This is delightful indeed! - She will be married! - I shall see her again!" - She will be married at sixteen!".[265] Elizabeth thinks that the expectation that she should be thankful for their union is the worst aspect of it the situation. Elizabeth and Mr Bennet find Mrs Bennet's happiness about the match inappropriate. Mrs Bennet turns from nervous to incredibly happy after learning about the news of her daughter's marriage to Mr Wickham. She boasts about the match to her neighbours, orders wedding garments for her daughter and discusses the matter joyfully. She is surprised that Mr Bennet does not wish to receive them at Longbourn and refuses to buy new clothes for Lydia. Her attitude is ridiculed by the narrator: "She was more alive to the disgrace, which the want of new clothes must reflect on her daughter's nuptials, than to any sense of shame ay her eloping and living with Wickham, a fortnight before they took place". When both Lydia and Jane are married the narrator notes the irony of the situation for the Bennet family: "The Bennets were speedily pronounced to be the luckiest family in the world, though only a few weeks before, when Lydia had first run away, they had generally proved to be marked out for misfortune."[266] After three of the five Bennet sisters have formed matches, their futures are saved and they are considered fortunate for their current situation. The narrative displays the role marriage had in women's lives and the precarious nature of women's own financial and social stability.

While *Pride and Prejudice* concludes in marriage, it consists of several narratives and it results in the critical portrayal of marriage as an institution in the novel. In *General Consent in Jane Austen: A Study of Dialogism* (2000), Barbara K. Seeber writes about the development of the heroine and its relationship to the Bildungsroman genre in relation to Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of dialogism. She quotes Mary Poovey who concludes that Jane Austen employs a "doubling technique" in her novels and that the texts are written

[264] Austen, p. 203.
[265] Austen, p. 205.
[266] Austen, p. 235.

"in a code capable of being read in two ways: as acquiescence to the norm and as departure from it".[267] The existence of two narratives in *Pride and Prejudice* evokes a double reading of the text, between the moralising tale of Lydia's storyline and Elizabeth's narrative of development that eventually leads to marriage. Many of the female background characters remain unhappy and unfulfilled in the end. Barbara K. Seeber further argues that "the 'other' heroine provides and alternative history, which is integral to the dialogic design of each novel, 'a system of intersecting planes".[268] The other background characters remind the reader of stories of exploitation and mistreatment that are incompatible with the happy ending of the novels.[269] The other women's storylines therefore reveal gaps in the official ideology in the novel and their narratives consequently dialogise the heroine's storyline.[270] In *Pride and Prejudice,* Mr Wickham's attempt to exploit Georgiana is repeated, which reveals the heroine's own unsafe situation.[271]

A Tale of Redemption

The Bildungsroman narrative involves the personal growth process of a hero or heroine. The storyline of comic background figures interact with the protagonist's development. In "The frames of comic 'freedom'" (1984), Umberto Eco describes the relationship between comedy and social conventions and he argues that when a comic figure transgress a rule "we in some way welcome the violation; we are; so to speak, revenged by the comic character who has challenged the repressive power of the rule".[272] Comic characters offer a relief from rules of conduct and they express human desires and act them out. However, Umberto Eco further concludes that comedy is always discriminatory since only certain characters are able to redeem themselves as comic targets.[273] Therefore, the relationship between the heroine and the figure of the Bakhtinian fool is significant.

Audrey Bilger asserts that the female tricksters function as foil characters to the heroine. Simultaneously, there is tension between the female trickster and the heroine. The

[267] Seeber, p. 21.
[268] Seeber, p. 26.
[269] Seeber, p. 67.
[270] Seeber, p. 69.
[271] Seeber, p. 88.
[272] Umberto Eco, "The frames of comic 'freedom'", in *Carnival!,* ed. Thomas A. Sebeok, Mouton Publishers, Berlin, New York and Amsterdam, 1984, p. 2.
[273] Eco, p. 2.

female trickster is defined by her will to transgress rules of conduct placed on women in comparison with the more restricted heroine.[274] Audrey Bilger names Lydia Bennet as a female trickster in *Pride and Prejudice;* she is detached from values expressed in conduct-books and she is described her as untamed and fearless. Lydia Bennet is the youngest sister in the Bennet family and she is able to break rules that her sisters insist upon. Audrey Bilger asserts that the authoritarian male is the target for the female trickster's laughter.[275] Lydia interrupts Mr Collins reading of *Sermons to Young Women* and professes that she enjoys reading of novels, which was a genre that was mainly written and read by young women.[276] When she interrupts his reading of the conduct book, her older sisters give her a warning stare not to speak anymore. The narrator notes that "Mr. Collins was not a sensible man, and the deficiency of nature had been but little assisted by education or society; the greatest part of his life having been spent under the guidance of an illiterate and misery father; and though he belonged to one of the universities, he had merely kept the necessary terms, without forming at it any useful acquaintance".[277] Mr Collins thinks he is entitled to instruct young women on how to behave, but it turns out that he lacks education and intelligence himself. Lydia's interruption of Mr Collins acts as a transgression of the demand placed on women to be meek, mild, and modest.

Both Lydia and Elizabeth's narratives comment on women's ability for personal development in a misogynistic society and the consequence of breaking conventions of ideal femininity. At the end of the novel, Lydia is unlike Elizabeth unable to redeem herself. After Mr Wickham and Lydia have been married, Elizabeth is positive that Lydia feels ashamed for her behaviour but to her astonishment, she finds that "Lydia was Lydia still; untamed, unabashed, wild, noisy, and fearless".[278] All the while, Elizabeth is often ashamed of her family's behaviour but she herself is often pleased by the thought of breaking rules of decorum established by the wealthy upper class.[279] Lydia's elopement is humiliating for the entire Bennet family and Elizabeth. After Mr Darcy has proposed to Elizabeth, she receives a letter from him in which he explains his reasons for separating Mr Bingley and Mr Wickham's attempt to exploit his sister Georgiana. Receiving the letter from Mr Darcy is a

[274] Bilger, p. 98 f.
[275] Bilger, p. 100 f.
[276] Bilger, p. 108.

[277] Austen, p. 47.
[278] Austen, p. 211.
[279] Austen, p. 142.

point of mortification for Elizabeth. She learns that she was wrong in her judgement of Mr Wickham's character and she thinks that she was too hasty in her verdict of Mr Darcy. After reading the letter, Elizabeth is ashamed of her own and her family's conduct. Elizabeth has previously noted the likeness between how she and Lydia speaks but she is now appalled by her crassness.

Previously, her method of dealing with issues that befall her was laughter. She has adopted this behaviour from her father and now she realises that it is inappropriate. Elizabeth thinks that "[i]n her own past behaviour, there was a constant source of vexation and regret; and in the unhappy defects of her family a subject of yet heavier chagrin. They were hopeless of remedy. Her father, contented with laughing at them, would never exert himself to restrain the wild giddiness of his youngest daughters; and her mother, was entirely insensible of the evil".[280] She does not differentiate between the judgmental sarcasm of her father and the boisterous humour of her youngest sister and declares that their laughter is equally damaging. Seemingly, a woman's possibility of redemption is placed in her willingness to adapt to demands placed on women. But, Audrey Bilger suggests that by not stifling Lydia's laughter at the end of the text, the novel attempts to not permit reputation to dictate a woman's fate.[281]

Elizabeth speaks to Jane about Mr Darcy and she tells her "I meant to be uncommonly cleaver in taking so decided a dislike to him, without any reason. It is such a spur to one's genius, such an opening for wit to have a dislike of that kind. One may be continually abusive without saying any thing just; but one cannot be always laughing at a man without now and then stumbling on something witty".[282] The novel eases the reader into sympathising with Mr Bennet and Elizabeth's laughter. But alongside Elizabeth's own revelation, the reader soon recognises that their laughter is misguided. Patricia Meyer Spacks writes "[f]or father and daughter, laughter helps fend off real social, psychological, and familial difficulties".[283] Consequently, this defence mechanism leads Elizabeth to make misinformed decisions. Their laughter has been revealed to be cruel and a cover for a clouded judgement and this revelation is extended to her mother. The narrator describes Elizabeth's feelings of her family and her views of marriage based on her family situation:

[280] Austen, p. 144.
[281] Bilger, p. 108.
[282] Austen, p. 152.
[283] Meyer Spacks, p. 72.

> Had Elizabeth's opinion been all drawn from her own family, she could not have formed a very pleasing picture of conjugal felicity or domestic comfort. Her father captivated by youth and beauty, and that appearance of good humour, which youth and beauty generally give, had married a women whose weak understanding and illiberal mind, had very early in their marriage put and end to all real affection for her. Respect, esteem, and confidence, had vanished for ever; and all his views of domestic happiness were overthrown.[284]

Elizabeth finds her father's attitude and approach toward his wife as inappropriate. She thinks that he exposes her to the disregard of her own children, which she considers a breach of the demands expected of a husband. Elizabeth is continuously exposed to unsuitable matches both regarding her parents and other matches made throughout the narrative and she herself wants a partnership that is based on respect and compatibility, which the novel argues that she reaches through her development. Laughter is also a way of establishing intimate relationships in the novel and the characters reveal aspects about themselves through humour that would otherwise be hidden. Audrey Bilger argues that "[t]he comic theory that underlies *Pride and Prejudice* involves a mixture of satire and sympathy. Elizabeth declares herself bound to laugh at 'follies and nonsense, whims and inconsistencies,' but she sees this laughter as an essential part of intimacy".[285] Furthermore, it draws on the importance of laughter in marriage as Georgina learns via Elizabeth to take liberties and allow herself to be humorous with a future husband. Consequently, laughter also forms relationships between women in the novel.[286]

[284] Austen, p. 159.
[285] Bilger, p. 75.
[286] Bilger, p. 71 f.

Jane Austen's Parody of the Sentimental Novel: a Negotiation of the Private and the Public Spheres

The sentimental novel and the sentimental comedy compensate virtue with marriage and domestic happiness.[287] This is visible in Samuel Richardson's *Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded.* The novel portrays the righteous life of the fifteen-year-old servant Pamela Andrews. Her employer attempts to seduce and sexually assault her but Pamela defies him. Her resistance leads him to make her an offer of marriage, which she accepts. Their marriage is depicted as a reward for her righteousness in the text.[288] The misogynistic narrative is a common format for the sentimental novel. Literary critics have argued that the sentimental novel both depicts women's vulnerable position within 18th-century English society, but simultaneously places women's worth in their virtue and concludes that women's happiness is found within marriage.

In the text *Small Change: Women, Learning, Patriotism, 1750-1810* (2000), Harriet Guest describes sentiment "as a moralized language of feeling articulated in certain overdetermined structures of narrative which deal with the victimization of feminine or feminized subjects".[289] She further writes that even though sentiment and sensibility are closely related, sentiment disallows desire while sensibility represents the moral obscurity of desire.[290] Moreover, she complicates the language of sensibility in relation to women's position and writes "sensibility as a feminized language of professional ambition comes uncomfortably close in the heroine's vision of domesticity, to the language of the wife as property".[291] However, Harriet Guest also asserts that sentiment allowed women to perceive themselves as public subjects and take part in politics. But, additionally this had a nationalistic interest, since the nuclear family became representative for the English nation during the 18th-century, partly through the sentimental novel's utopian depiction of domestic

[287] "Sentimental comedy", *The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms,* 3rd ed., Oxford University Press, 2008. Accessed from http://www.oxfordreference.com.ludwig.lub.lu.se/view/10.1093/acref/9780199208272.001.0001/acref-9780199208272-e-1041?rskey=JnDAuR&result=1046 18-05-2018.

[288] "Pamela", *Encyclopaedia Britannica,* 2016. Accessed from https://www.britannica.com/topic/Pamela-novel-by-Richardson 18-05-2018.

[289] Harriet Guest, *Small change: women, learning, patriotism, 1750-1810*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2000, p. 295. Accessed from https://books.google.se/books?id=nYXIaWSvBTAC&lpg=PA23&pg=PA295#v=onepage&q=sentiment&f=false 18-05-2018.

[290] Guest, *Small change: women, learning, patriotism, 1750-1810,* p. 295.

[291] Guest, *Small change: women, learning, patriotism, 1750-1810,* p. 303.

bliss.[292] The sentimental novel deals with women's position in English society. Jane Austen takes on this tradition but parodies the sentimental novel's misogynistic language in *Pride and Prejudice,* which is displayed in Elizabeth's personal development.

The sentimental novel focuses on the private sphere and displays the dichotomy between the private and the public realm, which is a tradition that Jane Austen adopts. Christine Roulston argues that the genre stems from a gendered opposition between the public and the domestic sphere.[293] Christine Roulston further discusses Mikhail Bakhtin's writing on the sentimental novel and she writes that he lauds its realism but concludes that its genre conventions make it monologic.[294] According to Mikhail Bakhtin, the sentimental novel becomes monologic sine it denies representation of the public sphere as its "movement toward privatization cuts it off from 'other aspects of reality,' it 'attempts to displace the brute discourse of life".[295] Men occupy both the public and the private sphere and are freely able to move between them. Women on the other hand are confined to the domestic realm. Due to the gendered polarisation of the private and the public spheres, the domestic sphere is denied the official space that the public sphere occupies. Christine Roulston notes that "Bakhtin's critique suggests a reluctance to have the private – and by implication the feminine – realms – become a referent for the representation of the real".[296] But, Jane Austen displays the political significance of the domestic realm and consequently opposes the dichotomy between the public and the private spheres in the novel.[297]

The novel argues that the match between Mr Darcy and Elizabeth is one based on compatibility. This is suggested when Elizabeth sees Pemberley for the first time. Elizabeth follows her uncle and aunt Mr and Mrs Gardiner on a longer trip and they visit Pemberley during their travels. At first, she is hesitant to visit the estate but when she sees the grounds "her spirits were in a high flutter".[298] Elizabeth generally keeps a happy outlook and it is important for the understanding of her relationships. Her happiness stems from intimate relationships with women and she hopes to be able to find the same closeness with a husband.

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[292] Harriet Guest, "introduction", *Unbounded Attachment: Sentiment and Politics in the Age of the French Revolution,* Oxford Scholarship Online, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2014, p. 4.

[293] Christine Roulston, In "Discourse, Gender, and Gossip: Some Reflections of Bakhtin and *Emma*", *Ambiguous Discourse: Feminist Narratology and British Women Writers,* ed. Kathy Mezei, The University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill and London, 1996, Roulston, p. 42.
[294] Roulston, p. 41.
[295] Roulston, p. 42.
[296] Roulston, p. 42.
[297] Roulston, p. 43.
[298] Austen, p. 163.

Elizabeth is delighted when she sees Pemberley and she even thinks that to be mistress of the estate would be would be quite something. Everywhere she looks on the grounds of Pemberley, she thinks there are beauties to be seen. Elizabeth considers this visit to be a good source of the true nature of Mr Darcy's character. Later in the novel, Jane asks her how long she has loved Mr Darcy and Elizabeth responds: "It has been coming on so gradually, that I hardly knew when it began. But I believe I must date it from my first seeing his beautiful grounds at Pemberley".[299] Their future match is set in motion when she sees his home for the first time.

Nina Auerbach argues that "Pemberley is Elizabeth's initiation into physicality, providing her with all the architectural solidity and domestic substance Longbourn lacks. It has real grounds, woods, paths, streams, rooms, furniture".[300] In comparison with Pemberley, Longbourn's physical appearance is described in minor detail in the novel and its materiality is only brought forward in the presence of male guests who may counter the indiscernibility of the estate.[301] Consequently, the novel engages with the discourse of the domestic sphere as an unofficial, unshaped realm. Nina Auerbach asserts that the Bennet family's life is portrayed as unreal, illusory, and as a life in waiting. She writes: "The near-invisibility of Longbourn and the collective life of the Bennets within it is at one with its economic invisibility under an entail which denies a family of women legal existence".[302] Consequently, the notion of the authentic, real world is connected with the public sphere.[303] But, the novel engages critically with the divide between the private and the public realms and the factors behind the portrayal of the Bennet family's domestic life as an unofficial reality is appointed to economic realities. Moreover, Nina Auerbach challenges the view that Jane Austen did not involve her contemporary society or historical context in her novels and concludes that her texts are war novels that are portrayed from the domestic sphere.[304]

Christine Roulston argues that socio-economic factors form relationships in Jane Austen's literary texts, which fuses the public and the private in the novels. She writes: "The marriage contract, in turn, confirms the relationship between public and private, legitimating private passion by turning it into public duty and thereby also regulating and defining socio-

[299] Austen, p. 252.
[300] Auerbach, p. 44.
[301] Auerbach, p. 44.
[302] Auerbach, p. 42.
[303] Roulston, p. 42.
[304] Auerbach, p. 39.

economic relations".[305] Jane Austen displays that marriage is the only way for women to acquire economic stability and Christine Roulston argues that marriage isolates women, which hinder them to speak as a class in a united voice.[306] This is displayed in the heroine's silence and Harriet Guest argues that Jane Austen counters the ideal of directness in the late 18th-century texts that express social criticism. Instead, she allows her heroines to contemplate their place in the restricting domestic sphere through quietness and their internal contemplation further displays the boundaries of the private sphere. Moreover, the heroines' inability to communicate displays the deficiency of a community that surrounds them, which often drives the plot in the novels.[307] Harriet Guest writes that Jane Austen portrays mistrust in language through to the acts of miscommunication and misjudgement in the texts. She further writes that the novels "are marked by a sustained emphasis on what is unspoken, concealed, and indirectly or obliquely expressed".[308] The failures in interaction complicate the marriage plot in *Pride and Prejudice* and Mr Darcy and Elizabeth's relationship is driven by communication errors.[309] The novel displays doubt in spoken language as a medium, which has both personal and social implications and affects the heroine's personal development.[310] However, the heroines reach an authoritative narrative position through their relationship with the narrator, which is established through free indirect discourse and it permits the heroine to distance herself from authority.[311] The narrator often shares Elizabeth's sarcastic tone and during the ball at Netherfield the narrator reports "[n]othing could be more delightful! To be fond of dancing was a certain step towards falling in love".[312] The narrator laughs at the rituals that are supposed to aid the formation of marriages during the period and shows an affinity with the heroine with their humorous air.

Jane Austen transgresses the sentimental convention of presenting perfect and morally righteous heroines. Mr Darcy echoes the demand of perfection placed on women and

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[305] Roulston, p. 44.
[306] Roulston, p. 59.
[307] Harriet Guest, "introduction", *Unbounded Attachment: Sentiment and Politics in the Age of the French Revolution,* p. 13 f.
[308] Harriet Guest, "'Inadvertencies and misconstructions': Jane Austen's Heroines", *Unbounded Attachment: Sentiment and Politics in the Age of the French Revolution,* Oxford Scholarship Online, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2014, p. 4.
[309] Harriet Guest, "'Inadvertencies and Misconstructions': Jane Austen's Heroines", p. 6.

[310] Harriet Guest, "'Inadvertencies and misconstructions': Jane Austen's Heroines", p. 4 f.
[311] Kathy Mezei, "Introduction", *Ambiguous Discourse: Feminist Narratology and British Women Writers,* ed. Kathy Mezei, The University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill and London, 1996, p. 12.
[312] Austen, p. 5.

reproduces the language found in conduct books. Miss Bingley communicates his requirements of accomplishment: "A woman must have a thorough knowledge, of music, singing, drawing, dancing, and the modern languages, to deserve the word; and besides all this, she must possess a certain something in her air and walking, the tone of her voice, her address and expressions, or the word will be but half deserved".[313] Elizabeth responds: "I never saw such a woman. I never saw such capacity, and taste, and application, and elegance, as you describe, united".[314] Recognisably, Elizabeth is not commenting of women's lack of accomplishments, but rather the unattainability of the ideal professed by Mr Darcy. Unlike the sentimental novel, *Pride and Prejudice's* focus is personal growth rather than maintaining the heroine as the epitome of ideal femininity and virtue.

Mr Bennet's character is parodying portrait of the authoritative father figure that is often depicted in the sentimental novel. He is an authoritative figure but the narrative criticises his behaviour in the text. [315] In "The Humiliation of Elizabeth Bennet", Susan Fraiman agues that Mr Bennet maintains his position of control by taking on the role of an author and she writes "among women whose solace is news, Mr. Bennet keeps the upper hand by withholding information – that is, by creating suspense".[316] This is shown when Mr Bennet refuses to tell Mrs Bennet that he has visited Mr Bingley. This instance further displays women's lack of mobility and confinement to the home, as Mrs Bennet is dependent on Mr Bennet passing her information. Consequently, Mrs Bennet is unable to do much to help her daughter's situation despite her grave concern for them. Elizabeth adopts her father's ironic stance as Susan Fraiman notes: "Mr Bennet bequeaths to Elizabeth his ironic distance from the world, his habit of studying and appraising those around him, his role of social critic".[317] She further argues that this gives Elizabeth some authorial power, but notably none of the privilege of the authoritative male figure.[318] Instead, by adopting her father's judgmental tone Elizabeth makes grave judgements in error. The narrative harshly criticises Mr Bennet's detached outlook and particularly his inability to protect Lydia from Mr Wickham. Because of Lydia's elopement, Elizabeth learns to be critical of her father's attitude. Consequently, Elizabeth needs to disengage herself from the distanced place of judgement that she and her father have shared. Later she dismisses her father's authorial position and proves that she has

[313] Austen, p. 26.
[314] Austen, p. 26.
[315] Roulston, p. 45.
[316] Fraiman, p. 251.
[317] Fraiman, p. 253.
[318] Fraiman, p. 253.

learnt a lesson her father has yet to learn, the ability to move past her former judgements of people.

Noticeably, Lydia is a parody of the sentimental heroine. Her narrative displays the economic factors that govern the institution of marriage and the misogynistic language surrounding the ideal of virtue, as her potential loss of virtue is Mr Wickham's primary threat in his scheme to acquire finances from her family. In line with Barbara K. Seeber's argument that is previously outlined in this essay, Susan Fraiman asserts that Elizabeth's marriage to Darcy is dependent on Lydia's narrative and Mr Darcy's rescue of Lydia. Susan Fraiman writes: "Lydia's seduction codes an emotional drama – of coercion, capitulation, and lamentation – missing from but underlying Elizabeth's story proper".[319] Elizabeth, Lydia, and Charlotte's narratives intersect in the text and the utopian ending in *Pride and Prejudice* is the closure of a novel that negotiates the difficulty in fulfilling communal versus personal needs.[320] In the novel, women are asked to choose between material security and personal happiness. The novel counters Elizabeth's sentimentality with Charlotte's pragmatism, but displays that Charlotte's decision to marry Mr Collins is marked by necessity and can barely be described as a choice. It further contrasts Elizabeth and Mr Darcy's marriage with Lydia's "patched-up business", to use Lady Catherine's words.[321] Susan Fraiman writes that "Austen remained suspicious not only of excessively sentimental rhetoric but of all attempts to deny the material contingencies of marriage and to romanticize it as a simple matter of female interest and choice".[322] Consequently, Jane Austen's parody of the sentimental novel in *Pride and Prejudice,* destabilises the novel's own happy ending and its succumbing to the marriage plot.

[319] Fraiman, p. 263.
[320] Sarah Webster Goodwin, "Knowing Better: Feminism and Utopian Discourse in *Pride and Prejudice*, *Villette*, and 'Babette's Feast'", *Critical Insights: Pride and Prejudice,* Salem Press, 2011, p. 284

[321] Austen, p. 240.
[322] Fraiman, p. 247.

Conclusion

This study has investigated the role of the Bakhtinian fool in *Pride and Prejudice*; namely, it has examined how Mrs Bennet is used as a vehicle to display conflicting discourses in the text and consequently making it dialogic. By exposing the authoritative language conveyed by characters that insist on the demands of marriage market and the preserving of rank the novel opposes authoritative discourse. The incompatible relationship between Mr and Mrs Bennet acts as a catalyst for the novel's discussion and negotiation of women's relationship to authoritative language. Language is displayed as a medium that is always ideologically embedded and authoritative sentences are revealed to be contradictory and unstable. The characters' various idiolects are encoded with their personalities, values, and intentions, which often accentuate their various social standings in society and consequently make the reader aware of the implications of gender and class in the text. The novel exhibits an anxiety regarding language as a medium, which is partly brought forward by the increase in social mobility after the Industrialisation that lead to greater interaction between people of different classes. Socio-political changes affect language and language is displayed as a site for both repression and resistance.

Mrs Bennet's opposes Mr Collins inheriting the Longbourn estate and her stance is portrayed as naïve in the novel. But, her incomprehension allows the reader to recognise the misogyny intact in various institutions and estranges the language used to keep patriarchal authority and the wealthy upper class intact through the succession of property. Mr Collins' proposal further demonstrates the necessity for women to marry in order to secure a comfortable future. Jane Austen parodies authoritative male figures through the portraits of Mr Collins and Mr Bennet. Throughout the narrative, Mrs Bennet appears as a foolish figure. Yet, as the text shows there are many resemblances between her and other characters. Notably, Lady Catherine attempts to form a beneficial match for her daughter and she is both frank and commanding much like Mrs Bennet. The link between Mrs Bennet and other characters exhibits the primary function of the Bakhtinian fool who defamiliarises social conventions and makes them appear strange and imposing.

Marriages are often formed due to ill-advised reasons and consequently lead to unstable, unfulfilling, and potentially dangerous situations for women in *Pride and Prejudice.* Mrs Bennet and Mr Bennet's imbalanced relationship that lacks affinity and companionship is placed in relation to the match made between Elizabeth and Mr Darcy. The novel therefore argues for matches made out of affection rather than marriages formed by compulsion. This

conclusion is drawn by the link and the resemblance between Mrs Bennet and Elizabeth. Mrs Bennet's behaviour is not unlike Elizabeth's own conduct. The Bakhtinian fool is a mask for the author and here acts as a foil character to the heroine. The likeness between mother and daughter is important for understanding the narrative and the instability of Elizabeth's happy ending. However, while *Pride and Prejudice* concludes in marriage it consists of several narratives and voices that interact dialogically and result in the critical portrayal of marriage as an institution in the novel. Elizabeth's trajectory follows the traditional marriage plot, but her narrative is placed in relation to Charlotte and Lydia's storylines. Their communal narratives remind the reader of women's position in 19th-century England that was defined by a lack of legal personhood, financial dependence, and confinement to the domestic sphere. But, the novel further strives to establish a different reality for women, which is not defined by necessity. Using the symbolic figure of the Bakhtinian fool, Jane Austen negotiates women's existence in a misogynistic society. *Pride and Prejudice* engages with the dichotomy between the private and the public spheres and the novel argues that there is value in the private lives of women and displays their existence as a significant part of reality and the brute discourse of life.

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