A Different Point of View:
On Love and Marriage in *Pride and Prejudice*

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I. Introduction

*Pride and Prejudice* is Jane Austen’s most popular and widely-read novel. For teenagers, *Pride and Prejudice* has always been the most fascinating appeal. By virtue of its elaborate plots, I am eager to see what happens next. I am deeply attracted by excellent descriptions, fascinating characters and some specific issues it tackles. Therefore, this thesis intends to discuss one important issue that goes through the novel: the concepts of marriage and love in *Pride and Prejudice*.

Born in 1775 in Steventon Hampshire, Jane Austen was the youngest among seven children. She had education at home instead of going to school. Since Jane’s father was a clergyman, she was encouraged to read and write. In addition, she started to write when she was twelve, and writing had become an everlasting passion for Jane ever since.

Jane had many works in her life, such as *Pride and Prejudice* (1811), *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), *Mansfield Park* (1814), *Emma* (1815), and after Jane was dead, *Persuasion* and *Northanger Abbey* were published.

Jane Austen’s language is light, vivid, and ironic with a sense of humor. On the one hand, dialogues in her works are natural to readers, which can easily involve readers’ identification. On the other hand, acromonic observations, and spicy language mark Jane Austen’s novels as implicit observations and implied criticisms of England society at her time.

Setting her backgrounds on village lives of the middle-class, many of her novels are love stories. She always describes how women and men fall in love and eventually get married through her colorful dialogues. Although Jane never been gets married, she still knows what women and men think and expresses their thinkings very well. With her perfect depiction of characters, and arrangement of actions, the main characters know each other through conflicts and mistakes, making the story eventually becoming a happy ending.

The background of *Pride and Prejudice* is the late 18th and early 19th century England. At that age, women were considered the inferior class in the society, and the sole purpose for unmarried women was to secure a good marriage and a good husband, and to fulfill the sacred obligation as a good wife and a godmother.

Conditioned by this, women were dressed up and performed gracefully in a ball where access to upper-class men is granted and guarantees of a good marriage and a good life were secured.

This thesis, first introduces *Pride and Prejudice*, including characters, summaries, and related analysis. Then, in the second part, this thesis argues that
the concept of love and marriage have been redefined in *Pride and Prejudice*. As Jane Austen puts it, marriage is the union of two minds, a union of love.

II. A Different Point of View: On Love and Marriage in *Pride and Prejudice*

The story focused on the Bennet family. When Charles Bingley, a single and rich man, rented Netherfield Park, Mrs. Bennet strived to let one of her daughters marry him. In a ball, Bingley fell in love with Jane, the eldest daughter of Mr. Bennet and Mrs. Bennet’s daughters. However, her closest sister, Elizabeth, had a prejudice against Darcy, Bingley’s best friend, because of his pride.

Few days later, encountering a soldier, Wickham, Elizabeth heard Darcy’s evil deeds which provoked more of her prejudice against Darcy. Before long, it was shocked for Jane to get a letter that Bingley went to London and never came back. Soon, Jane decided to go to London because of Elizabeth’s courage. Another surprising thing happened: Mr. Collins, Elizabeth’s cousin, proposed to Elizabeth. Needless to say, she rejected the ridiculous proposal and then Mr. Collins married Charlotte, Elizabeth’s best friend.

Months passed, Elizabeth knew that Darcy broke the potential marriage between Jane and Bingley. At the same time, not holding back his love to Elizabeth, Darcy proposed to her. But Elizabeth contended that she was angry that he ruined the happiness of her beloved sister. However, after reading the letter from Darcy, Elizabeth knew that she misunderstood Darcy. Besides, understanding that Darcy helped Lydia, Elizabeth’s little sister, and Wickham got married, Elizabeth knew that Darcy was a kind person and then deeply loved him.

After clearing all the mistakes, Elizabeth and Darcy got married as well as Jane and Bingley. Through many difficulties and mistakes, the two couple got married and had a happy ending.

In the late 18th and early 19th century England, marriage is traditionally based on money. At that time, women married for “money.” Marriage is a place, a market where men and women negotiate and bargain for wealth, and social status. Therefore Ginger Grab argues, “marriage is a market, and the young women are its merchandise.” (1)

In *Pride and Prejudice*, Charlotte Lucas and Mr. Collins married for money and a satisfying life, as Charlotte said:

“But I am not romantic, you know. I never was. I ask only a comfortable home; and considering Mr. Collins’s character, connections, and situation in life, I am convinced that my chance of happiness with him is as fair, as most people can boast on entering the marriage state.”(96)
Charlotte considered the well-being of a family life was economically based. The function of marriage was to secure one’s financial state, which in turn solidified, or in many cases, elevated social status. Consequently, Peter L. De Rose defined Charlotte’s marriage to Mr. Collins as “mercenary.”(206) According to De Rose, Charlotte regarded marriage as a way to a life of rich. Charlotte did not stress love on marriage but on a demand that can guarantee adequate clothing and food in the rest of her life. All that she wanted was acquire a decent life which can prevent her from the impoverished life. Situated in the late 18\textsuperscript{th} and early 19\textsuperscript{th} century England, women needed marriage to lift themselves to higher social class. As a result, Charlotte sacrificed love just because of a satisfying life, and higher social status.

To climb up to a higher class via marriage, required many preparations. As Ginger Grab put it, “In this lovely world of good manners, balls, social visits, servants and elegant clothing, the young women operate under a ruthless imperative: they must marry.”(1) In *Pride and Prejudice*, there were many descriptions that stated how women expected and prepared when a ball was held because to attend a ball was the best way of marrying a man of higher social status. In addition, dancing was a certain step to fall in love with a man in possession of a good fortune. For example, it is a ball that Jane fell in love with Bingley and Jane encountered Darcy, and both of which got married with each other in the long run.

The concept that marriage as a negotiation or trading can be equally applied to man as it was explicitly revealed in the beginning of *Pride and Prejudice*: “It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife.” (1) Men thought that “marriage” was the vital purpose in their life. All men wanted was a wife who could manage domestic chores. It was no doubt that the reason why men got married was not for true love. In *Pride and Prejudice*, the statement “Having now a good house and very sufficient income, he intended to marry.”(53), revealed the reason why Mr. Collins married. Mr. Collins considered that he was the man who possessed a large number of incomes, and as a minister, he needed a wife to set a perfect example. Besides, he thought that he had to select a wife who was diligent and could help him manage household affairs. He secured a wife because he wanted a woman not only to do the housework but also to meet his vanity. That is to say, marriage was nothing more than Mr. Collins’ need.

In *Pride and Prejudice*, Mr. Collins proposed to Charlotte after he was refused by Elizabeth few days ago. It was so ridiculous that he proposed two women in few days. Although Mr. Collins married Charlotte, he on no condition loved her. So Zhang Ming commented that, “his love to Charlotte was by no means sincere and genuine”(4) Mr. Collins did not stress love on marriage. Instead, he got
married just because he wanted a wife to satisfy his vanity. Considering his higher social status, he could easily find a wife. Therefore, his concept toward marriage was based on vanity not love.

To conclude, in the late 18th and early 19th century, marriage was traditionally based on money. Not only women but also men regarded marriage as a trade, not a symbol of love. Marriage was nothing more than a market where men were the buyers and women were their merchandises.

However, in *Pride and Prejudice*, two couples’ marriages were not based on money, but love.

A. Elizabeth and Darcy

Elizabeth and Darcy’s marriage, different from the traditional marriage, was based on true love and understanding. Throughout many conflicts and mistakes, they eventually deeply loved each other despite the fact that Mr. Darcy was relatively rich.

Elizabeth first encountered Darcy in a ball. Because of Darcy’s pride, she had extreme prejudice against him. She felt that Darcy was just a man who was very proud and selfish. Unlike other people who only saw Darcy’s richness in their eyes, Elizabeth focused on Darcy’s personality. What counts was who he was, instead of what he had. Elizabeth said, “From the beginning, from the first sight, I may almost say, of my acquaintance with you. Your manners impress me with the fullest belief of your arrogance.” (148) Obviously, Elizabeth thought that one’s personality outweighed his class and wealth. Elizabeth considered that Darcy was such a proud person that he could be the last woman in the world to marry, as she told to Darcy, “And I had not known you a month before I felt that you were the last man in the world whom I had ever be prevailed on to marry.” (148) Ginger Grab thought that Elizabeth displayed that, “She heartily dislikes him and his aloof manner and class-based pride.” (2)

However, after Darcy wrote the letter to interpret what Elizabeth accused of him, she knew that how wrong she was. Having a previous prejudice against Darcy, she could not judge in perspective. She blamed herself for being proud and conceited:

“‘How despicably have I acted!’ she cried.—‘I, who have prided myself on my discernment!’—I, who have valued myself on abilities! Who have often disdained the generous candour of my sister, and gratified my vanity, in useless or blameable distrust.” (159)

Because Elizabeth had intensive prejudice against Darcy at first, she gradually lost her judgment and could not judge who truly loved her. To put it another way, when accusing Mr. Darcy’s for his arrogance and the defaults in his personality,
Elizabeth had been blinded for being acrid and unable to judge clearly and calmly. In her own definition, she had committed the crime of pride, two. Her pride, which stemmed from her overestimate about her own ability to discern, and to judge eventually seduced her to misjudge, and to fall into the shame of arrogance and selfishness, just exactly like what she had previously thought of Darcy.

Since Elizabeth found her fault, she began to re-evaluate Darcy’s personality and behaviors and to affirm whether Darcy’s explanation was true. Gradually, Elizabeth found that Darcy was true and Wickham was a liar. Not only did Wickham deceive Elizabeth, but he eloped with Lydia. In addition, knowing that Darcy helped Wickham and Lydia get married, Elizabeth thought that Darcy was such a kind man that she deeply loved him. As Elizabeth discovered her love to Darcy, she intended to overcome all troubles, such as her rejection to Lady Catherine’s acquirement that she could not marry Darcy. Elizabeth said, “I am only resolved to act in that manner, which will, in my own opinion, constitute my happiness, without reference to you, or to any person so wholly unconnected with me.” (273) Moreover, Elizabeth convinced her father that she truly loved Darcy and she wanted to marry him. With all her efforts, Elizabeth and Darcy got married and led a sweet life in the end.

As for Darcy, he fell in love with Elizabeth gradually. He could not help but love her and was deeply attracted by her behaviors as Zhang Ming argued that, “His love to Elizabeth, nourished by day-to-day encounters with her, grew steadily and quickly.”(9). Darcy said, “In vain have I struggled. It will not do. My feelings will not be repressed. You must allow me to tell you how ardently I admire and love you.” (145) Darcy was so appealed by Elizabeth that he loved her so much even that he did not know when or where he loved him. In addition, even though he was rich and of higher social status, he loves Elizabeth because of her wits and good minds. His love was not deterred by the gap of their social class. Even though Elizabeth seemed so unconventional, so active, aggressive, he loved who she actually was with his obvious ignorance to Catherine’s suggestion to marry a woman of a higher society.

Therefore, Darcy proposed to Elizabeth. To his surprise, Elizabeth rejected him and accused him of his evil deeds. Though he was rejected by Elizabeth, he still deeply loved her and helped her little sister, Lydia. Darcy said:

“‘If you will thank me,’ he replied, ‘let it be yourself alone. That the wish of giving happiness to you, might add fore to the other inducements which led me on, I shall not attempt to deny. But your family owe me nothing. Much as I respect them, I believe, I thought only for you.’” (280)

Despite of Darcy’s hatred to Elizabeth’s low status and the entire Bennet family’s
disgraceful deeds, he still helped Elizabeth get through the difficult times because of his everlasting love to her. In addition, loving Elizabeth so deeply, he opposed against Catherine’s proposal to marry a woman of higher social status. In spite of the fact that Darcy was of higher social status, he was still deeply attracted by Elizabeth. Because Darcy’s endless love moved Elizabeth, Darcy eventually married Elizabeth and had a happy ending.

Elizabeth and Darcy’s marriage was based on love and true understanding. It was different from marriages for money and social status. Neither was Darcy the buyer, nor was Elizabeth the merchandise. Elizabeth turned her prejudice into deep love to Darcy; and Darcy loved Elizabeth despite the fact that he was of higher social class. Throughout many mistakes, they became the perfect couple in the long run. Their marriage was not based on money, social status, or decent life; instead, it was based on true love and understanding. They were the couple taking the non-traditional view on marriage.

Jane and Bingley’s marriage was based on love and true understanding as well. It was unconventional marriage, not for money but love. Although there was a biggest problem that Bingley was a man in possession of a good fortune and a higher social class than Jane, they made all efforts to vanquish it.

As soon as Jane encountered Bingley in a ball, she soon fell in love with him. She loved his modesty, politeness, and good manners as Jane said, “‘He is just what a young man ought to be,’ said she, ‘sensible, good humoured, lively; and I never saw such happy manners!’” (9)

However, because Jane did not show her feelings obviously, Bingley did not know that Jane loved him as well. Neither did Darcy know that. In the letter which Darcy gave to Elizabeth, Darcy said that, “Her look and manner were open, cheerful and engaging as ever, but without any symptom of peculiar regard.” (151) Darcy felt Jane did not love Bingley. He supposed Jane just loved Bingley’s fortune. But the fact was Jane concealed her feelings and did not want to convey, as Zhang Ming argued that, “Jane cherished her feelings towards Bingley, yet she chose to conceal it. She tried to control her passion, lest anyone find it.”(9)

Besides, because Jane was a middle-class woman, Bingley’s sisters and Darcy were against them. Bingley’s sisters and Darcy thought that Jane did not match with Bingley. Therefore, Bingley’s sister did not truly regarded Jane as a friend and even strived to break their marriage. As a result, Jane went to London but did not see Bingley and back. However, in the end, because Darcy found that he was fault, he told the truth to Bingley. In the conversation between Elizabeth and Darcy, Darcy said, “I told him of all that had occurred to make my former interference in his affairs, absurd and impertinent.” (284) Therefore, Bingley went
back to Netherfield Park and proposed to Jane. Jane eventually married Bingley and had a happy life.

In the case of Bingley, he fell in love with Jane at first sight in the ball as well. He loved Jane because of beauty, blandness, and gentleness. He was so appealed by Jane that he danced with her twice even though Jane was the middle-class. Besides, when Jane fell sick, he loved her so much that he felt very uncomfortable and made all his efforts to take care of her: “while he could find no better relief to his feelings than by giving his housekeeper directions that every possible attention night be paid to the sick lady and her sister.” (30) Zhang Ming thought that, “When Jane suffered an illness his anxiety for Jane was evident, and his attentions to herself most pleasing. We can feel Bingley’s real concern and affection towards Jane from these details.” (8)

Nevertheless, because Bingley was such an indecisive man that when Darcy and her sister convinced him that Jane did not loved him, he soon believed and went to London. In the letter which Darcy gave to Elizabeth, Darcy said that, “Bingley has great natural modesty, with a stronger dependence on my judgment than on his own.” (152) Lacking confidence and Darcy’s interference, Bingley was stuck in the yearning of Jane. However, after few months passed, Bingley found that he still deeply loved Jane and could not stop missing her. In addition, Darcy found he was wrong and told Bingley the truth that he deceived him. Therefore, returning to Netherfield Park, Bingley proposed to Jane. Through Bingley’s efforts, he overcomes all obstacles and mistakes, as Zhang Ming put, “Jane and Bingley were married in order to love.”(9)

In late 18th and early 19th century, marriage was traditionally based on money. Marriage was a “market.” Women married just because they wanted a decent life and to climb up to higher social class. What men needed was a woman to satisfy their sexual desire. However, in Pride and Prejudice, marriage was not based on money but true love. Their marriage was different from that age. For example, Elizabeth and Darcy and Jane and Bingley, they overcame hardship and finally knew that they were the suitable person for each other. Although Bingley and Darcy are the men of higher social status and good fortune, they truly loved Jane and Elizabeth. As for Jane and Elizabeth, in spite of the fact that they were the women of middle class, they married Bingley and Darcy not because of money but love. The two couples are the proof that true love outweighs social class and money. Their marriages are non-traditional and based on love and true understanding.

III. Conclusion
The famous England literature *Pride and Prejudice*, written by Jane Austen, is a very popular novel which has been widely read and popular with teenagers. Its vivid language, complex plots and alluring characters make people longing for what happens next. Apart from this, her sharp social criticism can easily be seen. Jane Austen holds a non-traditional view of marriage and shows that marriage is not based on money but love. The marriage which she presents in *Pride and Prejudice* is distinct from that in the real late 18th and early 19th century. This essay discusses this distinction and argues that true meaning of love and marriage lies on true love outweighs social class and money.

IV. Works Cited
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