



Elizabeth Bennet's Intelligence

A Reading of Class and Gender Conventions and Transgressions in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*

Elizabeth Bennets intelligens
En läsning om klass- och könskonventioner samt överträdelser i Jane Austens
Pride and Prejudice

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Abstract

In *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen, gender roles and gender expectations relate to class differences in a system of social convention which operates to delimit all of the characters - men and women, rich people and less privileged people - to a greater or lesser extent, in a way which reflects actual class and gender structures in England around 1800. The most important strain of social commentary on gender and class in the novel is constituted by the characterisation of Elizabeth Bennet. She is associated with intelligence in a way which is vital to her successful breach of gender and class conventions. This essay starts out from Susan Morgan's "Intelligence in *Pride and Prejudice*" and will extend her arguments in my reading of the novel to prove that Elizabeth's intelligence allows her to transgress social conventions related to gender and class more successfully than other characters and arrive at a happy ending despite having defied social convention. A number of other characters also represent a breach of class and gender conventions. Lydia Bennet elopes with Mr. Wickham, which at the time was considered scandalous. Mr. Darcy tries to ignore his affection for Elizabeth but fails to do so. In comparison to the unconventionality of Elizabeth, who manages to overcome every obstacle by relying on her intelligence in a way which also benefits Darcy and secures a happy ending for him as well, their transgressions are not as successful.

Sammanfattning

I Jane Austens *Pride and Prejudice* så relaterar könsroller och könsförväntningar till klasskillnader i ett system av sociala konventioner som fokuserar på att begränsa alla karaktärer, t.ex. kvinnor, män, rika och fattiga, till en större eller mindre utsträckning samt på ett sätt som reflekterar faktiska köns- och klasstrukturer i England runt 1800-talet. De viktigaste sociala kommentarerna som rör köns- och klassteman i novellen utgörs av Elizabeth Bennets karaktärisering. Hon associeras med intelligens på ett sätt som är betydande för hennes lyckade överträdande mot köns- och klasskonventioner. Denna uppsats utgår från Susan Morgans "Intelligence in *Pride and Prejudice*" och kommer förlänga hennes argument inom min läsning av romanen för att bevisa att Elizabeths intelligens tillåter henne att överträda sociala konventioner relaterade till genus och status på ett framgångsrikare sätt än andra karaktärer samt åstadkomma ett lyckligt slut trots att hon utmanat sociala konventioner. Andra karaktärer i romanen representerar också ett överträdande mot köns-

och klasskonventioner. Lydia Bennet rymmer med Mr Wickham, vilket under den tiden ansågs vara skandalöst. Mr Darcy försöker ignorera sina känslor för Elizabeth men lyckas inte. I jämförelse med Elizabeth, som genom att förlita sig på sin intelligens lyckas överkomma varje hinder på ett sätt som också gynnar Darcy och även säkrar ett lyckligt slut för honom, så är de andra karaktärernas överträdande inte lika framgångsrikt.

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A Reading of Class and Gender Conventions and Transgressions in Jane Austen's
Pride and Prejudice

In Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, gender roles and gender expectations are extremely significant as most of the characters try to adjust to them, especially the women. The gender roles and gender expectations of the novel also relate to class differences in a system of social convention which operates to delimit all of the characters - men and women, rich people and less privileged people - to a greater or lesser extent, in a way which reflects actual class and gender structures in England around 1800. The class and gender conventions mostly involve the fact that there are many differences between men and women in the novel. According to Kubitschek, women around 1800 had little choice in terms of marriage and education (237). Those of lower status had to focus on marrying wealthy men in order to receive fortune, high social status and wealth. Wealthy men benefitted from convention as not much was expected from them, especially in terms of marriage.

The characterisation of Elizabeth Bennet constitutes the most important strain of social commentary on gender and class in the novel and she is associated with intelligence in a way which can be read as an explanation for her successful breach of gender and class conventions. This essay will start out from Susan Morgan's "Intelligence in *Pride and Prejudice*" and extend her arguments in my reading of the novel to prove that Elizabeth's intelligence allows her to transgress social conventions related to gender and class more successfully than other characters and arrive at a happy ending despite having defied social convention. My reading of the novel will also focus on how Elizabeth differs from other characters in terms of her intelligence, as she allows it to guide her towards her main goal which is to marry someone out of true love. This can be seen, for instance, when she declines Mr Collins' proposal and stands up for herself in connection with confrontations with Darcy.

This essay will consist of three parts. The first one will introduce and describe Morgan's main views as well as her most important arguments in relation to Elizabeth's intelligence. This part will also show how Morgan's text will be used in terms of my own reading of *Pride and Prejudice*. The second part will focus on the different types of intelligence that Elizabeth possesses and how they allow her to transgress social conventions more successfully than other characters. This part will also involve a comparison between Elizabeth and other characters that she considers intelligent, for example Mr Bennet and Charlotte Lucas, in order to describe Elizabeth's difference in terms of

intelligence and how it allows her to be transgressive throughout the novel. The third part will focus on Elizabeth's breach of social conventions in comparison to those of other characters in the novel, such as Lydia and Darcy, as well as describe the outcomes of Elizabeth's transgression. The second and the third part will focus on extending arguments from Morgan's text in relation to Elizabeth's intelligence and her breach of social conventions.

When it comes to Morgan's main views, her text focuses on how Elizabeth's intelligence changes and develops her personal growth in comparison to other female characters who fail to develop in the way which Elizabeth does. She gives various examples of how Elizabeth differs from other characters in the novel in terms of her intelligence but also describes how her intelligence affects as well as controls her personality, actions, goals, relationships and interactions with other characters, such as Jane.

One of Morgan's most important arguments is when she clarifies how intelligence controls and affects Elizabeth's actions as well as how Mr Bennet has influenced her with his intelligence by pointing out their differences: "The saving difference between Elizabeth and her father is that her motive is not cool pleasure at the follies of others but a helpless sympathy with her sister's pain" (Morgan 64). Mr Bennet often appears as unconcerned about various situations while Elizabeth relies on her intelligence and tries to assist her family and friends. For example, when she tells Jane what she thinks about Mr Bingley and his sisters, Elizabeth wants to increase Jane's understanding and knowledge about them and make sure that she thinks before she acts.

Morgan's main opinion of Elizabeth is that she is an observer who relies on her intelligence, allowing it both to guide her and to blind her on her way towards success and a marriage based on true love. Her arguments show that Elizabeth is not a character without faults, which is important in relation to my own reading of *Pride and Prejudice*. One of Morgan's most important findings, in terms of how Elizabeth's intelligence controls and affects her, concerns Elizabeth's relationship with Wickham and how she believes in his lies. Morgan states that "Elizabeth is quick to see and laugh at the failings of many... Yet she chooses not to see Mr. Wickham, and this in spite of the fact that she is provided with obvious evidence of his falseness..." (61). She does not consider Elizabeth as perfect, instead giving the impression that the protagonist is gullible as she is charmed by Wickham because he and his story "are such clichés" (Morgan 61). This also proves that Morgan's opinion of Elizabeth is not completely condemnatory, instead in her analysis Elizabeth's intelligence becomes the sometimes unreliable factor in the novel, for instance when Elizabeth decides to believe in Wickham's lies and allow it to affect her opinion of Darcy.

Morgan also compares Elizabeth to some of the other characters, for example Jane and Mr

Bennet, showing that Elizabeth's intelligence is more complex and involves different aspects, such as a capacity of emotion which is obvious when Morgan discusses the differences between Elizabeth and Jane: "At the beginning of the novel, we are assured of Elizabeth's intelligence and Jane's blindness, in part because Elizabeth can see immediately that Bingley's sisters are not well intentioned. And we are quick to think of Jane as sweet but a fool" (64). Morgan's analysis of Elizabeth Bennet's intelligence as centrally important in the text and more complex than that of other characters will be extended in my own reading of *Pride and Prejudice* in order to prove that Elizabeth defies social conventions more successfully than other characters.

At the beginning of the novel, Elizabeth is quite different from the heroine who marries Darcy at the end. *Pride and Prejudice* focuses on her movement away from class and gender conventions, mainly by using her intelligence in order to transgress the role of an unmarried young woman which is forced upon her by society. She possesses different types of intelligence which allows her to do so and the only intelligent person in her environment, in her opinion, is Mr Bennet. Elizabeth also departs from gender and class expectations in the most extended and foregrounded way of any character in the novel because of her views on initial marriage and how she breaks the norms of women in her society. This makes her stand out as unusual and wayward, for instance in relation to Charlotte Lucas, her best friend who ends up marrying Mr Collins after Elizabeth declined his proposal. Due to that streak of unconventionality, and her inclination to defy anyone who disrespects her, she is easily seen in her time as a woman who is reckless, preposterous, and unsuited to be a wife. Her association with intelligence can be interpreted as an explanation for her successful breach of gender and class conventions. By choosing intelligence instead of adapting to social conventions, she finds a way to achieve her goals through honest means and find true love.

Morgan points out the significance of intelligence for the characterisation of Elizabeth in the text where she quotes Lionel Trilling in order to describe Elizabeth's mistakes in relation to her sense of personal freedom: "*Pride and Prejudice* shows us that morality can be a matter of style" (57). She continues by stating that "intelligence can be a matter of heart", because Elizabeth's education is seen as a love story and also declares that "Elizabeth believes that understanding, intelligence, perception, depend on being independent of their objects, and she wants most powerfully to be an intelligent observer of her world. That urge explains much of her continuing appeal and is the single most important force in her story" (Morgan 57). Morgan's statement about Elizabeth's intelligence can easily be related to gender and class, as intelligence is the quality which separates Elizabeth from the rest of the women, both of lower and higher class, in the novel, allowing her to defy the social conventions. Intelligence has an impact on both her personality and the outcomes of every

ordeal she goes through. Elizabeth as a character represents intelligence in different ways. For example, she is intelligent in terms of being strong-willed, independent and clear-headed. In the beginning of the novel when expressing her thoughts about Mr Bingley to Jane after the ball, it is obvious that Elizabeth's desire to apply logic to her surroundings assists her in breaking through the traditional way of life for a woman because she is willing to be self aware, even if others judge her for it. Since her intelligence allows her to recognise class and gender conventions for what they are, and calculate the risks of breaking them, she acts against those conventions rather than adapting. Elizabeth says to Jane: "He could not help seeing that you were about five times as pretty as every other woman in the room. No thanks to his gallantry for that. Well, he certainly is very agreeable, and I give you leave to like him. You have liked many a stupider person" (Austen 12). Jane replies by saying that she always speaks what she thinks and Elizabeth replies in an honest way: "I know you do; and it is that which makes the wonder. With your good sense, to be so honestly blind to the follies and nonsense of others! Affectation of candour is common enough — one meets with it everywhere. But to be candid without ostentation or design — to take the good of everybody's character and make it still better, and say nothing of the bad — belongs to you alone. And so you like this man's sisters, too, do you? Their manners are not equal to his" (Austen 12). This passage shows how Elizabeth breaks gender conventions by relying on her intelligence when expressing her opinions about Bingley as well as his sisters. It also shows how independent and clear-headed she is as a less independent and intelligent woman might either have remained quiet or agreed with Jane to avoid upsetting her. Elizabeth's words express both her intelligence as well as the purpose of their conversation, as far as she is concerned, which is to increase Jane's understanding and knowledge. In short, Elizabeth is teaching her sister the importance of observation before action.

In addition, the conversation between Elizabeth and Jane also shows that Elizabeth possesses a particular kind of emotional intelligence at the same time as she successfully transgresses social conventions, mostly by relying on her knowledge and observing different people and situations. Her emotional intelligence is characterised by the fact that she is able to identify as well as understand emotions in order to empathise with others, overcome obstacles and prevent conflicts. Morgan states that Elizabeth "neither manipulates people nor acts like a heroine herself. Instead, she understands herself as an observer, an enlightened and discerning witness to all that is ridiculous and entertaining in others" (61). In agreement with Morgan's analysis, it is clear that Elizabeth's intelligent observations dominate the conversation with Jane concerning Bingley. It is also obvious that she cares about her family, always giving them good advice as well as her opinions, showing that she wants the best for them. She observes and relies on her intelligence, from an emotional

perspective, in order to assist Jane in making the right decisions about her future, in this case regarding her relationship with Mr Bingley and his sisters. By gaining Jane's acceptance and gratitude, Elizabeth comes out successful even though she defies gender and class conventions by speaking her mind about Bingley. She also manages to assist her family successfully through difficult situations by relying on her emotional intelligence, even though she defies gender and class conventions due to the difference between her own decisions and those of her family's. One example of the difference between Elizabeth's decisions and the conventional views of members of her family is when she rejects Mr Collins' proposal and her mother becomes upset. The Bennets are of low status and because the family only has daughters and no male heir, marriage is the only chance for the parents to secure their future in terms of wealth and social status. When Elizabeth declines Mr Collins' proposal, her mother is horrified as her main purpose is to marry her daughters off to wealthy men. She attempts to persuade Mr Bennet to make Elizabeth change her mind: "Oh, Mr Bennet, you are wanted immediately; we are all in an uproar. You must come and make Lizzy marry Mr Collins, for she vows she will not have him, and if you do not make haste, he will change his mind and not have her" (Austen 107). This part of the novel shows how traditional expectations related to gender and class converge to control women's lives and ambitions but in this case not Elizabeth's. She manages to rely on her emotional intelligence as she reveals her opinions about Bingley to Jane, gaining her respect, and also manages to speak to her parents, making them realise that Mr Collins is not a suitable husband for any of the Bennet daughters. Elizabeth also successfully defies gender and class conventions by refusing Collins' proposal and rescuing herself from a loveless marriage. Elizabeth's best friend Charlotte Lucas, a woman from a family of lower status, ends up marrying Mr Collins instead. Having told Elizabeth that she has accepted Mr Collins' proposal, Charlotte explains that "I am not romantic, you know. I never was. I ask only a comfortable home; considering Mr Collin's character, connexions, 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" (Austen 121). Charlotte's opinions on marriage agree with the conventional gender and class roles while Elizabeth's views defy them. The text implicitly explains the significance of Charlotte's choice in terms of money, status and security. However, in terms of a successful resolution, Charlotte is in a sense represented as a failure compared to Elizabeth as she does not marry out of love.

Charlotte is one of the intelligent persons in Elizabeth's environment, the main one being Mr Bennet. However, Elizabeth cannot rely on Charlotte because she easily adjusts to the conventional gender and class norms by marrying Mr Collins. Therefore, the influence of Mr Bennet becomes

one of the main reasons why Elizabeth can defy social conventions as he has encouraged her to rely on her intelligence. Morgan points out that Elizabeth's desire to be an intelligent observer of the world "explains much of her continuing appeal" but that it also means to be "apart from events" as she has learnt from her father that "people are blind and silly and only distance can save her from being blind and silly as well" (57). As Morgan rightly points out, Mr Bennet guides Elizabeth and assists her progress in achieving her goals as well as successfully transgressing social conventions. Elizabeth is linked to her father in the novel because they share a propensity for intelligent reasoning, despite their differences, for instance when it comes to the kind of intelligence that they employ to navigate in their social circle. Mr Bennet encourages Elizabeth to become an observer and rely on her intelligence. She is his favourite daughter, this is obvious when he speaks of Elizabeth to Mrs Bennet: "They have none of them much to recommend them... They are all silly and ignorant like other girls; but Lizzy has something more of quickness than her sisters". This part of the novel gives the impression that Mr Bennet favors Elizabeth because she is very similar to him in terms of her personality and how she relies on her intelligence. Morgan states that Elizabeth's observations "are far from being as irresponsible and limiting as her father's" and that she can "sympathise with Jane's suffering and can condemn the impropriety and the evil of her father's misused intelligence" (61). Morgan is right when pointing out that Elizabeth and her father both possess intelligence yet from different perspectives. Elizabeth's intelligence is more emotional and intuitive, while her father's according to Morgan is "misused" and "limiting" (61). Morgan's comments about Mr Bennet explain why Elizabeth cannot always rely on her father's intelligence as he sometimes appears as unconcerned, allowing her completely to make her own decisions for herself without his advice. One example of this "misused" intelligence is when Mrs Bennet is upset because of Elizabeth's rejection of Collins' proposal and Mr Bennet does not care about her misery or the fact that his daughter must marry in order to receive wealth and high status. He dislikes Mr Collins and therefore does not want Elizabeth to marry him.

Furthermore, when it comes to Elizabeth's breach of social conventions in comparison to those of other characters in the novel, she does it more successfully than Lydia and Darcy. The outcomes of her transgression are affected by her intelligence but also by gender and class expectations. Gender and class expectations in England around 1800 are extremely significant. They presumed that men were strong and reasonable while women were seen as weak and timid. Kubitschek states that "middle class British women had little choice" in terms of marriage and that they received little education and could only get "low paid employment as servants, seamstresses, factory workers or governesses" (237). She also points out that middle class women were "socially destined to be

dependent on men for financial support, to be wives and mothers” and when they were married they could only be divorced by ”an act of Parliament which only the richest could afford” (Kubitschek 237). The society depicted in the novel is based on gender and class roles which control all characters, but especially the female ones as they have to focus on marrying a wealthy man in order to receive wealth, fortune and a high social status for themselves, as they cannot achieve it on their own. This is what most female characters in *Pride and Prejudice* strive for, including some of the Bennet sisters, especially Lydia. When it comes to Elizabeth, the quality of intelligence introduces a crucial difference in her function as a character in terms of gender and class conventions. She wants to get married out of love, not because of the reasons that are important to her mother and sisters, and also prefers to remain in the background and observe while her sisters and mother engage themselves in conversations about balls, wealthy men and glory.

Furthermore, Elizabeth is determined to always rely on her own knowledge and intuition. Her insistence on using intelligence to handle social situations may or may not be successful in terms of the outcome, and more often than not it means a breach of gender or class conventions. An example of a successful breach of social convention is when the Bennets find out that Caroline Bingley does everything to make sure that Jane and Bingley’s relationship will end up ruined. Elizabeth knows, when meeting Darcy and Caroline, that Caroline pretends to care about Jane even though she dislikes her and wants her brother to stay away from her. When Caroline’s true intentions are revealed, it is proven that Elizabeth’s observations and transgression of gender and class conventions are successful as well as assist her in partly finding out whom to trust and whom to beware of. They also allow her to rebel against class and gender norms as she is the only one who shares her opinions about other characters in *Pride and Prejudice*, especially those of higher class. When Elizabeth tells Jane early in the novel about her opinions of Caroline and her brother, it proves that her intelligence is the quality that makes her breach of social conventions possible. The connection between Elizabeth’s use of intelligence and her deviation from social norms is mostly based on her ability of sharing her opinions of other characters and situations, her function as an observer and that she wishes to marry out of true love.

However, Elizabeth’s intelligence does not always allow her to transgress successfully. One example is the entire situation with Mr Wickham. Morgan points out that ”Elizabeth is quick to see and laugh at the failings of many...yet she chooses not to see Wickham and this in spite of the fact that she is provided with obvious evidence of his falseness” (61) and explains this lapse by arguing that ”Elizabeth’s heart is not engaged by Mr Wickham, her understanding is. Her opinion of him is based on her belief in her own discernment and her separation through intelligence from an

essentially ugly world” (Morgan 57). Despite the fact that she thinks that she is being rational, Elizabeth ends up just as gullible as Lydia and Georgiana Darcy as she is fooled by Wickham’s charm, believing in his lies without relying on her own intelligence to find out the truth about Mr Darcy. Her acceptance of Wickham also leads to the downfall of Lydia. This proves that Elizabeth’s intelligence is not always reliable and it is also pointed out by Greenfield who declares that Elizabeth “along with other female characters, is also an easy prey for lies” and that she is “readily seduced by Wickham’s distortion of Darcy’s history.” (343). Greenfield also states that Elizabeth’s “gravest mistakes” occur “when she takes language too literally...when she assumes words are really true” (Greenfield 343). According to Dooley in a discussion about Elizabeth’s pride, prejudice and vanity, she is “quick to punctuate Wickham’s story with exclamations about Darcy’s abominable pride” and willing to hear Darcy abused, which amounts to “accepting the story without corroborative evidence” (186). Dooley also quotes Fox, stating that prejudice is present when “Elizabeth is taken in by the handsome and charming Wickham” (186). Dooley and Greenfield show how gullible Elizabeth becomes when interacting with Wickham as well as how he manages to affect her opinion of Darcy. However, both fail to depict how Elizabeth's intelligence is called into question when she allows Wickham’s lies to develop her prejudice towards Darcy without finding out the truth. She partly departs successfully from gender norms and expectations in this situation as well, though not in terms of her intelligence. Instead, she relies on her independence and intuition as she will stand for her own opinions and do what she considers correct even if people question her. Once Elizabeth finds out the truth through Darcy’s letter, she realises that she has made a mistake. After this incident, she is associated with intelligence in a way which emphasises and extends her breach of gender conventions when she realises that she has trusted Wickham and almost fallen into his trap like her younger sister Lydia. The fact that she can learn from her mistakes proves that Elizabeth’s intelligence assists her in defying social conventions related to gender and class more successfully than other characters, in this case in comparison to Lydia.

Lydia is the most irresponsible and immature of the Bennet sisters as she is flirtatious and recklessly impulsive. Lydia and her sister Kitty also has an obsession with officers: “They could talk of nothing but officers; and Mr. Bingley’s large fortune, the mention of which gave animation to their mother, was worthless in their eyes when opposed to the regimentals of an ensign” (Austen 27). Despite her silliness, Lydia is her mother’s favourite daughter and not seen by Mrs Bennet as disastrous like Elizabeth because she adores balls, dancing, boys and the thought of marriage. Lydia relies on her mother from time to time throughout of the novel, even though everything changes

when she meets Mr Wickham. Morgan points out that Wickham's looks and manners are "all Mr Wickham has to recommend him" (58). He has "all the best parts of beauty" as he has a "fine countenance, a good figure and a very pleasing address" (Austen 69) which is also enough to charm a gullible girl such as Lydia. Lydia falls in love with Wickham after their very first meeting and breaks the social conventions by eloping with him, creating disgrace for the Bennet family, both due to the action itself as well as the fact that the man has no feelings for her. In "No Love For Lydia: The Fate of Desire in *Pride and Prejudice*", Allen states that by "rejecting personal repression or cultural restriction of her desires, Lydia continually seeks immediate complete gratification" and that she is "condemned to eternal want, both romantic and financial" as her marriage has sunk into "mutual indifference", as well as her income being insufficient (437). His argument shows how the aftermath of Lydia's actions affects the entire Bennet family, in terms of reputation as well as economy. She ends up marrying Wickham and is satisfied with her choices, even though she has still transgressed class conventions with disastrous results because of Wickham's lower status and the fact that he is a gambler with a low income allows Darcy to bribe him to marry Lydia. She also transgresses gender expectations with more negative outcomes when she affects the reputation of the Bennet family by eloping with Wickham. By way of historical context, Johnson states about social codes around 1800 in England that "most women had no legal standing" and that "a rebellious girl who eloped or refused her father's choice of husband could be sent packing" (117). In my reading, the text indicates that Lydia's actions were disastrous and that her marriage partly ended up as a punishment for her immature actions. In comparison to Lydia, Elizabeth's transgression of gender and class conventions is represented as more successful throughout the novel, mostly because she ends up relying on her intelligence, finding out the truth about Darcy and marrying him completely out of love. Even though she rejects two proposals and does not behave like the ideal woman of the time, she still ends up happy with Darcy despite the presuppositions concerning their marriage. Most people around them believe that Elizabeth only married Darcy because of his wealth and high status, but in fact she did it completely out of love. This is obvious when she informs Jane about her engagement to Darcy, stating: "Perhaps I did not always love him as well as I do now" (Austen 359). Jane asks Elizabeth if she will be happy with Darcy and Elizabeth's happiness and love for him are obvious in her reply: "There can be no doubt of that. It is settled between us already, that we are to be the happiest couple in the world" (Austen 359).

In addition, when it comes to Elizabeth's breach of social conventions, she has relied on her intelligence throughout every single situation that she is forced to face and ended up successful as she has learned from her own mistakes after experiencing the aftermath of Lydia's actions. She has

learned that she has to keep relying on her intelligence in order to end up happy but that she has to be cautious at the same time as she makes a decision. Lydia's immaturity was the reason for Elizabeth's sudden understanding. As the reputation of the Bennet family decreases after Lydia's marriage, in relation to both gender and class conventions, Elizabeth grows more cautious of everything and everyone around her, not wanting to make any sudden assumptions, for example such as those about Darcy. The function of Lydia's silliness in the novel is to provide an effective counterpoint for Elizabeth's intelligence and development into an even more rational and judicious person. This is obvious because Elizabeth knows how she should not behave or think after witnessing Lydia elope with Wickham and experiencing the disastrous outcomes that Darcy as well as the Bennets had to deal with.

Furthermore, the biggest obstacle in Elizabeth's departure from social conventions is her feelings for Darcy, as she has previously insulted him and gone against the norms, as women are not supposed to disrespect men of higher status. The struggle in relation to her feelings for Darcy changes Elizabeth as a person as she becomes more affectionate and down to earth. This struggle also allows her transgression to become more successful in comparison to the nonconformity of other characters as she is more secure in terms of relying on her intelligence. Morgan points out that Elizabeth "moves from a belief in her own logic to a more fluid interpretation of knowing and of intelligence in terms of backgrounds, context, and particulars which inform truth" (54). In agreement but also as an elaboration of this statement, the sudden change in Elizabeth's intelligence is caused by her realisation that Wickham has lied to her about Darcy. By finding out the truth about him, Elizabeth proves herself capable of relying on her knowledge while still breaking the gender conventions of society.

In addition, Zimmerman states that "Darcy's unwilling attraction to Elizabeth and Elizabeth's fascinated but clear dislike of Darcy seem inevitably to be leading towards a confrontation out of which will come a resolution" (68). In relation to my reading of *Pride and Prejudice*, the "confrontation out of which will come a resolution" (68) that Zimmerman mentions, expresses how Elizabeth changes from allowing her intelligence to control her to become in control of it, this also changes her opinions about Darcy as well as her feelings for him. Throughout the novel, she breaks the gender and class conventions of her time by relying on her intelligence, speaking her mind towards Darcy every time they have a minor argument, such as when he too finally goes against the gender conventions, accepting his feelings and proposing to Elizabeth: "In vain I have 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" (183). Earlier in the novel, Darcy has not accepted that he is in love with a woman of

lower status and when he finally does as well as proposes to Elizabeth, she declines his offer.

In a discussion about Elizabeth's sudden understanding concerning the damage that is created when she judges people, Sherry states that she is "faced with the problem of understanding Darcy" after she has realised that her intelligence betrayed her, allowing her to misjudge him (617).

Sherry's statement suggests that Elizabeth does not control her own intelligence completely, as she sometimes relies on rumours and stories which can be lies, for example regarding Darcy, only because of her first impression of him. When they first met at a ball, she considered him horrid because he degraded her by saying that she was "tolerable but not handsome enough to tempt me" (Austen 10). However, despite the prejudice and dislike that Elizabeth feels towards Darcy initially, she still falls in love with him and also becomes partly responsible for *his* transgression from gender and class conventions.

When it comes to Darcy, he seems like a rude and haughty person who from the beginning of the novel never departs from gender and class conventions. He speaks his mind about everything and relies on his pride, something that makes him degrade people of lower class such as Elizabeth. Because of Elizabeth's intelligence and witty personality, however, she catches Darcy's interest and eventually turns into reason why Darcy too breaks social conventions in the novel. Morgan asks if "Darcy is to represent society and Elizabeth a rebellious individualism, how are we to account for the fact that the first major breach of society's rules is made by Mr Darcy?" (55). This breach is when he insults Elizabeth at the ball in Meryton, and it can be taken into account in terms of gender as well as class because one does not expect Darcy to go against social convention, mostly because he is a man of the upper class who is both wealthy and privileged. Consequently, he benefits from convention and besides the transgression is barely obvious enough to make any difference.

However, Elizabeth's transgression is more successful than Darcy's as well as much more brave, bold and dangerous. In comparison to Darcy, Elizabeth has more to lose and people judge her more harshly, mostly because she is a young woman from a much less privileged family at the time and she is expected to adjust to social conventions rather than defying them. Darcy seems to adapt to social conventions rather than transgressing them, mostly because of the fact that he relies on his pride and is affected by opinions of his aunt Lady Catherine de Bourgh who dislikes people of lower class. As Darcy is seen as a desirable bachelor by several women, for example Caroline Bingley, one does not expect him to become interested in Elizabeth, as she does not have any interest in claiming him, getting to know him or making him fall for her. However, as she is a woman different from the others he has previously known, she is represented in the text as someone interesting for Darcy to find out more about. As he finds out more and more about Elizabeth

throughout the novel, he realises how unsuitable a marriage between them would be; yet when he tries to avoid falling in love, he still does. This is how Darcy breaks the norms of society, he allows himself to ignore his pride and fall for a woman of lower class. Elizabeth is mainly responsible for this and complicit in his nonconformity, even though she remains unaware of it throughout the novel. She relies on her intelligence throughout every single conversation she has with Darcy and it makes him more interested in her, which is the opposite of what she wanted to achieve from the beginning.

When discussing the development of Darcy and Elizabeth's relationship, Anderson states that "because Darcy is more attracted to Elizabeth than he could wish and because she is more interested in him than she can admit" it is expected to see them "come to a better understanding" (374). In relation to my reading of *Pride and Prejudice*, Elizabeth's intelligence has been able to affect the views of Darcy, allowing him to break the gender conventions. Her intelligence has also affected her own judgement of him. Because both characters break the norms in a way which cancels out the seemingly surmountable distance between them, they "come to a better understanding" (Anderson 374) yet with far more consequences than they expected as other characters, for example Lady Catherine, dislike Elizabeth and try to pair Darcy up with a more suitable woman. They all express what gender conventions dictated at the time. Lady Catherine expresses her opinion of what she personally favours when she has a conversation with Elizabeth: "Miss Bennet I am shocked and astonished. I expected to find a more reasonable young woman. But do not deceive yourself into a belief that I will ever recede. I shall not go away till you have given me the assurance I require" (Austen 343). Lady Catherine expresses her opinion in relation to what society favours and that she wishes her nephew to marry someone of high status but secretly someone who will obey her. She wishes that her daughter Anne will become Darcy's future wife.

Furthermore, Darcy and Elizabeth's relationship is the ultimate verification that Elizabeth's intelligence allows her to transgress social conventions related to gender and class more successfully than other characters and arrive at a happy ending despite having defied social convention. From the beginning of the novel, they dislike each other because of Darcy's pride and Elizabeth's prejudice. No matter how much Darcy degrades her after Elizabeth has found out the truth about Wickham, she keeps relying on her intelligence, believing that it will assist her as it has done through other situations, for example through everything related to Wickham. Morgan states that Elizabeth "sees the world as some kind of entertaining game" in comparison to the other members of her family (61). Her statement is accurate and obvious since Elizabeth neglects Darcy's proposals, giving the members of her family, especially her mother, the impression that she is

toying with the hearts of men. She does not care about the fact that Darcy is of higher status than her and she also ignores that she has just rebelled against the main purpose of unmarried women at the time which is to get married. Her independence is obvious when she neglects Darcy's proposal, stating:

"From the very beginning, from the first moment I may almost say, if my acquaintance with you, your manners, impressing me with the fullest belief of your arrogance, your conceit, and your selfish disdain of the feelings of others, were such as to form that groundwork of disapprobation on which succeeding events have built so immovable a dislike: and I had not known you a month before I felt that you were the last man in the world whom I could ever be prevailed to marry" (Austen 186-187) .

As Elizabeth speaks her mind and shows her opinions towards Darcy, she transgresses social conventions because women in the 1800s were not supposed to talk back against men in the way which Elizabeth does. By describing her views and opinions about Darcy, she also reveals her passion for observing people and the environment, something she cannot do without relying on her intelligence. Morgan's statement about how Elizabeth sees the world can also be related to her breach from social conventions in terms of her relationship with Darcy as she at first allows her intelligence to decline him and afterwards accept him, playing with his as well as her own emotions. In both cases, she ends up relying on her intelligence, which eventually secures a happy ending as she follows her heart and what she considers to be right which is to marry Darcy out of love. As previously mentioned, throughout the situation with Wickham, Elizabeth's intelligence fails her but it is a learning experience which finally enables her to make intelligent decisions in relation to Darcy. She has also learned various lessons from her changing relationships with Wickham and Darcy. One of them is expressed by Morgan as she states about Darcy that Elizabeth's "most important lesson about him is not that he is good but that he loves her in ways that can overcome the failings in his character" (67). When Elizabeth finally accepts her own affection for Darcy as well as his proposal, she manages to transgress gender and class conventions in a successful way because of relying on her intelligence like she has done from the very beginning of the novel. Her marriage to Darcy also become the one she wanted from the beginning of the novel, as in a marriage that consists of love and is different to her best friend's, this quoted by Bander who states that "Charlotte Lucas's marriage to Mr Collins is motivated by money and

power” because she ”will gain both a comfortable income and the power of an independent establishment” (27). She also mentions that Elizabeth’s love for Darcy ”evolves not through instant erotic attraction...nor as a calculating desire for wealth and power, like Charlotte’s choice of Mr Collins, but rather, through careful reflection” (27).

Both Darcy and Elizabeth achieve a happy ending but Elizabeth manages to transgress her position as a young woman from a family that is not wealthy with a more successful result and is also responsible for Darcy’s sudden breach from gender and class conventions as he falls in love with her even if he realises how unsuitable a marriage between them would be. Because of Elizabeth’s intelligence as well as her witty personality, Darcy allows himself to ignore his pride and fall for a woman who is his opposite. Even though Elizabeth’s marriage can be seen as positive because she has married a wealthy man, above her status, her choices seem like a complete disaster to the other characters in the novel as she has gone against the gender and class roles of society. However, her own pride and knowledge have instead guided her towards what she considers is true happiness and love. Throughout the novel, she remains a strong-willed and independent woman who knows what society expects of her but still follows her own heart. The fact that she acts against social convention rather than adapting and wants to marry out of true love, shows her difference from other women. She is proud of being a woman but also a woman who dares to stand up for herself no matter how harsh the circumstances and prescribed roles are. Elizabeth’s strength and resilience only grow as she is belittled countless times but still stands for what she believes in, becoming a role-model for people around her, for example her sisters, even if men and women of higher status question her insistence on disregarding convention.

In conclusion, in relation to Morgan’s analysis of Elizabeth’s intelligence, my essay adds the aspect of how it controls her throughout parts of the novel and shows how she has managed to rely on her intelligence even though the outcomes sometimes have been negative, for example in relation to the situation with Wickham. My reading of *Pride and Prejudice* also proves that Elizabeth’s intelligence allows her to transgress social conventions related to gender and class more successfully than other characters and arrive at a happy ending despite having defied social convention. Elizabeth has most of the times managed to transgress successfully despite the fact that other characters consider her difficult and controversial because she follows her heart rather than following the paths and roles shaped by society.

In addition, she has managed to change from being an intelligent observer who relied on her own knowledge and intuition, never accepting that her observations could fail, to become a strong and independent woman, accepting her faults and misdeeds towards other characters, for example

Darcy. Elizabeth knows that she is not a person without faults as she from time to time commits mistakes in relation to her intelligence. However, as Elizabeth dares to defy the roles of society and its oppression of women, she becomes the most respected character, at least to readers. In terms of gender and class, Elizabeth is the perfect example of an intelligent, independent and strong-willed woman around the year 1800 and she expresses what women wanted to be yet usually did not dare to be because of the risks associated with defying convention. She manages to transgress gender and class conventions successfully in comparison to other characters such as Charlotte Lucas who by following convention ends up in a disastrous marriage, Lydia Bennet and Mr Wickham as they eloped together into a trouble marriage as well as Lady de Bourgh as she did not succeed in ruining Elizabeth and Darcy's relationship despite her opinions about Elizabeth's lower class.

Furthermore, Elizabeth's intelligence has also affected Darcy, who seemed to be the one character in the novel least likely to go against social norms. He changed from relying on his pride and disliking Elizabeth to gradually feeling affection towards her, even going as far as proposing because he could not ignore his own feelings despite the fact that he found it hard to accept the thought of her family as well as her lower status. Elizabeth's intelligence finally allows her to marry the man that she used to dislike but adores at the end of the novel and it creates a future where she can be happy and satisfied with herself despite her struggles towards the gender and class conventions of society. Elizabeth would not have been able to examine her own views and experiences or come to terms with her own affections without her intelligence, as she has relied on knowledge throughout the novel in order to separate lies from reality which also changed her dislike for Darcy into love. Her intelligence has brought her to finally receive her very own happy ending.

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