BIANCA DEON ROSSATO

THE PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN IN *PRIDE AND PREJUDICE* (1813) AND *THE LIZZIE BENNET DIARIES* (2012/2013)

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To all the women
who have enlightened my path
and made me stronger.

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RESUMO

Duzentos anos após seu falecimento, as obras de Jane Austen ainda ecoam nas pessoas. Elas têm sido adaptadas das formas mais variadas, nas mais diferente mídias. *Os Diários de Lizzie Bennet* é um projeto transmidiático que transpõe o romance *Orgulho e Preconceito* (1813) para uma vídeo-série veiculada no YouTube de 2012 a 2013 de forma serializada. Esta pesquisa analisa de que forma temas que influenciam a vida das mulheres, como casamento, classe social e dinheiro, foram transpostos do período regencial inglês para a Califórnia-EUA do século vinte-um. Esta análise considera que ambas as obras são compostas por duas camadas de significado: a primeira é constituída pela comédia romântica que dialoga com a cultura popular; a segunda é mais profunda, através da qual a crítica social é revelada. No que tange ao referencial teórico, a relação entre a noção de subjetividade na virada do século dezenove e a expansão da vida privada na esfera pública no século vinte-um, conforme Jon Dovey (2000), é base para compreender como a estrutura de ambas as narrativas contribui na produção de significado. As discussões sobre feminismo e pós-feminismo na cultura popular de Angela McRobbie (2009) e Imelda Whelean (2010) tornam possível a observação da construção dos temas. Em *Orgulho e Preconceito*, as instituições sociais estabelecidas não são amplamente questionadas. Em vez disso, a composição da subjetividade dos personagens, especialmente das mulheres, revela a crítica a elementos sociais da época. *Os Diários de Lizzie Bennet*, a seu turno, desafiam as representações da mulher provenientes da cultura popular pós-feminista. A análise da adaptação revela que as mulheres ainda estão restritas a determinados papéis sociais assim como aquelas situadas no romance. Ainda há a necessidade de se encontrar equilíbrio.

Palavras-Chave: Orgulho e Preconceito; Os Diários de Lizzie Bennet; representação da mulher; subjetividade; privado e público.

ABSTRACT

Two hundred years after her demise, Jane Austen's works still resonate with people. They have been adapted in numerous ways through different media. *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* is a transmedia project, which transposes the novel *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) to a videoblog series aired on YouTube from 2012 to 2013 in a serialised mode. This investigation analyses the ways issues concerning the lives of women, such as marriage, money and social class, were adapted from Regency England to twenty-first century California-USA. The analysis understands both works as consisting of two layers of meaning: a romantic comedy layer which converses with popular culture, and a deeper one through which social criticism is revealed. In theoretical terms, the relationship between the notion of subjectivity in the turn of nineteenth century and the spread of private life into the public sphere in the twenty-first century, as proposed by Jon Dovey (2000), informs the analysis of the structural elements of both narratives which contribute to the production of meaning. The discussions on feminism and post-feminism in popular culture by Angela McRobbie (2009) and Imelda Whelehan (2010) make it possible to observe the construction of the themes. In *Pride and Prejudice*, the established social institutions are not overtly questioned. Instead, it is the composition of the characters' subjectivities, especially those of women, which reveals criticism on the social context of the time. *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, for its part, challenges the established representations of women as informed by postfeminist popular culture. In the end, it seems to propose that women are, in fact, still restrained by social roles, just as the ones in the novel are. There is yet a need to find balance.

Keywords: Pride and Prejudice; The Lizzie Bennet Diaries; portrayal of women; subjectivity; private and public.

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INTRODUCTION

When I first embarked on this journey, little did I know that it would be as much as acquiring and developing scientific knowledge as discovering about myself. The woman Bianca has learned as much as the researcher Bianca, and understanding the place where each should stand was quite a challenge at times. As academic as this doctoral dissertation must be, it is unavoidable to reveal yourself in the process of writing. Hopefully, the investigation is as little tempered as possible with my personal process of growth. I suppose it is a risk one must take when deciding to work with an author such as Jane Austen. As Virginia Woolf pointed out, her works deal with the universal rather than the parochial (WOOLF, 1925). Or as Sir Walter Scott declared, the British author crafted her characters, their feelings and involvements with such nicety it is quite difficult not to relate to them (apud BLOOM, 2008). This possibly explains why, two hundred years after her demise, her works are still objects of investigation.

This dissertation is about women, and about figuring out how to circulate in a changing society, which demands us to play certain roles. The central aim of this investigation is to analyse how Jane Austen's representation of women in *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) set during Regency England has been transposed to the twenty-first century. In order to accomplish that, it analyses the ways social themes such as marriage, money and social class have been transposed. It considers the fact that some adaptations of Austen's oeuvre have transposed the romantic comedy layer of the narrative to the expense of social commentary (FRANCUS, 2010). It also attempts at investigating the extent to which *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* (2012/2013) falls out of such spectrum.

Women, considering a white middle-class scenario, have conquered their space in traditionally male working environments. Family structures have changed, and women have taken their seats in university classrooms. However, even female movie celebrities are still fighting for equal pay. In her speech at the 2018 Cannes Festival, Cate Blanchett said 'equal pay should not be in the agenda anymore. It should just be.' Also, discussions on sexual harassment in the entertainment industry are on the table with campaigns such as #TimesUp. In everyday life, women struggle to accommodate their professional and academic accomplishments with house chores, and child caring, and absent fathers. A lot has changed in terms of the position and rights of women in society since Mary Wollstonecraft's *A*

Vindication of the Rights of Women, published in 1792. But, apparently, not enough has changed.

Of course this may sound pamphletarian to some readers. Nevertheless, an anecdotal series of events that happened as this dissertation was reaching its final steps may illustrate how relevant these issues still are. On 19 May 2018, Prince Harry, from the British Royal Family, and Meghan Markle, a divorced American actress, got married. The event stirred social media. Among the discussions, a particular one attracted attention: two different memes circulated on the Internet discussing Meghan Markle's situation upon marrying the Prince. The first presented her gazing at her newlywed groom with a line saying: 'The expression of someone who will no longer worry about bills.' Immediately, another meme was spread. It contained the previous one but with a correction: 'The expression of someone who works, and is able to pay bills with their own money.' This may sound simply like a fruitless online debate. I want to argue that it represents this moment of social change that has intensified particularly since the 1980s. While the first meme may be read by some as a desire for a traditional past – when men were the providers and women remained at home –, it seems it represents a sense of fatigue. While some things have actually changed, women are overburdened, and struggling to manage career, studies, family life, and the demands for the perfect body, for instance. The second meme, in turn, reminds us that women need not depend on man anymore; they are independent individuals. Clearly, there is a sense of confusion as to how women should behave, and at all times, they are still expected to perform certain roles.

Analysing *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries,* a popular culture piece of entertainment which adapts a plot mainly centred on the lives of women as that of *Pride and Prejudice* is, therefore, relevant both for understanding how Austen's works have remained relevant, and to get glimpses at the portrayal of women. In order to do so, one must initially observe the rapid cultural changes that have happened in the last decades of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first century. Some of them have been ignited by advances in technologies. The development of computers, portable computers, VCRs, portable camcorders, and smartphones has individualised the experience with entertainment (LISTER et al, 2009). In addition to that, the last decades of the twentieth century saw the decline of grand narratives, and along with it traditional and standardised ways of circulating in society. 'Grand' or 'master' narratives are terms coined by theorist Jean-François Lyotard (1984) to refer to totalising narratives or meta-discourses of modernity. Jon Dovey (2002, p.22) discusses this issue in economic terms and informs that one of the problems of course 'is that this disappearing world also included the traditional post-Enlightenment formulations about how the world might be turned into a

better, more equitable place, such as the rational revolutions of France and the US, revolutionary communism, social democracy.' For Dovey (2002, p. 22), 'all are grand narratives disempowered or destroyed by the triumph of neo-liberalism.'

Drawing from Lyotard (1984), Dovey (2000) informs that new forms of narrative have risen, especially since the 1990s, which have focused on individual, subjective experiences. They have replaced more general views of the world. He says that there is a 'growing awareness that statements about the world (i.e. the way we make truth) no longer have any purchase unless they are grounded in individual subjective experience – unless they are embodied, relative and particular rather than totalising, general and unified' (DOVEY, 2000, p. 22). Thus, subjectivity has become the stamp for authenticity.

The existing media in the 1990s all found their own ways of providing authenticity through subjectivity. Television has given factual programs based on regular people's personal experiences such as traumas, accidents, and crime solving. Bookshop shelves are stacked with biographies; and cinema has recently intensified the production of biopics – films based on biographies. Nonetheless, it is in the realm of the digital that subjectivity has played its most impacting role. Dovey (2000, p. 24) acknowledges that 'subjectivity, confession and identity have been central driving forces in the evolution of the form itself.' Personal websites in the 1990s, and more particularly, social media in the 2000s are examples. Such changes in cultural productions have blurred the limits between what is private and what is public, what is real and what is fictional.

Besides such changes in broader terms, it is enriching for this investigation to observe the ways women have been thought of and represented in the same period. The 1970s and the 1980s witnessed the culmination of debates concerning feminism and the rights of women, especially in universities and public institutions (MCROBBIE, 2009). Women conquered more space in society. Meanwhile, while the objectivity and rationality of grand narratives are usually considered masculine traits, the individuality, the focus on particular experience has a feminine tone (DOVEY, 2000). So the 1990s were an encouraging period for the spread of female narratives. However, the focus on individuality, and its market-based, consumerist appeal, resulted, among other things, in the establishment of feminism as no longer being necessary (WHELEHAN, 2010). Post-feminism 'has supplanted feminism and provides a contemporary audience with a feminist memory, mediate, rendered palatable and just critical enough to key into an apolitical sense of social dissatisfaction with heterosexual and gendered role scripts' (ibid, p. 160). In this environment, romantic comedies, which focused on the romantic entanglements at the expense of social criticism, abounded in popular culture.

How is this related to Jane Austen? Curiously, the turn of the nineteenth century, when she lived and crafted her novels, was also a period of intense transformations, especially in the North American and European societies. According to Jürgen Habermas (1962), this period saw the emergence of a public sphere based on the expression of subjectivity, rationality and the establishment of the individual in society. It comprises the transformations brought on by the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution. Of course Austen did not circulate in the new public spaces of debate such as cafes, salons, and theatres, for these discussions were reserved for men. Nevertheless, she lived in a domestic environment which prompted reading and discussions (FERGUS, 2005). Her focus on the establishment of her heroines as rational creatures, and her general portrayal of character – as this dissertation should inform – reveal the *zeitgeist* of her time.

Furthermore, she is among authors such as Charles Dickens, Emily and Charlotte Brönte, William Thackeray and Henry James, whose works have been abundantly adapted to film (TROOST, 2007). Adaptations of her work gain particular relevance from the 1980s on, just as her peers'. Linda Troost (2007) proposes an analysis of such adaptations as divided in three categories. The first is termed 'Hollywood-style' adaptations and refers to those productions such as MGM's 1940 *Pride and Prejudice,* which take liberties with the source text in order to accommodate it to the context and aesthetics of Hollywood. The second, 'Heritage-style' adaptations, on the other hand, focus on the fidelity to the source text both in terms of visuals and the pace of the narrative, which may be dull to contemporary audiences. Examples of such style are BBC's 1972 *Emma* and 1979 *Pride and Prejudice*. The third on Troost's list is 'fusion adaptations,' which endeavour to combine the needs of the entertainment industry and heritage drama's concern with accuracy. BBC's 1995 *Pride and Prejudice* series and Patricia Rozema's 1999 *Mansfield Park* stand out in this category: the first, among other things, for its portrayal of the romantic hero, in Colin Firth's rendering of Mr Darcy in a wet shirt; and the second for its social commentary on slavery which is absent from the source text.

Ever since the wet shirt scene from the BBC 1995 *Pride and Prejudice* television adaptation of the homonymous work of art by Jane Austen, we have experienced an endless growth in the production of adaptations, prequels, sequels, fan fictions, mashups and all sorts of expression related to the English writer's realm (PUGH, 2005, CARTMELL, 2007, HUTCHEON 2013). This abundance of *all things Austen* points out to a transformation not only in the cultural production but also in its reception. As Pugh (2005, p. 47) mentions, *Pride and Prejudice* is, in the Austen realm, the one book which has the greatest quantity of

derivatives and fan fictions dedicated to. Also, it is relevant to posit that the BBC filmic productions and the consequent flood of Austen-inspired derivatives were a decisive key to the spread of Austen around the world, Brazil included; a similar effect to that produced by the filmic versions of J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*: 'the returning to the resource text' (INDRUSIAK, 2011, p. 175).

Unlike other writers, who either pertain to the 'solemn pantheon of classic English Literature' or to the 'exuberantly commercial realm of pop culture,' Jane Austen inhabits both (YAFFE, 2013, p. xvii). According to Juliette Wells, Roger Sales' 1996 *Jane Austen and Representations of Regency England* 'was the first critical study to include substantial discussion of Austen adaptations' (WELLS, 2011, p. 10). In this book, Sales asserts that 'popular modern texts are relevant to the academic study of Austen since readers construct an idea of the author, and therefore of her works and her historical period.' Such idea may come, then, 'from the materials that are readily available within a particular culture at a particular time' (SALES, 1996, p. 25). It is fruitful, then, to observe such 'popular modern texts' in order to understand who the Jane Austen these readers see is and how her work may be understood. It is verifiable, then, that the concern with the 'popular modern texts' arose considerably at the same time as the adaptations of Austenian works did, at least in England.

Along with the new adaptations, a whole new debate concerning the British author began. There is a great discussion in terms of what this avalanche of fans of Austen means. Some of the perspectives of analysis maintain that this new wave of love for Austen's work represent a conservative, reactionary, white upper-class movement (PAGLIA, 1996), which is negative. Others see a feminist movement (JOHNSON, 2001, LOOSER, 2001), and there are even post-feminism investigations (JONES, 2012). Such concerns may help investigate why Austen and how her work has been appropriated.

In that sense, the most relevant aspect to be considered for this project derives from Juliette Wells' concern: 'treatments of Austen's world in the late 2000s and early 2010s are growing ever more ingenuous – and sometimes gleefully outrageous – as creators attempt to stake original claims on imaginative territory that is already quite crowded' (2011, p. 5). Even if one tried, it would be quite impossible to map all of the productions based on Austen as well as the readers/viewers' responses and thus it seems that lack of originality will eventually occur. Yet, what has become a concern after the turn of 2010 is the ingenuity with which both producers and readers have been approaching Austen in their production of derivatives, mostly focusing on the superficial romantic layer and this, as Sales (1996) points out, interferes with the Jane Austen heritage. Such a perspective towards Austen's work may be a

result of a process Deborah Kaplan (2001) calls 'harlequinization,' started in the 1980s, in which publishing houses set a formula for mass-market romance which included the romantic plot in Austen's *Pride and Prejudice.*

The Lizzie Bennet Diaries is chosen as the corpus of investigation of this dissertation, so as to observe whether the romantic comedy layer prevails over Austen's social criticism and her representation of women. It is one of the most recent endeavours in the Austen realm coming from the United States, produced by Hank Green and Bernie Su. It is an online videoblog series derived from *Pride and Prejudice* (1813). Unlike the most traditional derivatives of *all things Austen,* such as movies and books, it is a product of the postmillennial digital era. It is a YouTube vlog series which went viral during its 100 episodes aired from April 2012 to March 2013, and which defines itself as a 'modern adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice*.' The Internet has become more than a medium to search information; it now allows regular people to produce their own entertainment content and make it available throughout the world (JENKINS, 2006). The storyworld of *The Diaries* is also composed of characters' social media, secondary videoblogs and books. Thus, it is relevant to attempt an analysis of *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* once it is a product of such environment and takes full advantage of its possibilities.

This dissertation focuses on the hundred episodes that compose the main storyline of *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*. It is divided in four chapters. Chapter 1 presents the reader with an account of Jane Austen's life; her literary context and her own writing; the critique on her oeuvre; and the ways her work has been appropriated by popular culture. This chapter sets the context for those who eventually are unfamiliar with the British author. Meanwhile, it provides a rationale about Austen through which the entire investigation is conducted. Chapter 2 discusses the romantic comedy layers of both works under scrutiny in this research: *Pride and Prejudice* and *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*. The romantic comedy layer is understood as composed by the plot of the narratives. It is the more easily accessible layer of the narrative, and therefore, the one which attracts popular culture more promptly. Chapter 3 develops an investigation on the narrative structure of both works. The aim is to observe how meaning is reached through the weaving of the narrative elements, especially considering the transposition from the telling to the showing mode. Finally, Chapter 4 is dedicated to debate the transposition of themes from the novel to the videoblog; how women are represented in both works.

On a final note, regarding practical issues of this dissertation, *Pride and Prejudice* will be referred to both along the text and in footnotes as *P&P*; *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* will be

referred to as The LBD or *The Diaries*. Also, since this dissertation does not endeavour to discuss theoretical issues concerning fan culture and its qualities as participants or users online, the public of *The Diaries* will be referred to as ‘audience’ or ‘viewers’ both terms used by Lizzie Bennet, the protagonist in the storyworld.

1 JANE AUSTEN IN CONTEXT

> *Jane Austen, the person, was the daughter of a country parson, the second-to-last in a family with eight children with enough connections to be well regarded by neighbors, but not enough to be seen as more than genteel. It has been a long way from those original circumstances, to the icon that we have nowadays, whose image is able to sell not only her books, but that of several other authors that are inspired by Austen, and appropriate her work, as well as all sort of merchandise imaginable.*
>
> **Ana Iris Ramgrab,** *Meet Jane Austen.*

Jane Austen has become a commodity. This is a fact. Everything from pens, teacup sets, cards, games, to bonnets and of course adaptations and books related to the British author is sure to provide a lucrative business in the entertainment market[1]. At the same time, never was Austen scrutinized by the academic researchers as in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century, although she has never really enjoyed ostracism (YAFFE, 2013). Amidst both environments, whoever dedicates time and energy to reading Austen stakes a claim for her and her oeuvre. It is only natural that this doctoral dissertation should do the same. Therefore, in order to present a coherent argument concerning *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries'* appropriation of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, this chapter presents an account of Austen's biography; her literary context and her own writing process; the critique on her oeuvre; and her relationship with popular culture. 'Section 2.1 Jane Austen's Life' presents the argument that Austen was neither an overt revolutionary, nor an overt conservative person. 'Section 2.2 Jane Austen's Literary Context and Her Writing' informs the reader that the author's context saw an increase in the number of women writers despite the bad reputation of such activity; it was also a time of great proliferation in the publication and circulation of novels. It also informs that, once more, she establishes a type of balance: she manages to be published without revealing her name – which could blemish her family's reputation. 'Section 2.3 The Critique on Austen's Oeuvre' aims at presenting an account of her reception so as to understand the process of construction that leads to her afterlife. Finally,

[1] Aside from the merchandise directly connected to adaptations, as one may notice for example in the website for the Lizzie Bennet Diaries (www.pemberleydigital.com), there are all sorts of products advertised in the magazine *Jane Austen's Regency World* which relate directly to the novel.

‘Section 2.4 Jane Austen and Popular Culture’ discusses the author’s afterlife, especially through the appropriation by the entertainment industry. Such panorama aims at preparing the reader for the comparative analysis of the novel *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) and the transmedia project *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* (2012/2013).

1.1 JANE AUSTEN’S LIFE

It is an attempt of this section to acquaint the reader with a perspective on Jane Austen’s life which shows through renowned critique and the only material besides her novels that was written by her – the surviving letters – that she was neither as outspoken a revolutionary like Mary Wollstonecraft as many feminist studies impose on her persona, nor that devoted parochial lady who was completely unconcerned with anything other than domestic life, bonnets and muslins. She was rather a woman who made the most with what she had at her disposal. With a quick eye and a smart mind she was able to observe people interacting around her to the fullest. There are bits and pieces of criticism that may be perceived once the construction of both the narrative and its characters is more closely observed. For the present moment, however, we shall get acquainted with the British author’s life.

In a broader spectrum, the period in the history of England in which Jane Austen lived – late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries – witnessed a profusion of events and transformations that would influence not only England but the entire world. Concerning England, at the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the Industrial Revolution showed its first signs; the British were in conflict with the French once again; the United States had just conquered their independence from the British Empire; and the Illuminist ideals and conceptions were spreading inside the country. It was a time of great ebullition for the British society. It is also in this period that the novel ascertains space in the literary world as production and publication are facilitated, and circulating libraries and consumption are incentivised.

When it comes to Jane Austen’s biography, it is a fact that the information available is meagre. Fergus (2005, p. 3) informs that ‘most people who read the novels know that she was a clergyman’s daughter who grew up in a country parsonage with several brothers and one beloved sister, that she never married and that she died relatively young.’ Part of that is owed to the fact that there are no diaries left and that a considerable portion of her correspondence

was destroyed by her sister Cassandra, her depositary. Austen's great-nephew Fanny Knight's son, Lord Brabourne (2009, p. 29), reports that 'in all probability […] when Jane Austen died in 1817, and all her papers and letters came into her sister's possession, the latter did not think her own letters worth preserving, and they were accordingly destroyed.' One might argue whether that was merely an act of cleaning; or did she intend to eliminate undesired topics or conversations to the eyes of Victorian England – the period when Cassandra edited and distributed the letters? Was it an attempt to maintain the 'beloved Ms Austen' presented to the world by Henry Austen in his *Bibliographical Notice of the Author* (1818)? Whatever the real circumstances were, 'despite the effort of several accomplished biographers to dispel some early misconceptions about the author's life, the case with Jane Austen is one of those instances where the boundaries between history and fiction become blurry' (RAMGRAB, 2013, p. 12).

Jane Austen was born on 16 December 1775 in the village of Steventon in the rural area of Hampshire in southern England. She was born to George and Cassandra Austen. An orphan without any property before he was nine, Jane's father had an uncle's help to go through school, and afterwards college at Oxford. Through the help of such uncle and a cousin, he came to possess the rectories of Deane and Steventon. Before marriage, he was in charge of a son of Warren Hastings, an English statesman who was the Governor of India from 1772-1785. Her mother Cassandra pertained to the Leigh family, coming from a higher social rank, the gentry, and had distant relations to titled people. They were also connected to Oxford College through an uncle of hers, Dr Theophilous Leigh. These connections provided the family with a position in the gentry, although they did not own land, and Mrs Austen had to manage the household with economy (FERGUS, 2005). That is probably why Mr Austen took in pupils from 1773 to 1796, an occupation which filled the Austen household with boys. In this sense, 'Jane's earliest years would have been spent in a bustling house filled with brothers and schoolboys' (SUTHERLAND, 2012, p. 25-26).

Austen was the sixth of the eight children in Mr George Austen's family: James, George, Edward, Henry, Cassandra, Jane, Francis and Charles. James (1765), following his father's footsteps, attended Oxford and in that period was responsible for the publishing of *The Loiterer,* a periodical in the shape of *The Spectator*. Upon his father's retirement as a rector, he took his position at Steventon and Deane. George (1766) was the handicap raised in a cottage outside the neighbourhood. Edward (1767) was adopted by a rich cousin, Mr Knight of Godmersham Park and Chawton House, in Hampshire. Henry (1771), after a period in the Militia, resigned and became a banker. Later, he bankrupted and was aided by Edward Austen

and his uncle, Mr Thomas Knight. Cassandra (1773), two years older than Jane, was her confident and constant correspondent whenever they were apart[2]. Francis (1774) and Charles (1779) both studied at the Royal Naval Academy and spent most of the time abroad either during the war with France or in the colonies, East and West. It is also interesting to observe that Austen had a cousin, Eliza Hancock, who was born in the West Indies and married Comte Jean-François Capot de Feuillide, who was guillotined during the French Revolution.

Setting such scenario of Austen's family, especially considering the lack of materials available about her life, helps us see that Austen was not isolated from the rest of the world as it is implied by some interpretations of her life and works. Her family held connections with people, such as Hastings and Comte Feuillide. Except from Edward, who inherited properties from Mr Knight both in Kent and Hampshire – and George, the handicap –, all of her brothers 'went in for genteel, but demanding professions' (KELLY, 2009, p. 17). Francis and Charles sailed the seas in the Royal Navy exactly in the times of Britain's conflicts with France and America and their territorial expansions both in the East and West Indies. The surviving letters show Austen and her family's enthusiasm for them as they conquered the titles of Admirals. Also, she travelled quite often, and her destinations were places such as Bath – a fashionable bathing town at the time –, Lyme Regis at the seaside, and London. She also visited small towns on the way from Bath to Southampton in the couple of years after her father's death. Many of the letters sent from these places reveal that Austen socialised in theatres and balls. In one of her letters from Bath she said: 'There were twenty dances, and I danced them all, and without any fatigue.' (Letter XIV).

Another relevant piece of information regarding Austen's family is related to their political position: they were Tories (JONES, 2012). In this sense, 'they identified with the political grouping which defended the institutions that mattered to their family – the Church of England, the Navy, and a stable, essentially hierarchical social order' (JONES, 2012, p. 288). Because of that, Austen is at times aligned with the Burkean ideals although there is no written evidence of such a connection that has survived, if it has ever existed. At the same time, it is necessary to point out that, as members of the professional class, 'the Austens were strong defenders of merit, rather than mere birth, as the means to worldly success and personal happiness' (ibid, 2012, p. 288). If you take into account merely this biographical information and the happy ending of her novels, it is not hard to consider her conservative.

[2] It is blatant that we locate people in the world by where they come from, but mostly by what they do in life. As a woman in early nineteenth-century England, her greatest achievement is being Jane Austen's confident. Such claim substantiates the position of women during Regency England, as portrayed by Austen in her novels.

However, when it comes to Jane Austen, 'this broad political position is necessarily inflected by gender' and involves much more than the happy marriages of her heroines as we shall see in Chapter 4 in the analysis of *Pride and Prejudice* (ibid, 2012, p. 288).

Regarding her education and knowledge of the world, it is known that Jane was sent to school twice, in 1783 and 1785, but of course did not receive as formal an education as boys would. Nevertheless, according to James Edward Austen Leigh's *A Memoir of Jane Austen* (1870), as a teenager she was very political, expressing her positions on seventeenth- and eighteenth-century politics in a spirited and decided way. Her letters as well as the *Memoir* reveal that the Austen family were avid readers of novels among other texts, and not at all embarrassed by that (SUTHERLAND, 2004). Also, she had access to her father's library, which amounted to 500 hundred books. Linda Bree, in a study of the writer's literary context, observes that Austen's 'letters refer to many hours spent in reading and discussing sermons and travel-writing and books concerned with matters of contemporary religious and political interest' (2013, p. 56). Fragments from her letters reveal that she did read newspapers and 'was well acquainted with the old periodicals from the "Spectator" downwards' (*Memoir*[3], 1870, p. 89). Furthermore, in 1791, when she was about to turn 16 years old, she wrote *The History of England*, decorated with her sister's 'humorous watercolor medallions of British monarchs' (MACK, 2012, p. 32). It worked as a type of response to Oliver Goldsmith's *History of England*. Based on such observations one cannot refute the fact that Jane Austen was aware of the historical events which had occurred since the French Revolution in 1789, and which led to the war with England and brought great anxiety to the British society in those two decades – 1790s and 1800s.

As for Austen's readings, among her favourite books it figures works by Samuel Richardson, one of the forefathers of the novel, such as *Clarissa: or the story of a young lady* (1748) and *The history of Sir Charles Grandison* (1753); by Fanny (or Frances) Burney, her favourite is certainly *Cecilia* (1782), from which she borrowed the phrase 'pride and prejudice' that is used three times in the last paragraph of the novel. Burney became popular for her use of satire and wit especially when talking about the politics of society. Another of Austen's favourites is Maria Edgeworth, nowadays known as the Irish Jane Austen. She was very influential, and it is argued that Austen appreciated her use of humour and circumstantial irony (SPENCER, 2012).

[3] The extracts taken from the *Memoir* are contained in the 2008 *A Memoir of Jane Austen and other Family recollections,* organized by Katherine Sutherland.

In one of her letters, she tells Cassandra their father bought 'Fitz-Albini' by Egerton Brydges, which she does not exactly appreciate since it is the one his family is ashamed of. The letter goes on: 'That these scruples, however, do not at all interfere with my reading it, you will easily believe. We have neither of us yet finished the first volume. My father is disappointed – / am not, for I expected nothing better.' (Letter XI, emphasis original). Interestingly, it also reveals not only that she was used to reading at least some of the same materials as her father, but also that she had an attentive eye to the narrative construction of literary works, as we shall see in the section concerning her writing.

Jane Austen did not marry, and accounts for any possible candidates amount to three. The first, Tom Lefroy, is mentioned in the earliest of her surviving letters from 1796-1797 (Letters I and II). Her tone in talking about him is playful and she denies any sorrow when he is to leave for Ireland. In a later letter in 1798, her tone is graver and she mentions a conversation with her friend, Mrs Lefroy (Letter X). When she comes across a note he wrote in which he says he wishes to be better acquainted with the Austen family on a particular interest – Jane –, but he cannot at the moment, Austen comments: 'This is rational enough; there is less love and more sense in it than sometimes appeared before, and I am very well satisfied.' (Letter X). The overall of the letter denotes some bitterness – as in this passage above in which she seems to feign indifference – with the fact that he was more reasonable than it would be desirable. Being the eldest of a large family, it was expected of him to marry wealthily. This is also one of the earliest records of Austen's idea of never marrying without affection. She fancies he does not like her so it is easier for her to forget him. In 1802, while Cassandra and Jane were visiting their brother James, Harris Bigg-Wither, who was five years younger than the latter and whose sisters were Austen's friends, proposed to her. She accepted on one day, just to decline it the next morning. It would have been an advantageous marriage, for Bigg-Wither was an heir to properties, Jane was already 27 years-old, and pertained to a family far from being rich. Finally, in the *Memoir* there is a mention to a clergyman met in one of her travels to the seaside, who died shortly after.

There are different interpretations of how Austen felt about not having married. Years before Cassandra Austen took upon herself the role of an editor of Austen's letters, she had discussed them with one of their nieces, Catherine, who understood from the surviving aunt that '[Jane Austen] always said her books were her children, and supplied her sufficient interest for happiness; and some of her letters, triumphing over the married women of her acquaintance, & rejoicing in her own freedom from care, were most amusing' *(Memoir*, p. 191). It is interesting that Cassandra does not seem to express opposition or resistance to the

ways Austen chose to live her life. On the contrary, she seems to appreciate her liveliness in dealing with such serious matters at the time as marriage and children.

The erstwhile description of Austen and her behaviour towards marriage and children does not corroborate at all with 'modest, retiring, essentially domestic and private' woman both the *Bibliographical Notice* and the *Memoir* try to present (FERGUS, 1997, p. 13). By such account, Austen did not seem to regret the fact that she did not marry and did not have children, which would fulfil the role of a woman expected by the eighteenth-century English society. She ironizes a mother's perils. On the other hand, one is led to wonder if she could be feigning indifference, as it appears plausible in some of her letters. The fact that all of her heroines marry both wealthily and for love could mean they fulfilled something she did not.

Whatever the case may be, as an unmarried woman from a family that stood on the fringes of gentry, Austen's financial situation, though not of poverty, was of a restrained type. In 1799, in a letter to her sister Cassandra, while the latter is at Godmersham visiting their brother Edward Knight, she says: 'I am tolerably glad to hear that Edward's income is so good a one—as glad as I can be at anybody's being rich except you and me.' (Letter XVI). Again there is a sense of bitterness ironically expressed in her writing and, though subtly, it is possible to understand from such a comment to what extent she was aware of women's financial conditions. She cannot be glad for not having as much money as their brother does, so she is 'tolerably glad.'

Still before 1802, in 1800, Mr Austen retired and decided to move to Bath to Austen's great displeasure. There are accounts of her having fainted when she heard the news (*Memoir*, 1870). They moved to Bath in 1801, and her father passed away in 1805. The Austen women's financial situation, which was already complicated, firstly because they were women, and secondly because none of the daughters had married, became even worse with Mr Austen's decease. From 1805 to 1809, Jane, Cassandra, their mother and a friend, Martha Lloyd, stayed at lodgings in different cities (Clifton, Adlestrop, Stoneleigh and Hamstall Ridware, before settling in Southampton in the autumn of 1806), and had a small support from Edward Knight (FERGUS, 2005). It was only in 1809 that he provided his mother and sisters with a living at Chawton, the place where Austen lived until a couple of months before she died.

Places have a very important role not only in Austen's personal life, but also in the production of her literary works. It is in her first home, Steventon, in the period comprised between 1786 and 1793, that she wrote her *Juvenilia* – her most satirical and playful works – which amounted to three volumes. It is also there that she first drafted *Susan* – later to become

Northanger Abbey; *Elinor and Marianne* – later to become *Sense and Sensibility*; and *First Impressions* – published as *Pride and Prejudice*. The interim between Steventon and Chawton (1801 to 1809) reveals an apparent less prolific Austen: she revised *Susan* and tried publication unsuccessfully, and left another novel unfinished, *The Watsons*. It is when settled at Chawton, in the period between 1809 and 1817, that she resumes her literary activity more intensely and sees four of her six novels published: *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), *Mansfield Park* (1814) and *Emma* (1815). Further discussion concerning Austen's oeuvre is located in the next section of this chapter.

Jane's health started to fail in the spring of 1816. In several of the surviving letters, she mentions fatigue, lack of strength and rheumatism. The cause of her death was never definitely identified, and over the years diseases such as Addison's and Hodgkin's were taken into consideration. There is also a claim that she might have been poisoned by arsenic, a component which one of her medicines for rheumatism contained. In *Jane Austen, Her Life and Letters*: *A Family Record* (1913), two of the Austen-Leigh descendants write they believe Austen's health condition was worse after she learned of the will of a deceased uncle. In one of her letters from April 1817, she relates to her brother Charles how much she was affected by the news that one of Mrs Austen's brothers had left nothing for his sister: 'A few days ago my complaint appeared removed, but I am ashamed to say that the shock of my uncle's will brought on a relapse, and I was so ill on Friday and thought myself so likely to be worse that I could not but press for Cassandra's returning with Frank after the funeral last night' (*A Family Record*, 1913). Despite her illness, from 1816 to 1817 she was still able to compose and revise *Persuasion*; revise *Northanger Abbey*; and start *Sanditon*, left unfinished. The two former works were published posthumously in 1818. She was taken by her sister Cassandra to Winchester in May 1817 for treatment, and died early in the morning of 17 July that year. She was buried at the Winchester Cathedral.

1.2 JANE AUSTEN'S LITERARY CONTEXT AND HER WRITING

This section is dedicated to present to the reader a brief account of the transformations that occurred in England in terms of its literary environment during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as well as an account of Austen's writing. Among the most relevant occurrences are the growing focus on individuals' lives as themes for writing; the creation of circulating libraries; the spread of mechanical ways of reproduction and, therefore, the increase in selling; the situation of marriage; and the increase in the number of women writers. These should set the context for understanding Austen's production and publishing.

Aligned with Enlightenment principles, literature in the eighteenth century England focused on individuals. Sanders (2004, p. 308) affirms that the 'English novel appears to have developed in response to a demand for a new kind of literature which emphasized the significance of private experience.' Also, it is the middle class individual the focus of such narratives as few aristocrats and no monarchs appear (SANDERS, 2004). Daniel Defoe's Robinson Crusoe (1719), Moll Flanders (1720) and Roxana (1724) are examples of common folk characters whose lives are recounted through journal style narratives. Along with Samuel Richardson and Henry Fielding, Defoe is considered one of the forefathers of the novel as we read it today (WATT, 1957). Also, at the same time as the relationships in the family circle were changing, and marriage could be achieved through affection and not parental arrangement only, courtly love gained space in literature as well (GREEN, 1991). In this sense, Samuel Richardson's novels were decisive for establishing courtly love as a significant issue to be addressed by literature. According to Ian Watt,

> he wrote at a time when a variety of economic and social changes, some of them temporary and local, but most of them characteristic of modern English and American civilisation, were combining to make marriage much more important for women than before, and at the same time much more difficult to achieve. (1957, p. 136)

Even though British women enjoyed a much easier situation in life than women in other European countries (WATT, 1957), marriage was still the goal, because it meant financial security. Being well married meant marrying a person of some wealth. Marrying poor, especially for women, meant their ruin. However, the eighteenth century witnessed a shortage in marriageable men that was even part of the news in papers as 'the matter excited great and increasing public concern: whether statisticians would have confirmed them or not, many people certainly believed that the situation was grave and called for drastic measures'

(WATT, 1957, p. 144). The reasons for such shortage are unclear, but one may infer they are the consequence of the demand for men both in the army, the navy, and the militia due to England's conflicts and conquests abroad.

As in the basic law of supply and demand, fewer men meant more competition for women. The institution of the dowry endangered the possibilities of poorer girls settling in marriage. This is probably the main reason why conjugal unions were arranged in the eighteenth century. It was not only a matter of maintaining certain family lineages, but of securing family properties. Hence, the situation was rather difficult for women at that time: not only could they not inherit but they were supposed to provide a good dowry. When such facts are laid out, Austen's focus on her heroine's prospects of marriage do not seem unimportant or foolish. Rather, they gain relevance.

Whether such difficulty in marrying contributed to the increase in the number of women writers or not, the fact is that at about the same period more women became writers, and they usually crafted novels. Fergus (1997) informs that the increase in the number of women writers is probably due to their need for money. According to her, 'publishing was one of the few means by which a woman of the middling or upper classes could earn cash' (FERGUS, 1997, p. 18). Among them, Fanny Burney, Maria Edgeworth, Charlotte Lennox and Mary Brunton saw their works published and gaining popularity. As Katherine Sutherland (2004, p. 247) points out, 'in Jane Austen's lifetime (1775–1817) literature became increasingly subject to particular modes of marketing and consumption that helped consolidate its functions, whether for entertainment or instruction, within a domestic and therefore feminized space.'

The drawing room was still a woman's place in society and the novel having been domesticised, as Sutherland argues, indicates that the main readers of this new genre are women. Also, the consumption of novels was facilitated by the fact that circulating libraries – the first being established in Edinburgh in 1716 – decreased the costs of consuming literature and allowed for the rising of group-identified, sociable consumers (SUTHERLAND, 2004). Nevertheless, as a genre still in the process of consolidating itself as legitimate literature, and because it came to be produced mostly by women and for women, it remained an inferior and not serious form of writing. Austen was part of this scenario both as a writer and an avid reader, as it is evident in the defence of the novel in one of her posthumous works, *Northanger Abbey* (1818).

With such events in perspective, the fact that Jane Austen was a woman writer whose main focus relies on women's lives and destinies who pertain to a period in England when the

female sex was facing important transformations in society gains a different importance. In the Regency period, it was still not ladylike for a woman from middle and upper classes to undertake any public services or have a job, for example (SUTHERLAND, 2004; GREEN, 1991). Although novels tended to be written by and for women, even writing as a profession was only admissible for women in cases of 'desperate financial need, preferably to support aged parents, a sick husband, or destitute children' (FERGUS, 1997, p. 14). When such was not the case, 'publishing her own writing could threaten a woman's reputation as well as her social position. For any woman, the fame of authorship could become infamy, and novels were particularly reprehensible' (FERGUS, 1997, p. 13).

The late eighteenth century seems to have been a moment for the coexistence of very controversial points of view both concerning women and literature. As one may have noticed so far, at the same time as the literary market grew, especially due to novels consumed by women, writing for women was still not advisable. Nevertheless, not only did more women write and consume literature, but they also produced other works that dealt with women's issues in the British society. I will briefly present Mary Wollstonecraft and Hannah More, both of whom, despite writing from opposite directions, centred their focus on the roles of women in the society, and may serve here as examples of the discussions on such topics.

Mary Wollstonecraft's book *Vindication of the Rights of Women*, published in 1792, is a milestone in the pursuit of women's rights. She is one of the women writers whose ideas prompted discussions which developed into what has been known since the late nineteenth century as 'feminism.' According to Vivien Jones, even though Austen would certainly not be familiar with the term 'feminism,' since she died many years before feminist overt efforts for emancipation raised their voice, she was aware of 'the concept of individual rights and, more specifically, 'the rights of women.' Such an idea was developed 'by women writers sympathetic to the ideals of the French Revolution' among which is Wollstonecraft (JONES, 2012, p. 282).

The evangelical Hannah More, in the words of conservative commentator Richard Polwhele, is 'the embodiment of "modest Virtue"' (POLWHELE 1798, p. 28, 30). According to Jones, Polwhele 'depicts More as urging her followers, in a "voice seraphic," to 'clai[m] a nation's praise by using their moral influence to instil the traditional values which will secure national stability and cohesion' (2012, p. 287). More, then, centres the responsibility of the maintenance of the Burkean 'established structures of church, state, and family on the woman' (JONES, 2012, p. 287). 'Burkean' refers to Edmund Burke, who was a prominent British philosopher and politician. In his most famous work *Reflections on the French*

Revolution (1790), Burke defended the traditional British institutions which happened to be all male-centred. This work projected him as a leading figure in the conservative section of the Whig Party. In other words, Burkean followers, as Hannah More, were considered conservative, because they were against the French Revolution.

Even though from different perspectives, these two women writers – Mary Wollstonecraft and Hannah More – as well as Catherine Macaulay, Mary Hays, Mary Robinson, and Priscilla Wakefield, 'put questions of women's education, female equality, and the role of the family at the centre of the ideological debates generated by the war' (JONES, 2012, p. 287). Apparently, there are no surviving records that would reveal how Jane Austen felt concerning such conceptions. Nonetheless, the fact that the works she intended to have published (the six complete novels) all focus on the lives of women along with the fact that she avidly read books of different types as well as newspapers, and that she circulated among different sorts of people in places such as Bath, East Kent and London, point to her being aware of the discussions concerning women in the British society. According to Vivien Jones (2012, p. 287), 'this opposition between Wollstonecraft and More […] provides a helpful way of defending Austen's sexual politics, inseparable as they are from the context of a nation at war and, as the conflict dragged on, a growing crisis in the traditional institutions of authority.' To what extent she informed her novels with such conceptions is the theme for the rest of this section.

Austen seems to have found her own particular way to circulate around these conceptions. For instance, although the *Bibliographical Notice* (1818) and the *Memoir* (1870) try hard to stake a claim to the fact that Jane Austen did not pursue a professional career in writing, her father seems to have been a great motivator of her writing and publishing. Still in the 1790s, he was the person who sent the first manuscript of *Pride and Prejudice*, named *First Impressions* at the time, to Thomas Cadell, who rejected it without reading the work. Nevertheless, it should be noticed that the family seemed, as it appears in the biographies written by her family members, cautious about having a woman writer among them. An extract from a letter she sent to Cassandra on 4 February 1813, upon the publishing of *Pride and Prejudice* may contribute to understanding that:

> The caution observed at Steventon with regard to the possession of the book is an agreeable surprise to me, and I heartily wish it may be the means of saving you from anything unpleasant—but you must be prepared for the neighbourhood being perhaps already informed of there being such a work in the world and in the Chawton world. (*A family record*, 1913)

It seems that in order to accommodate both her desire for publishing, and her family's concerns, she published her novels without revealing her name. *Sense and Sensibility* is written 'by a Lady.' Two years later, *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) was published as being written 'by the author of *Sense and Sensibility*,' and so were *Mansfield Park* (1814), *Emma* (1815), and the ones published posthumously, *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion* (1818) (SUTHERLAND, 2004). Each of them is published by the author of the previous one. With years of observation of her fellow women writers, she was cautious enough not to reveal herself blatantly.

Her novels are conveyed through a narrator who is both heterodiegetic, which means it has not experienced the narrated events; and extradiegetic, which means it does not belong to the narrated world (HERMAN, VERVAECK, 2005). This narrative voice is anonymous although it has a personality; it comments on the actions and characters, sometimes ironically, but without disturbing the sense of the flow of events. It is also able to convey the thoughts and feelings of more than one character, yet it tends to set one of them, usually the heroine, as the focaliser. Such stylistic construction is fundamental for the development of Austen's narratives because it creates a sense of suspense. This sensation emerges from the moments when the narrator follows other characters, revealing their knowledge and comprehension of particular situations. Because the heroine is usually unaware of this knowledge – for different reasons, such as prejudice, biased judgment, naïveté – the reader knows more than her and, therefore is expecting the climax, the moment she will come to acquire such information; how she will react to it; and what her conduct will be afterwards.

Besides indirect speech used to report what has been either perceived of manifested by characters, the narrator also employs free indirect discourse. Austen, along with Goethe, James Joyce and Virginia Wolf, is famous for her employment of this linguistic device, which consists of revealing thoughts, feelings and perceptions of characters through the narrator's voice as well as of roaming from viewpoint to viewpoint. Firstly, it increases the sense of reality as it brings the reader closer to the action. Austen seems to prefer implicit indicators of reported conversation to explicit commentary and analysis. Secondly, free indirect discourse allows for the disguise of opinions or points of view of the author, because it is sometimes rather difficult to pinpoint if a certain comment or sentence belongs to a character or to the narrator. In Austen's case the result is usually a satirical tone. This reminds the reader of her analysis of Egerton's novel.

When it comes to the scope of Austen's novels, there is a famous fragment of one of her letters to her niece Anna in which she synthesises it: '3 or 4 families in a Country Village

is the very thing to work on' (Letters, p. 275/June 1814). Most of the scenes are usually set in ballrooms and country houses, and although all of her heroines travel occasionally, the focus is always in their interactions with other people rather than in descriptions of sceneries or appearance of characters. Most of the times, the descriptions of people concern their personality or feelings. Every event and every characterisation is carefully connected so as to create a cohesive narrative. Sutherland (2004, p. 250) points out that Austen dispenses with 'loose episodic structure of many contemporary novels' as she favours 'an alternating concentration on limited social and inward developments' which produces 'a blend of behaviour minutely observed and subsequent moral reflection, usually centred in the consciousness of the heroine' (ibid, 2004, p. 250).

Austen's comment on Egerton's novel *Fitz-Albini*, which she read with her father still in 1799, summarises her conception of composition of a novel:

> My father is disappointed – / am not, for I expected nothing better Never did any book carry more internal evidence of its author. Every sentiment is completely Egerton's. There is very little story, and what there is is told in a strange, unconnected way. There are many characters introduced, apparently merely to be delineated. We have not been able to recognise any of them hitherto, except Dr. and Mrs. Hey and Mr. Oxenden, who is not very tenderly treated. (Letter XI – emphasis original)

Obviously, this is only a fragment of one letter. Nevertheless, it points to the characteristics seen in Austen's novels for which they gained and maintained notoriety. Firstly, instead of a profusion of characters, her works present only the quantity necessary for the 'story,' as she calls. Secondly, such 'small' quantity allows the writer to craft protagonists that have deeper and more complex personality constructions; they are not merely 'delineated.' Finally, her use of free indirect discourse disguises evidence of the author's interference or point of view; apparently there is very little of Austen in her works. By the time the aforementioned letter was written in 1799, the author had already finished 'First Impressions,' her draft of what later became *Pride and Prejudice.*

In these tightly woven narratives, she does not leave room for discussing political or philosophical issues. She is aware of that, although not always confident regarding her decision. In one of her letters, she mentions the fact that *Pride and Prejudice* is devoid of any supposedly serious engagement: [*Pride and Prejudice*] 'wants to be stretched out here & there with a long Chapter […] about something unconnected with the story: an Essay on Writing, a critique on Walter Scott, or the history of Buonaparte' (14 February 1813 / Letters: 203). It is

possible to observe that she felt insecure about her novel because it did not follow the trend of the time in which novels would have monologues, for instance, which discussed serious issues, even though that interfered with the work's structure and narrative cohesion.

It is from Austen's correspondence with the Prince Regent's librarian, Mr Clarke, that we learn she deliberately avoided blatant political and philosophical issues in her six published novels. When he entreats her to write a work whose protagonist would be a clergyman, she writes to him: 'The comic part of the character I might be equal to, but not the good, the enthusiastic, the literary.' She considers that a man's conversation should verse on science and philosophy at times, and she says she does not know such topics. She contends that 'a classical education, or at any rate a very extensive acquaintance with English literature, ancient and modern, appears to me quite indispensable for the person who would do any justice to your clergyman.' She ends the letter saying: 'I think I may boast myself to be, with all possible vanity, the most unlearned and uninformed female who ever dared to be an author' (December 1815). She is aware of the dissimilarity between men's and women's education, and that is her excuse for declining Mr Clarke's request. It is interesting that all of her novels have clergymen but as all other men, we are only acquainted with them in scenes where there are women present. Those moments after dinner when men drink or smoke are only mentioned. Austen is very committed to writing upon what she deeply knows of.

Austen is very clear minded when it comes to what her scope and her style are. As Mr Clarke entreats her in a second letter to consider the possibility of writing of a clergyman, she replies:

> I could no more write a romance than an epic poem. I could not sit seriously down to write a serious romance under any other motive than to save my life; and if it were indispensable for me to keep it up and never relax into laughing at myself or at other people, I am sure I should be hung before I had finished the first chapter. No, I must keep to my own style and go on in my own way, and though I may never succeed again in that, I am convinced that I should totally fail in any other. (April 1816)

Despite the fact that she keeps on her own way, distant from her contemporaries, one aspect of their writing she maintains: 'the sense that fiction is a legitimate variation on the philosophical and political discourse of ideas' (SUTHERLAND, 2004, p. 250). She chooses her fiction to discuss, although obliquely and between the lines, the situation of women who, like her, most of the times belonged to the fringes of gentry. In the crafting of her heroines she incorporates discussions on moral, on the rights of the individual, particularly the woman. Elinor and Marianne Dashwood – the protagonists of her first published novel, *Sense and*

Sensibility (1811) – were destitute after their father's death, just as Cassandra and Jane Austen and many other ladies whose family properties remained entailed to male heirs. Along with a younger sister and their mother, Elinor and Marianne are turned out of their home by the half-brother and his greedy wife who were supposed to help them. They are left with a meagre income, and it is a distant cousin, Mr John Middleton, who provides a cottage for them to live. They are raised, as all women of the time, to prepare for marriage, but the financial condition makes it difficult for them to become eligible ladies. Through their falling in and out of love up until they marry and settle, the sense of the eldest and the sensibility of the second sister are refined and brought to a balance.

In *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), Elizabeth Bennet is the second of five daughters in a family whose parents were never sensible enough about their finances, and their property is entailed to a distant cousin. On the eminence of being destitute, she has to cope with the fact that she should marry Mr Collins. She refuses to do so, even though it would mean the maintenance of the family estate, Longbourn. She also refuses Mr Darcy's advantageous marriage proposal, because she cannot respect him. She is only tempted to marry when she is capable of loving, respecting and admiring him. This happens after both Elizabeth and Darcy learn to see through their pride and prejudice against each other. Their marrying for love resonates a famous quote from one of Austen's letters to a niece: 'Anything is to be preferred or endured rather than marrying without Affection' (L., 18-20 November 1814). It also reminds us of Mr Bigg-Whither marriage proposal she accepted on one day, only to refuse in the next morning.

Fanny Price, one of several children from a poor family, is the protagonist from *Mansfield Park* (1814). She is surrounded by examples of how marriage affects a woman's life: her mother's poor marriage and her aunt Lady Bertram's successful one. This novel is about people learning right from wrong, moral from amoral, especially in relationships. Women are subjected to difficult circumstances: marriage is either their salvation or doom. If they ever misbehave and enter in any sort of romantic scandal, they are the ones who suffer the penalties for such behaviour. As Fanny observes characters such as Mary and Henry Crawford, Maria and Julia Bertram, Tom and Edmund Bertram, she matures to find her way: marrying for affection and, as in all of Austen's novels, marrying well. In terms of any sort of resemblance with aspects of Austen's own life, the theatrical plays performed by the young people at Mansfield Park resonate those of Austen's teenage days when her cousin Eliza de Feuillide would visit the family.

Unlike the heroines of her previous novels, Emma Woodhouse in *Emma* (1815) is neither destitute nor in need of money. Her struggles concern her emotional growth as she creates different kinds of problems to young people around her in her attempts at matchmaking. She considers herself a great reader of character, and is proved wrong when her plans for marrying the others fail and people suffer. Through an ambiguous narrative voice, the reader is never quite sure if she should approve of or condemn Emma. One of her dialogues with her friend, Harriet Smith, provides the reader with an interesting view of Austen's ability to discuss the reality of women through her characters so as not to break the flow of the narrative. When Emma tells Harriet she does not intend to marry and that she would only be tempted by someone 'very superior,' the latter considers it 'odd to hear a woman talk so,' to which Emma replies:

> 'I have none of the usual inducements of women to marry. Were I to fall in love, indeed it would be a different thing! But I never have been in love; it is not my way, or my nature; and I do not think I ever shall. And, without love, I am sure I should be a fool to change such a situation as mine. Fortune I do not want; employment I do not want; consequence I do not want; I believe few married women are half as much mistress of their husband's house as I am of Hartfield.' (AUSTEN, 1999, p. 55)

Despite the sense of self-importance, it is clear Emma can afford to marry for love. Her words reveal the condition of women who unlike her do not possess either fortune or rank: marriage is not a choice, but a necessity for most of them. That is further clarified by her when, as the conversation follows, she says: 'Never mind, Harriet, I shall not be a poor old maid; and it is poverty only which makes celibacy contemptible to a generous public!' Money or the lack of it dictates a woman's fate. Emma is happy enough to have plenty, and to find 'somebody very superior' in Mr Knightley.

Northanger Abbey (1818), although published posthumously, is considered to be one of the earliest novels Austen drafted still in the 1790s. Its protagonist, Catherine Morland, is presented to the reader as a sort of tomboy as a child. It is not an objective to read the author in her novels, but Austen grew up in a house full of brothers and schoolboys. It is in Woolf's essay on Jane Austen that we learn how she was seen by a cousin, Philadelphia Austen: she 'is not at all pretty and very prim, unlike a girl of twelve, Jane is whimsical and affected' (WOOLF, 1925, p. 54). There is a chance Catherine resembles her infant days. As a teenager, she develops into a beautiful girl whose main interest is books. While she is an avid reader, she does not judge character well and that is the fault she must conquer in order to grow. This narrative is famous for its defence of the novel. There is again certain ambiguity for, at the

same time the protagonist fools herself because she confuses reality with the gothic readings she likes, the narrator defends the novel. As with Marianne Dashwood, it is not simply reading, or repetitive reading, but a critical one that is praised. In this sense, one might argue that were they able to have formal instruction, as men do, they would not let themselves be fooled by their readings.

Finally, in *Persuasion* Anne Eliot pays the price for not having followed her own heart. She followed an aunt's advice, and did not accept Frederick Wentworth's marriage proposal because he was a naval officer at the time. Her family thought him unequal to her position in society. At the age of 27, due to her family's imprudence, she must live in lodgings in Bath – just like Jane Austen. Because Anne reflects on the past, the narrative focalises on her thoughts of happier times. Also, there is in Mr Eliot, Anne's father, a longing for a past when the aristocratic ways of living – which is inherited – pervaded the British society. Now, such society has to learn to respect and accommodate new ways of living – those worked for –, as that represented by Wentworth, now a Captain in the Navy. Unlike the other novels, this one has a more serious tone as such topics are dealt with. At the end of the narrative, Anne learns to avoid persuasion and decide things for herself and recover Captain Wentworth's love.

As it is possible to observe, all of Austen's heroines struggle to find a balance between family needs and their individual desires, to find a place in the social order. In this process they all come to a more mature state, which enables them to decide their lives more independently. In a certain sense, all of her heroines resemble a little bit Austen, at least from what is known through the surviving letters. Austen had a playful disposition; many of her letters present a comic/satirical strain. She tends to satirise situations that displease her, as in the case of Tom Lefroy. In this situation, it was money, or the lack of it, which prevented them from furthering any relationship. Since she could not both marry for love and marry well, she made sure her heroines could all do that. To what extent this was real chances are we will never know. At any rate, what this discussion aims at pointing out is that Austen's worth is seen in the way she managed to focus on women's issues through the struggles of her heroines as well as her style of composition. The progresses of her plots are more important than the happy endings.

1.3 THE CRITIQUE ON AUSTEN'S OEUVRE

Through the observation of Austen's reception it is possible to see how her works have been understood ever since their publishing. The intention is not to give a comprehensive overview, but just a few glimpses of the different understandings, interpretations of Jane Austen's life and work: first of all, her own understanding of herself, her family's and her reception by the critics and the public; secondly, the meaning and relevance her novels have for us. This is a necessary step in the transition to the adaptations since many of the choices made by adaptors have to do with the moment in time they are produced and the ways in which Austen's work is understood in such period of time. Therefore, this section proposes a panorama of her reception as a foreground for the comprehension of the analysis of *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* (2012/2013).

1.3.1 Jane Austen's, her family's and friends' views of her novels

Jane Austen was very fond of her books. When she received the copy of *Pride and Prejudice* that came from print, she called it her 'darling child' (24 January 1813). She was also very protective of them as it is clear from the same letter: 'I must confess that I think [Elizabeth Bennet] as delightful a creature as ever appeared in print, and how I shall be able to tolerate those who do not like *her* at least I do not know' (emphasis hers). She recognizes there are fewer reported clauses than would be desired, but she immediately adds in verse style: 'I do not write for such dull elves / As have not a great deal of ingenuity themselves.' (4 January 1813). This is a reference to two verses from Canto VI of 'Marmion,' a poem by Sir Walter Scott published in 1808: 'I do not rhyme to that dull elf / Who cannot image to himself' (SCOTT, CADELL, 1841, p. 143). It seems she considers her works of a clever kind, and so must their readers be.

One might not suppose, however, that Jane Austen was as confident as she seems in the aforementioned passage at all times and concerning all of her books. Around ten days later, in another letter she says *P&P* is 'rather too light, and bright, and sparkling; it wants shade' (4 February 1813). To some degree how others see her work interferes in her mood. When she learns of the appreciation of Warren Hastings of her *Pride and Prejudice,* she writes: 'And Mr. Hastings! I am quite delighted with what such a man writes about it' (15

September 1813). This concern with the opinions of others is evident by the time *Emma* is published, as she confesses to Mr Clarke:

> 'My greatest anxiety at present is that this fourth work should not disgrace what was good in the others. But on this point I will do myself the justice to declare that, whatever may be my wishes for its success, I am very strongly haunted by the idea that to those readers who have preferred *Pride and Prejudice* it will appear inferior in wit; and to those who have preferred *Mansfield Park*, very inferior in good sense.' (11 December 1815)

At this point, she is so concerned with what readers would think of her work that she collected opinions on *Emma*. It is possible to see that not only did she register what family members thought, but had them collect any opinion they heard from more distant acquaintances. In general, family, friends and acquaintances appreciated *Emma*, but not as much as *Pride and Prejudice* and *Mansfield Park* as she had predicted. She wrote that 'Countess Craven admired it very much, but did not think it equal to *P. and P.* which she ranked as the very first of its sort. / Mrs. Guiton thought it too natural to be interesting' (W. AUSTEN-LEIGH; R. AUSTEN-LEIGH, 1913). Such appreciations generally concerned the construction of characters, but there were also comments in terms of language use. *Emma* was thought more elaborate than her previous works. Her brother James and his wife 'did not like it so well as either of the three others. Language different from the others; not so easily read.'

By the time she has *Persuasion* and *Northanger Abbey* ready for publication, she answers a letter from a nephew who had two chapters of his own writing lost at home. She defends herself saying she had not been there and asking: 'What should I do with your strong, manly, spirited sketches, full of variety and glow? How could I possibly join them on to the little bit (two inches wide) of ivory on which I work with so fine a brush, as produces little effect after much labour?' (16 December 1816). This is one of the most famous of her quotes, and it reveals how much she worked on her novels; how carefully she chose details. What she meant exactly with 'little effect' we are not to know precisely. Did she mean her works had less value because they are concerned with domestic life? Did she mean her works had less repercussion than those produced by men or those that had male protagonists? Whatever the meaning these are conjectures only, for we do not seem to have any material left that would explain, except the various interpretations other scholars have provided, which may be considered as much conjecture as these provided here.

1.3.2 Three moments in the professional criticism of Austen's oeuvre

As we turn our investigation to more professional reviews of Jane Austen's work, it is interesting to understand it in three moments. The criteria used to separate the different phases concern how professional and academic they are as well as their focus. The first of them refers to the period that comprises the publication of the novels to the establishment of English Departments at universities. In this period, editors commissioned reviews, generally anonymous pieces, which were published in periodicals such as *The Critical Review* and *The British Critic*; the best-known ones were written by Sir Walter Scott and Archbishop Richard Whately. It is also possible to grasp the opinions of other writers through their correspondence. The second moment encompasses the establishment of English Studies as an academic discipline around the 1890s up until the 1960s and 1970s. This is the point in time in which the third moment starts with the establishment of Women Studies. Both of these last moments happen in universities: first, English in general, which encompassed linguistics and literature, and later, Women Studies, have Austen's works as an arena for discussing literary artistry and feminist agendas each in its turn.

The reviews which appeared by the time *Sense and Sensibility* (1811) was published still required the filter of conduct manuals, and the necessity of some serious issue to be dealt with which reviewers did not seem to find in the novel (WALDRON, 2005). In an attempt at framing it as a fictionalised conduct manual, the reviewer for *The British* Critic, in its issue of May 1812, believes Marianne Dashwood is an example of what happens to young ladies who are not alert and careful to the mischiefs of the world, especially those brought by men such as Willoughby. *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), in turn, benefited from the evolving of criticism as reviewers began to devote attention, though still incipient, to literary aspects besides lessons on proper conduct for young ladies. Again in *The British Critic*, a review from January 1813 compares Elizabeth Bennet with Beatrice, a Shakespearean character from the play *Much Ado About Nothing.* The review says Elizabeth plays '*the Beatrice* upon' Mr Darcy (The Critic Review, 1813, p. 319, emphasis original). Such comparison may be considered a sign of respect towards the novel. There is also praise for its realistic nature in presentations of characters such as Mrs Bennet and Mr Collins, although there is still a prevailing need to boast a moralistic perspective in reading Lydia Bennet. The reviewer says there is 'an excellent lesson to be learned' from her elopement (p. 322).

Sir Walter Scott, for his part, when reviewing for *The Quarterly Review*, places Austen in the novel-writing tradition of the time. He is able to see the originality even though he does

not delve into a deeper analysis. For him, her works are original insofar as they refuse the stereotypes used by so many other writers, as Burney and Edgeworth. He says her merits can be seen 'in the force of a narrative conducted with much neatness and point, and a quiet yet comic dialogue, in which the characters of the speakers evolve themselves with dramatic effect.' At the same time he sees an exaggeration in characters such as Mr Woodhouse and Miss Bates in *Emma*. For him, 'their prosing is apt to become as tiresome in fiction as in real society' (SCOTT, 1815).

Some years later, many other dubious or reticent reviews still struggle to understand Austen's narratives, and deem them unconcerned with 'real' problems; it is Richard Whately who, in 1821, establishes a more serious literary criticism on her work. His analysis of her oeuvre will later echo in studies and lectures produced in universities. He conducts a long discussion on what is unnatural and improbable in narratives and compares fictional and historical ones. Based on Aristotle, he argues that the former 'present us (supposing, of course, each perfect in its kind) with the general, instead of the particular, – the probable, instead of the true' (WHATELY, 1821). This means that a historical narrative, because particularised, may be unnatural or improbable; it may happen only once. Fictional narratives, on the other hand, if well written, which is his opinion of Austen's, present with the natural and probable to happen. In his understanding, Austen's novels have such perfection as

> she has not been forgetful of the important maxim, so long ago illustrated by Homer, and afterwards enforced by Aristotle, of saying as little as possible in her own person, and giving a dramatic air to the narrative, by introducing frequent conversations; which she conducts with a regard to character hardly exceeded even by Shakespeare himself. (WHATELY, 1821)

Moreover, the reviewer observes that it is in the reader's hands the decision to judge the moral issues presented by Austen's novels. They are not presented as lessons to be learned. Rather, they remain unresolved as it may happen in real life, and it is the reader who must digest the information. Hence, they do not perform the conduct manuals didactics present in a variety of writings of the time (WALDRON, 2005). In 1826, in an edition of his *Journal*, Walter Scott refers again to Austen's talent: 'that young lady had a talent for describing the involvements and feelings and characters of ordinary life which is to me the most wonderful I ever met with' (apud BLOOM, 2008, p. 105). However, as the Victorian period approached, the so-called disinterest for 'important' causes in Austen's novels, such as social or 'real' individual problems, is again brought to the fore. In 1848, Charlotte Brönte, in a letter to George Lewes, exposes her opinion about *Pride and Prejudice*:

> An accurate daguerreotyped portrait of a commonplace face; a carefully fenced, highly cultivated garden, with neat borders and delicate flowers; but no glance of a bright, vivid physiognomy, no open country, no fresh air, no blue hill, no bonny beck. I should hardly like to live with her ladies and gentlemen, in their elegant but confined houses. (BLOOM, 2008, p. 106)

It seems Charlotte Brönte would have liked to read more of those scenes in which Lizzie goes for long walks. For her, Austen's heroines have no passion, no intense expression of feelings. In this sense, the scene where Mr Darcy, soaking wet with rain, proposes to Elizabeth in the outside in the 2005 Joe Wright movie adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* seems to reveal a little of a shared desire with Brönte. Austen's novel was too 'bright and sparkling' for the Victorian readership (*Letters,* 4 February 1813). Claire Harman (2009) synthesises the controversial responses Jane Austen received throughout the nineteenth century the following way: 'In the mid-nineteenth century – heyday of the Victorian triple-decker novel – Austen's restrained Regency romances looked old-fashioned and irrelevant and met with very mixed critical responses.'

Another relevant moment in this first phase of the criticism on Austen happens when James Edward Austen-Leigh publishes *A Memoir of Jane Austen* (1870). It probably contributed to the beginning of the second phase of criticism, as it is after its publication that it is possible to trace the divide between academic researchers and popular culture that has resisted up until the twenty-first century in regard to the appreciation of Austen's novels and what they convey. It is in this period also, more precisely in 1876, that Leslie Stephen, Virginia Woolf's father, coins the term 'Austenolatry.' He writes in his article entitled *Humour* for the 33rd issue of *The Cornhill Magazine* that 'Austenolatry is perhaps the most intolerant and dogmatic of literary creeds' (STEPHEN, 1876, p. 324). For him, there is no arguing with Austen's fans, especially when it comes to the understanding of humour in her work. He says he 'should dispute the conclusion that she was entitled to be ranked with the great authors who have sounded the depths of human passion, or found symbols for the finest speculations of the human intellect, instead of amusing themselves with the humours of a country tea-table' (p. 324-325). As we shall see ahead, it seems Woolf and her father did not quite agree about Austen.

The cult of Jane Austen was aided by George Saintsbury, a British literary critic and historian, who wrote the 1894 introduction for *Pride and Prejudice*. According to him, 'in the novels of the last hundred years there are vast numbers of young ladies with whom it might be

a pleasure to fall in love, – but to live with and marry, I do not know that any of them can come into competition with Elizabeth Bennet' (SAINTSBURY, 1894). His praise of Austen bears the idolatry discussed by Stephen. It is Saintsbury who coins the term 'Janeite' another famous indicative of Austen's fans. Rudyard Kipling appropriates the term in his short story 'The Janeites,' published in 1924. These events contributed to the expansion of Austen's fandom as well as it fed scholar discussions.

The second moment in the criticism of Austen's oeuvre is more clearly related to the establishment of English departments in universities, which happened mostly around the last decade of the nineteenth century – in Oxford University it was in 1894; in London College, in 1898, for instance. As the study of literature became institutionalized, and Austen became part of the canon, more works on her artistry appeared, dedicated to finding her genius in literary terms. In this sense, her novels were appreciated for their economy of characters and information. Unlike her contemporaries who filled their novels with disconnected information, every detail present in Austen's novels has a purpose of existence within the narrative. It is the perfection with which her narratives are woven that appealed to researchers and theoreticians in the early days of English departments. Sutherland considers that the 'economy also contributes directly to her serious status – to the portability of her fictions (that is, their capacity to live independently of contemporary contexts) and to their availability for re-reading' (SUTHERLAD, 2004, p. 259). That which was once considered a shortcoming of her work – apparently no serious discussion – became exactly what distinguished her from her contemporaries.

Echoing Whately's view of Austen's work – the probability of her narratives – the question, then, turned to understanding what exactly did her works imitate from reality. According to Nicola Trott, late nineteenth and early twentieth century posed different dilemmas concerning Austen's oeuvre: 'was she poetic as well as prosaic?'; 'artistic as well as imitative?'; and 'universal as well as parochial?' (2005, p. 95). Because Austen's scope comprises the famous '3 or 4 families in a country village,' there was great debate over the limits of her production. In general, her work was deemed devoid of a poetic atmosphere due to her realistic style, unlike Whately, who, on the other hand, had seen Austen's works as both artistic and imitative: artistic because of the way the plot is woven; imitative, because it reproduces so well probable characters from reality.

When it comes to understanding Austen's work as either parochial or universal, it is Virginia Woolf who also redresses balance to her appreciation. Her piece on Jane Austen, published in 1925 in *The Common Reader*, acquires a tone of homage to her predecessor. For

the author, Jane Austen knew ‘from her birth upwards’ that every ballroom could present with a set of laughable characters. She says ‘one of those fairies who perch upon cradles must have taken her a flight through the world directly [sic] she was born. When she was laid in the cradle again she knew not only what the world looked like, but had already chosen her kingdom’ (WOOLF, 1925, p. 55). She seems to agree with Whately when she says the minute presentation of characters rendered them universal and not parochial. Woolf says, ‘whatever she writes is finished and turned and set in its relation, not to the parsonage, but to the universe. She is impersonal; she is inscrutable’ (WOOLF, 1925, p. 55). It is possible that exactly because Austen writes only about three or four families from a country village that her characters are universal. Instead of only delineating numerous characters, she goes deeply into those she decides to work with and presents the reader with complex and intricate personalities.

The third phase of criticism on Austen’s works starts with the establishment of Women Studies in the early 1970s following women’s movements from the 1960s. As feminist and postcolonial theories developed, and women studies departments flourished in universities, it was only natural that more attention would be demanded for women writers. When it comes to Austen, the variety of analyses ranged from conservatory to revolutionary, extremes that brought a considerable amount of debate and which have enriched Austen’s world. Rajeswari Rajan (2005, p. 101) observes that ‘recent Austen scholarship’ has been absorbed in a great range of topics such as: ‘the Revolution, war, nationalism, empire, class, 'improvement', the clergy, town versus country, abolition, the professions, female emancipation.’ Also, ‘whether her politics were Tory, or Whig, or radical; whether she was a conservative or a revolutionary, or occupied a reformist position between these extremes’ are recurrent topics of collections of essays which discuss Jane Austen (RAJAN, 2005, 101). Everyday, someone comes across a topic for discussing Austen through a different perspective. In academic terms, it is possible to notice those who engage in seeing political agendas both from Austen’s time and our own, and those who remain in the territory of the narratives and seek to understand how topics such as genre are dealt with in the weaving of the novel.

This diversity of agendas in the studies of Austen is certainly increased by the quantity of literary or filmic productions which either adapted Austen’s novels or used their plots as models for other works. In this sense, both academic researchers and popular culture feed on each other. As this doctoral dissertation main objective is to observe the representations of women both in *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) and in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* (2012), it is

inevitable to approach discussions that relate Austen and feminism. It corroborates Rajan's perspective in which she declares feminism is more interested in 'identifying if and how questions of gender are addressed or occluded in the writer's work, and in exploring the contradictions that gender poses to various forms of narrative resolution' than pinpointing which writer is or is not feminist (RAJAN, 2005, p. 102-103). There is a great concern in the development of this work not to get overwhelmed by feminist analyses that are more interested in using Austen for their own purposes than in observing the ways in which gender is dealt with both in the novel and the transmedia project. Nevertheless, this work acknowledges that feminism – or rather, the individual women's rights – in Austen is a central issue. In this sense, Rajan identifies some of the reasons which allow researchers to approximate Austen to feminism: 'her historical location (her near contemporaneity to Mary Wollstonecraft is not a fact easy to overlook), the centrality of female protagonists in her fiction and the thematic preoccupation with courtship and marriage as the central predicament of women's lives in her novels.'

1.4 JANE AUSTEN AND POPULAR CULTURE

This section is dedicated to an overview of the development of the cult of Austen in popular culture. This is a necessary step in order to understand the environment in which *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* (2012/2013), one of the objects of this investigation, is situated. When it comes to discussing Jane Austen and her connection with popular culture, it is important to observe how multifaceted this relationship is. It involves taking into consideration societies, early cinematic adaptations, technological advances, the emerging of online communities, the heritage film trend, especially in England, among other issues. It involves acknowledging that she has become a commodity, as the opening sentence of this chapter declares. As it has been mentioned, the cult of Jane Austen fans started, at least to be noticed, in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. At that time, there were no groups or organisations that dedicated their time and effort to Jane Austen's works. When Leslie Stephen talked about 'Austenolatry' and George Saintsbury named the 'Janeites,' though they meant plural, they did not refer to organised groups of fans, because there were none. Austen's fame went from individual to individual readers. In 1940, the first Jane Austen Society is founded. It was created in England in order to raise funds for maintaining the last of Austen's residences, Chawton. At the end of the 1970s, the Jane Austen Society of North America was founded. These societies

organize year-round events such as conferences and discussions, performances of Austen's works, exhibitions and Regency England themed balls[4]. The fact that women's studies in universities saw in Austen a possibility of discussing their own agendas happened at around the same period, and they amplified and popularised the debate of her oeuvre.

Jane Austen's fandom started to garner the status of a global community fairly around the launch of Andrew Davis' BBC adaptation series of *Pride and Prejudice* in 1995. Much around the same time as the Internet spread globally. As any other medium, the Internet has gone through different stages of development/evolution over the years. While it was a medium of communication in the early 1990s, it evolved into an 'exponentially expanding networked archive of data' in the early 2000s (BOWLES, 2003, p. 15). It has become a place through which practices that happened in somewhat isolated forms – Charles Dickens' and Arthur Conan Doyle's publishing in instalments in newspapers and receiving feedback from readers in the nineteenth century; or fan fiction based on Star Wars and Star Trek in the early 1980s – are taken to an uncountable quantity, and globally spread almost instantaneously (ROSE, 2012). In Jane Austen's case, the adaptations have inspired debate on both the novels and the films and, therefore, have kept the 'novelist alive' (PERRIL, 2002, p.8), while the Internet has provided the perfect arena for such discussions (BOWLES, 2003; SIMONS, 2012).

Alongside academic endeavours concerning Jane Austen on the web, one also finds an endless rabbit hole of vernacular creativity – 'the wide range of everyday creative practices developed outside the cultural value systems of either high culture or commercial creative practices' (BURGESS, GREEN, 2009, p. 25). The universe of Austen's online fandom has also expanded after BBC's adaptations in the 1990s; the first mailing lists discussing the author date back to 1996. *The Republic of Pemberley* (https://pemberley.com/) – the most popular repository of fan fiction related to the British author – provides an environment where fans are encouraged to post their own Austen-based stories as well as comment and discuss their peers' ones. There are stories based on Austen's novels as well as on other published books that have been inspired by her oeuvre. Nevertheless, they have strict rules concerning posting and cross-posting, appropriateness and safety for minors as well as etiquette and netiquette (BOWLES, 2003). There are also blogs maintained by individuals which explore

[4] Retrieved from http://www.janeaustensoci.freeuk.com/pages/events_uk.htm and http://www.jasna.org/. Accessed in Dec. 2016.

Austen's life, novels and times such as *Strange Girl*[5] and *Amantes de Jane Austen*[6] – Jane Austen lovers –, this last one written in Portuguese by a Brazilian group of fans.

Advances in technologies and in the entertainment industry's ways of marketing and profiting have played an important role for the establishment of the beloved Miss Austen's cult[7]. So, the fact that she is a canonical writer, at least for the English speaking cultures, and that her works are in public domain has facilitated the creation of new productions that use her and her oeuvre as source texts. We include here film adaptations, Silhouette romances, fan fiction, merchandising such as card and board games, tea mugs, pins, clothes and a multiplicity of new editions of her work.

We will address here two of the most recurrent ways in which Austen's oeuvre has been transposed for the popular culture: adaptation and appropriation. For Julie Sanders (2006), the first term, adaptation, nominates an artistic work whose production is based on other works of art, and they usually appear in a different medium. In a broad perspective, adaptations loosely maintain the narrative plot with few alterations that could distance the new work from the source text. The cinema industry has thrived by producing adaptations of literary classics such as *Frankenstein* (1818) and many tales by the Brothers Grimm as well as Shakespeare's plays, among countless others. In another direction, there are adaptations that brought notoriety to literary works that were not very well known. *Gone with the Wind* (1936), written by Margareth Mitchell, as well as *Rebecca* (1938) and *The Birds* (1952) by Daphne Du Morier are narratives which gained visibility once transposed to the cinematic medium. This relationship between source text and new product has secured its lucrative position for the entertainment business, and is one of the factors which explain the profusion of Austen-related materials.

Although the first filmic production of *Pride and Prejudice* dates back to 1938, the one which has actually started a revival of popular culture interest in Austen is the 1995 BBC television series starring Colin Firth as Mr Darcy and Jennifer Ehle as Elizabeth Bennet. The series directed by Simon Langton comprises six episodes, which attempt at recreating in detail for the small screen the most beloved of Austen's novel. Andrew Davis, who was in charge of the screenplay, brought back in all their intensity the characteristics of television classic-novel adaptations which made the genre popular in the UK of the 1980s:

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[5] Retrieved from www.strangegirl.com. Accessed in Dec. 2016.
[6] Retrieved from www.amantesdejaneausten.blogspot.com.br. Accessed in Dec. 2016.
[7] The term "cult" applied to Jane Austen's fandom is used by Devoney Looser in "The cult of *Pride and Prejudice* and its author" in TODD, Janet (ed.). **The Cambridge Companion to Pride and Prejudice**. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013, p. 174-185.

> high production values; ‘authentic’, detailed costume sets; ‘great British actors’; light classical music; slow pace; steady, often symmetrical framing; an interest in landscapes, buildings, and interiors as well as characters; strong, gradually developed protagonists accompanied by entertaining cameo roles; and intelligent, ‘faithful’ dialogue. (CARDWELL, 2007, p. 189)

At the same time, these heritage film characteristics were balanced with the entertainment industry ones. In this adaptation, Mr Darcy is portrayed as struggling with his passion for Elizabeth (TROOST, 2007). He is turned into a sight for the female gaze, an object of desire. This television series follows a trend, or a cultural movement led mainly by the BBC – British Broadcasting Corporation –, which is a public radio and television broadcasting station. The production of adaptations of nineteenth century novels, which came to be termed heritage films, centres its focus on establishing an image of ‘a harmonious national and ethnic identity, evoking the centrist values of England as synecdochically pervasive throughout the Empire’ (VOIGTS-VIRCHOW, 2007, p. 125). It should be noted that the decade of the 1980s was a moment of crisis in England, and the emphasis on such values was aimed at maintaining an image of a unified country. Lastly, the 1980s is also the period when second-wave feminism was in its most effervescent period, and ‘the feminine dominance in both heritage/costume films and Victorian prose fiction is obvious and the Victorian novel provides a wealthy reservoir of powerful heroines enmeshed in, and fighting against clearly established patriarchal strictures’ (ibid, 2007, p. 125). All this comes to say that this television series contributed to the establishment of heritage films as a valuable commodity for the entertainment business, and amplified Austen’s readership.

In this sense, Sue Perril (2002, p. 8) argues that adaptations have some positive effects, among them the promotion of discussions of both adaptation and novels and that, according to her, has kept the ‘novelist alive.’ The researcher exemplifies it by observing the fact that the membership of the Jane Austen Society of North America almost doubled after the release of the 1990s adaptations and that the American Janeites ‘visited the Republic of Pemberley on-line,’ ‘participated in dialogues and arguments online; they posted information about all facets of eighteenth century customs, fashions, and music.’ Elaine Indrusiak (2013, p. 96) draws from Walter Benjamin’s notion that translations ‘grant the original text afterlife’ to argue that adaptations play the same role: they grant their source texts the possibility of remaining renowned. Jane Austen’s case corroborates such conception.

The second form of transformation important to this discussion is, according to Sanders (2006, p. 26), appropriation. It refers to a new work of art that takes an aspect of an original narrative and transforms it 'into a wholly new cultural product and domain.' This may happen in any type of media, including print. In Austen's case, popular examples are the novels *Bridget Jones' Diaries* (1996) by Helen Fielding and *The Jane Austen Book Club* (2004) by Karen Joy Fowler, both of which bring aspects of the Regency plot to twentieth-century narratives. In terms of filmic appropriations, the following productions are all examples of the updating of the Regency plot: *Clueless* (1995), directed by Amy Heckerling, which transpose *Emma*'s plot to Beverly Hills; the Tamil-language Kandukondain Kandukondain (2000), directed by Rajiv Menon; Andrew Black's Mormon version of *Pride and Prejudice* (2003); and Gurinder Chadha's Bollywood-style musical, *Bride & Prejudice* (2004). These culturally diverse appropriations may speak on behalf of Virginia Woolf's understanding of Austen's universality.

It is rather relevant to observe that the scenario of appropriations that can be seen in the twenty-first century is the result of a set of interconnected aspects. Firstly, it depends greatly on technological advances such as the Internet. The spread of online fan clubs and websites specialized on Austen made it possible for an incredible growth of a network of devoted readers and newcomers. The Republic of Pemberley[8], founded in 1996, is the most famous of such communities where readers are encouraged to write their own stories based on Austen's plots and comment on the stories by others. Secondly, the entertainment industry's ability to capitalise over such fandom has produced not only more adaptations of Austen's novels, but also every type of memorabilia related to them. These may include board games, tarot cards, T-shirts, pins, badges and tea mugs. *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* (2012/2013), for instance, depends greatly on technological advances since it is conveyed mainly through a YouTube channel, and various networking and social media platforms, such as Twitter and Facebook. Also, their website, Pemberley Digital[9], offers a merchandising section which sells all sorts of memorabilia related to the YouTube series.

Thirdly, it is necessary to observe that popular culture has reached such a stage that new productions not only relate themselves to the primary source, the novels, but also feed on each other. The most significant example is definitely the 1995 BBC series of *Pride and Prejudice*, just mentioned. It has become a source text in itself. In the series, there is an invented scene in which Mr Darcy walks out of a lake at Pemberley in a wet white shirt. Colin

[8] Retrieved from http://pemberley.com/ Accessed in Jun 2015.
[9] Retrieved from http://www.pemberleydigital.com/ Accessed in Jun 2015.

Firth, who played Darcy in the series, is Mark Darcy in the *Bridget Jones' Diaries* film, for instance; balls were held to pay homage to the scene in which Darcy comes out of the lake in a wet white shirt. In *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* (2012/2013), Lizzie says she loves 'any movie starring Colin Firth' (The LBD – Episode 2).

The reach of the scene was such that a fibreglass statue was set in the Serpentine Lake in Hyde Park in 2013 as part of the celebration of the 200th anniversary of the publication of *Pride and Prejudice* (1813). The statue re-enacts the wet-shirted Mr Darcy coming out of the lake at Pemberley, in a somewhat questionable fashion. A piece of news about the statue reveals to what extent the series was enjoyed:

> The notorious scene in the nation's favourite BBC adaptation of Pride and Prejudice, in which Colin Firth as Mr Darcy emerges wet-shirted and dripping from the lake of his country estate after an impromptu swim, has been celebrated in the shape of a 12-foot sculpture of the romantic hero. (Liz Bury for The Guardian, 8 July 2013)

Because it is a white wet shirt through which Mr Darcy's torso is evident, the invented scene is charged with sexual tension between him and Elizabeth Bennet, something that is never to be seen in the novel. It resonates with the Silhouette Romances, which became popular still in the 1980s. The article 'Mass Marketing Jane Austen,' by Deborah Kaplan (2001), brings some insight to what prompted the countless not only over-romanticising takes on *Pride and Prejudice*, but also the production of so many paperback romances, especially in the last decades of the 20th century. According to Kaplan, at some point in 1980 the company Simon and Schuster (later incorporated by Harlequin Enterprises) released a tip sheet for Silhouette Romances, which, among other things, prescribed the characterization of the hero:

> The hero is 8 to 12 years older than the heroine. He is self-assured, masterful, hot-tempered, capable of violence, passion, and tenderness. He is often mysteriously moody. Heathcliff (Wuthering Heights) is a rougher version; Darcy (Pride and Prejudice) a more refined one. (SILHOUETTE BOOKS apud KAPLAN, 2001, p. 177)

Both Austen's and Brönte's most popular heroes are taken as models for the creation of other similar ones. The way in which the relationship between hero and heroine should be constructed is explained as such:

> the action should explore the relationship between the lovers. . . The story usually begins with a clash between the hero and the heroine. Often this has to do with misapprehensions each has about the other. Sometimes the heroine has heard a great deal about the hero and has some reason to resent him before they actually meet, or they meet under inauspicious circumstances and the heroine is put off by the hero's ruthless, domineering, and arrogant manner. Or the hero has formed an opinion of

> the heroine before he meets her. (SIMON AND SCHUSTER apud KAPLAN, 2001, p. 177)

It is obvious that the formula presented derives from the plot of *Pride and Prejudice*. Could Jane Austen be, then, the mother of mass-market romance? Not if you consider the sophistication in language, which includes the narrator strategies and the irony derived from such use. Despite this fact, mass-market romances have been pulled out of that formula and along with them some of the filmic adaptations of Austen works (think of 2005 Mathew McFayden's Mr Darcy proposing to Elizabeth under the rain). That is what Deborah Kaplan considers 'harlequinization.' In her words, 'like the mass-market romance, the focus is on a hero and heroine's courtship at the expense of other characters and other experiences, which are sketchily represented' (2001, p. 178).

Deborah Kaplan resorts to Janice Radway's 1984 analysis of mass-market romance in *Reading the Romance: women, patriarchy, and popular culture* to determine further characteristics of harlequinization: 'it does necessitate an unswerving attention to the hero's and heroine's desires for one another and a tendency to represent those desires in unsurprising, even clichéd ways' (RADWAY, 1991, p. 122). Even though the reader expects surprise, such novels provide a sense of comfort that comes from the knowledge of how the narrative is to end. As Linda Hutcheon observes in her theory of adaptation, it is 'repetition with variation' which draws the public's attention because it provides pleasure (HUTCHEON, 2013, p. 4). The same is true for Silhouette Romances. Also, Radway (1991) observes that as a commercial mode of literature, it focuses on the bodies of the characters. They should be good-looking and sexy, as well as nicely dressed. She says 'clothes, too, are of interest, not only as a means of bringing attention to the bodies of the hero and the heroine but as objects of desire in their own right—another reminder of this highly commercial form' (RADWAY, 1991, p. 122).

The question here is not to condemn mass-market romances as inferior literature and close the discussion. On the contrary, even if the focus, as it is usually argued, is on a more superficial layer of romance, the fact is that it allows women agency, for men have become objects of female gaze (VOIRET, 2003). It inverts the prevalent logic in which women only were objects of gaze, mostly by men. Whatever the arguments concerning mass-market romance, it must be acknowledged that it certainly influenced the ways in which Austen's works have been recreated and transposed to other media. The intriguing aspect of all this process is that, especially in the filmic realm, the entering of such romanticising of plots

ended up creating diverging interpretations of Austen's characters, the most notable ones being Mr Darcy and Elizabeth Bennet. In the case of *Pride and Prejudice*, the happy ending might be the trigger which misleads the inattentive reader since it is aesthetically satisfying and may thus obscure the ideological contradictions presented earlier in the book (JOHNSON, 1988, p. 178).

Besides the cross-cultural focus, some of the appropriations are spaces where the Austen reader may be observed. According to Marilyn Francus (2010), appropriations such as *The Bridget Jones Diaries* (1996) and *The Jane Austen Book Club* (2004) present characters who find comfort in Austen's books. Re-reading or re-watching anything Austen-related 'is not only an expression of taste and values, but also a psychologically satisfying, healthy, healing' (FRANCUS, 2010, electronic information). These appropriations seem to present an encouragement to read Austen as something therapeutic as it had already happened with British soldiers during World War I (VERAS, 2015). And apparently, many Janeites have followed that trend both as readers and as writers of fan fictions or any other derivative works.

Another scholar, also self-claimed Janeite, states that, 'in Austen's stories, Janeites find not just entertainment but an inexhaustible source of wisdom, comfort, and insight' (YAFFE, 2013, p. xxi). As a therapeutic reading, once more, the British writer's works are said to be 'a support in adversity, to be read beside a sickbed, or a moral beacon in a murky world' (ibid, 2013, p. xxi). Apparently, the way the theorist puts it, the idea reinforces what Camile Paglia considers a reactionary move towards the maintenance of a 'white upper-class society' (PAGLIA, 1996). This is certainly intriguing, although any reader is entitled to absorb what best suits them in each reading and this is not the first time Austen works perform such therapeutic role.

In defence of the readers' own viewpoint concerning a given text and its adaptation, Brian McFarlane (2007, p.15) states that 'every reading of a literary text is a highly individual act of cognition and interpretation' and that 'every such response involves a kind of personal adaptation on to the screen of one's imaginative faculty as one reads.' There is, thus, a very fine line that distinguishes the possible interpretations of an artistic piece and the image created by one's imaginative faculty, as pointed by McFarlane. Therefore, it is not a question of finding one 'more appropriate' reading only, but of observing evidence of such readings in the narrative.

In appropriations produced around the first decade of the twenty-first century, Janeites are depicted 'as obsessive, escapist readers, for whom Austen becomes the source of their romantic problems' (FRANCUS, 2010, electronic information). An example is *Austenland*

(2013), whose protagonist is obsessed with Austen. She spends all of her savings in order to travel to England and have an experience as if she were living in Jane Austen's time. There, she enters into complicated situations because she is naïve. Such movie represents how Austen readers seem to miss her point: she 'does not advocate uncritical, romantic reading' (ibid, 2010, electronic information). On the contrary, it is extensive, not repetitive reading that is praised in the novels and as for foolish reading, 'Marianne Dashwood, Captain Benwick and Catherine Morland make evident the psychological costs of misreading' (ibid, 2010, electronic information). Apparently, the sense of closeness readers feel with the novel's plot, with their social conflicts as well as relationship dilemmas instantly allow them to call those characters theirs and relate to their dramas intimately.

Finally, for some researchers, Janeites seek 'a stable, recognizable world – [a] cultured world' (MARGOLIS, 2003, p. 22), because their own modern reality seems to be part of a chaotic system. Luciane Oliveira (2014) draws from Zigmund Bauman's concepts of solid and liquid times in order to say Austen's readers such as those from *The Jane Austen Book Club* (2004) are trying to make sense of their lives and the relationships they have in such a fluid era as that of the twenty-first century. More than desiring a return to the past, they seek to understand their present. Other theorists point to a recent trend of depicting these fans on TV and filmic productions which may be seen as a 'commentary about courtship in contemporary society, as characters express their frustrations with dating and relationships' (FRANCUS, 2010, electronic information), especially as they look for their own Mr Darcy. Although Devoney Looser (2001, p. 159-160) sees 'progressive, feminist elements at work in popular culture, rather than simply tolling neoconservative bells,' such adaptations, if really being a commentary on courtship only, may reinforce the fact that the interpretation of Austen novels by contemporary readers may be lacking depth, since they are unable to go beyond the superficial romantic layer.

There are some important points to take into consideration when our attention is directed to the reception of Austen. Firstly, it is this profusion of works, independently of their take on Austen that have maintained both academic researchers and popular culture involved with the British author, and this corroborates her longevity. Secondly, instead of remaining in rigid positions when it comes to how Austen should be interpreted, both scholars and popular culture should dialogue, for this is a way of both paying homage to her, and maintaining her afterlife. Finally, because there is little material left of Austen, except from a few hundred letters and her novels, we will always wonder as to what her intentions with her

novels were. There is, therefore, no room for strict certainties when it comes to our beloved Miss Austen.

1.5 SUMMING UP CHAPTER 1

This chapter aimed at acquainting the less familiar reader with the context of Jane Austen so as to prepare the terrain for the comparative analysis of *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) and *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* (2012/2013). Born in the second half of the eighteenth century, she witnessed different, but converging, social and economic transformations as well as political and philosophical ones that resulted, among other things, from the Enlightenment and the Industrial and French Revolutions. Even though the British author did not use her novels as platforms for presenting her position on such topics, she crafted them most minutely and allowed her ideas to be conveyed through the voice of the narrator – and its use of free indirect discourse – and extensive dialogue. In doing so she became known for both her artistry and her representation of Regency England society, even if represented by '3 or 4 families from a Country Village.' Her wit and irony are perceived throughout her literary works as well as her private correspondence.

In terms of her popularity, it was argued that despite the domination of controversial appreciations of her oeuvre in the nineteenth century, as English departments in the early half of the twentieth century, and women's studies ones in its second half, projected Jane Austen to a worldwide public. Such spread was greatly enhanced by the popularity of heritage films based on classic literature produced in the UK especially in the 1980s. In this sense, the evolution of technology, which allowed the improvement of filmic and television adaptations, as well as the spread of the Internet, contributed to the growth of a network of fans. Also, the development of the entertainment business permitted that different adaptations and appropriations in a variety of media connected to different types of public could exist.

At the same time, it was also observed that this diffusion has created multiple interpretations of Austen's novels and has promoted extensive debates over her production and reception. The most noticeable of them is the fixation with the happy ending at the expense of irony and narrative construction. In can be traced back to the formulaic paperback novel, the Silhouette Romance, developed by the company Simon and Shuster, whose models are Mr Darcy and Heathcliff. According to Martine Voiret (2003), these heroes have become sights of desire and pleasure for women, attending to a female sexuality that had been so far

neglected or suppressed. Such change of perspective may be measured by the size of the statue which recreates the scene from the 1995 BBC television adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* – in which he comes out of a lake in a wet shirt and encounters Elizabeth Bennet – that is not even in the novel.

Finally, the divide that has been formed from opposing ideas among researchers and Austen's reader and viewership has contributed to maintain her afterlife as alive as ever. It is the exchange of ideas that contribute to the longevity of her work. Any artistic work has the potential for different types of analysis, but it looks as though it is the readers, influenced by their era, who bring such meanings to the fore. This is what happens when Darcy is set as an object for the female gaze. In *Pride and Prejudice*, Elizabeth and Darcy's relationship is about minds and feelings. As it will be seen in the analysis of *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, just like in some of the aforementioned adaptations, the female leads strive to take control of their own sexuality, an agenda originated in second-wave feminist debates. Moreover, the more you know about the author and her era, the easier it is to grasp the subtleties of her oeuvre. The same holds true to the adaptations of her work: the clearer the context and the implications of the production, the easier to contrast it to the original, and to perceive its contribution to the author's afterlife.

2 THE ROMANTIC COMEDY LAYERS OF *PRIDE AND PREJUDICE* AND *THE LIZZIE BENNET DIARIES*

> *What we perhaps need most, then, is a place and a vocabulary with which to carry on a conversation about the meaning of such personal relations and the seemingly endless renewal of their primacy through the genre of romance. If we could begin to talk to each other from within our culture's 'pink ghetto,' we might indeed learn how 'to make talk walk.' We might learn how to activate the critical power that even now lies buried in the romance as one of the few widely shared womanly commentaries on the contradictions and costs of patriarchy.*
>
> **Janice Radway**, *Reading the Romance.*

Chapter 1 was dedicated to presenting a panorama of Jane Austen, her life, her works, her appreciation, and the adaptations that populate the universe of *all things Austen.* It is an attempt at setting a scenario to understanding both the British author's and her oeuvre's reach. It prepares the context for the comparison between *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) and *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* (2012/2013). This dissertation assumes that both works consist of more easily accessible romantic comedy layers, and also deeper levels of meaning woven through their structures and composition of characters. In this sense, Chapter 2 aims to present the reader with the plots[10] of both narratives within which the romantic comedy can be perceived. This is a relevant step since, as it has been observed, a portion of popular culture has appropriated Austen's novels' most superficial levels of representation, and therefore focused more evidently on the romantic layer and its happy ending in marriage.

The appropriation of Austen's work by popular culture has certainly fuelled the dispute between different academic interpretations of her novels that consider her either overall conservative or a revolutionary proto-feminist (JONES, 2012; TODD, 2013). Wayne Booth argues that 'although we cannot hope to decide whether Jane Austen was entirely conscious of her own artistry, a careful look at the technique of any of her novels reveals a rather different picture from that of the unconscious spinster with her knitting needles' (1983, p. 244). As the analysis of *Pride and Prejudice* in this dissertation is going to inform, I tend to

[10] Plot is understood here as 'the representation of meaningfully related events' that may 'use any sign system' as posited by Herman and Vervaeck (2005, p. 13). The theorists later develop the discussion on plot divided into two distinct parts, narrative and narration. The first refers to the 'concrete way in which events are presented to the reader' (2005, p. 59), while the second is 'concerned with formulation – the entire set of ways in which a story is actually told,,' that is, the concrete sentences and words offered to the reader' (2005, p.80).

see in Austen a woman writer that did the best she could with what she had at her disposal. In this sense, I understand she is not against the traditional institutions such as marriage. Nonetheless, she wants to circulate around them in her own terms. According to Vivien Jones (2012, p. 285), 'Austen's awareness of gender politics operates at the level of the individual choice (or lack of it) rather than fuelling any demand for structural social change.' The British author managed to establish in her novels a balance between the established institutions and her heroines' desires as individual creatures. The analysis of *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* throughout this dissertation should inform that the women represented in the transmedia narrative are also in search of balance.

2.1 *PRIDE AND PREJUDICE* (1813)

The plot of *Pride and Prejudice* starts when the news of the arrival of a Mr Bingley to the Netherfield estate stirs the neighbourhood where the Bennet family lives. Mr and Mrs Bennet are parents of five girls, and have no male heirs, which is a complicated situation considering that their estate Longbourn is entailed to a distant cousin. In this sense, when a single man of fortune arrives, he certainly draws attention. At a local ball, the Bennet sisters are finally acquainted with Mr Bingley as well as his sisters Ms Bingley and Mrs Hurst, a brother-in-law, Mr Hurst, and the most important character for the plot, Mr Darcy. While Jane Bennet, the eldest daughter, is delighted with Bingley's outgoing personality and friendly disposition, Elizabeth Bennet, along with the rest of the assembly, considers Darcy 'to be proud, to be above his company, and above being pleased.' It also does not help that Elizabeth is slighted by him and considered only 'tolerable,' though 'not handsome enough to tempt' him (*P&P*, p. 7).

When Jane Bennet is invited to visit Netherfield, Mrs Bennet concocts a plan that causes her daughter to catch a bad cold after horseback riding under the rain. Elizabeth walks three miles to tend to her sister and is received with civilised contempt by Ms Bingley and Mrs Hurst for 'her petticoat, six inches deep in mud' (*P&P*, p. 23). Meanwhile, Darcy and Bingley admire her; the former for the brilliancy exercise had given her countenance, the latter for her obsequious attention to the infirm sister. Bingley and Jane soon form an attachment, even though his sister and Darcy oppose to the match on the grounds of family impropriety and inferiority of rank. At the same time, Darcy finds himself attracted by

Elizabeth's spirited wit and expressive eyes despite Caroline Bingley's jealous criticisms of her manners and family connections.

After Jane and Elizabeth are back at Longbourn, the Bennet family receive the visit of a distant cousin, Mr Collins, who is to inherit Longbourn upon Mr Bennet's decease. His main purpose is to obey his patroness Lady Catherine de Bourgh's commands, which in the present case recommend him to find a wife. He chooses to do that among the Bennet daughters as he sees it is a way of atoning for the entailment situation of Longbourn. He chooses the eldest daughter, but warned by Mrs Bennet about an imminent engagement, he promptly switches to the second eldest, Elizabeth. She refuses him, despite the security he would provide for her and her sisters, something Charlotte Lucas is not as ready to refuse. She is already twenty-seven years old and only had 'the pure and disinterested desire of an establishment,' so she draws his attention to herself and receives his proposal only a couple of days after Elizabeth's refusal (*P&P*, p. 84).

In one of the Bennet girls' frequent walks to Meryton, where the militia are stationed, they meet a personable and handsome officer, Mr Wickham, who shows particular attention to Elizabeth. A sudden encounter with Mr Bingley and Mr Darcy reveals that Wickham and Darcy hold a mysterious history together, which entices Elizabeth's curiosity since she has determined herself to hate Darcy. Wickham tells her that Darcy is responsible for his ruined career. Elizabeth's dislike of Darcy is fuelled by the story, which the reader learns afterwards happened in quite different terms.

Mr Bingley throws a ball he promised Lydia Bennet as soon as Jane would recover from her cold, and this is an important event for the narrative. While Jane and Bingley seem more and more attached in the eyes of Elizabeth, Mrs Bennet openly predicts their marriage, and the younger Bennets act like follies; Darcy, being unaware of Jane's disposition, believes her indifferent to Bingley. After the ball, Caroline and Darcy drag Bingley away from Jane to London. They have no intention of returning and expect seeing Bingley married to Darcy's sister, Georgiana. At least that is what Miss Bingley reveals in a letter to Jane. Through this period, sentiments of very different natures flourish between Darcy and Elizabeth: while she increasingly dislikes his behaviour, it is admiration that he feels for her each day.

Jane is heartbroken although her disposition does not betray her real feelings. She is sent to London to stay with Mr and Mrs Gardiner, her uncle and aunt. There is an expectation that she might see Bingley there, even though such desire is not fulfilled. Jane seems to resign. Elizabeth visits Charlotte, now Mrs Collins, at Hunsford, Kent, and finds her friend comfortably settled. She meets Catherine de Bourgh and encounters Mr Darcy, who decided

to visit his aunt in order to see her. Once again, while Elizabeth finds more reasons to dislike Darcy, he seems more trapped by her lively manners. She finds out he was responsible for Bingley and Jane's separation and her consequent broken heart, while he prepares to propose to her. Not being an eloquent man, he chooses to propose to her against his better judgment and they enter into a heated discussion in which he displays her family's improprieties, and she accuses him of breaking her sister's heart and ruining Wickham's prospects.

Darcy writes Elizabeth a long letter in which he explains his reasons for separating Jane and Bingley and the real story between himself and Wickham. It marks a turning point in the narrative. The letter takes Elizabeth by surprise and provokes a gradual change of her sentiments towards its author. She returns to Longbourn and in a month she travels again, now with her aunt and uncle, the Gardiners, on vacation to the region of Derbyshire where Mrs Gardiner spent part of her life. They end up visiting Pemberley as tourists and encounter Mr Darcy, even though he was supposed to be absent. The Gardiners are struck by his cordiality as it contradicts Elizabeth's portrayal of the man. She herself is also surprised by his civility and, while she begins to see him in a different light – as well as wonder how it would have been to be the mistress of such a place –, she receives two letters from her sister Jane informing her of 'dreadful news' (*P&P*, p. 184): Lydia has eloped with Wickham. Fearing Lydia and the Bennet family's disgrace and the hopelessness of her recently discovered love for Darcy, Elizabeth sets for Longbourn along with her aunt and uncle. Lydia is found, however, and she and Wickham marry. After the wedding, Elizabeth finds out that Darcy was responsible for arranging everything necessary for the marriage to take place, thereby saving the reputation of the other Bennet sisters.

Bingley returns to Netherfield and soon asks Jane to marry him. She obviously accepts, which makes Mrs Bennet the happiest of mothers, except for the constant presence of Mr Darcy. Meanwhile, Elizabeth receives the visit of Lady Catherine de Bourgh, who has heard a rumour of an engagement between her nephew and Elizabeth. She demands to know the truth, and as Elizabeth tells her there is no engagement, she wants her to promise never to accept a proposal by Darcy. Lady de Bourgh leaves Longbourn infuriated by Elizabeth's negative to such demand, and her expression of dislike for the girl gives Darcy hope that Elizabeth has had a change of heart. In one of their walks around Longbourn, Darcy proposes to Elizabeth once again and she happily accepts.

As this brief account of the events of *P&P* reveal, Elizabeth Bennet is the protagonist and Mr William Darcy is her romantic partner. The narrative, therefore, tells the story of a heroine in her path to finding happiness in her love life, which constitutes the main concern of

a romantic comedy. ‘Romance in some form is as old as narrative’ and the conception of a romantic hero has evolved from heroic adventures and chivalric love romances – with their perfect damsels and adoring knights (ABRAMS, 1999, p. 38). According to M. H. Abrams (1999, p. 38, emphasis original), romantic comedies were ‘developed by Elizabethan dramatists’ – William Shakespeare among them – ‘on the model of contemporary *prose romance.*’ In the theorist’s glossary, romantic comedy is defined as that genre which ‘represents a love affair that involves a beautiful and engaging heroine (sometimes disguised as a man); the course of this love does not run smooth, yet overcomes all difficulties to end in a happy union’ (1999, p. 38). He also explains that a lot of the plots that revolve around a ‘boy-meets-girl’ story, as well as motion pictures, ‘are instances of romantic comedy’ (1999, p. 38).

Such conception of romantic comedy brings back the comparison Richard Whately establishes between Elizabeth and Shakespeare’s Beatrice mentioned in Chapter 1. Janet Todd (2013, p. 152) considers in the case of *P&P* that ‘there is always present in Elizabeth and Darcy something of the attractive but hierarchical heterosexual balance, the one so supremely caught in Shakespeare’s Beatrice and Benedict from *Much Ado About Nothing.*’ In this sense, just as many late-twentieth- and early-twenty-first-century popular culture productions inspired on Austen’s oeuvre, the most evident layer of meaning in *P&P* is mainly concerned with the development of Elizabeth and Darcy’s romantic relationship. Therefore, the happy ending in marriage stands out, which reveals the conservative tone of the novel claimed by some theorists, such as Marilyn Butler in *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas* (1975).

In this superficial layer of meaning, Elizabeth is an intelligent, sensible young lady from a family of relatively poor condition, which reveals an uncertain future for her. Darcy stands out as the potential partner as he reveals his appreciation of her spirited behaviour. Unlike other characters such as Samuel Richardson’s Mr B or Fanny Burney’s Lord Orville, Mr Darcy is not affable in the early pages of the narrative. This is because the narrative is revealed to the reader through Elizabeth’s eyes. The protagonist believes Darcy’s pride for pertaining to a superior rank renders him conceited and arrogant, an opinion that seems to be shared by other characters in the novel. As Janet Todd (2013, p. 155) points out, through Elizabeth’s perception ‘he is so bad he is almost comic.’ However, his growing appreciation for Elizabeth; the fact that he is an intelligent, sensible man; that he is in possession of an income of ten thousand a year; and is the master of Pemberley greatly contribute to his appeal with the reader. The heroine, for her part, does not see in him a potential partner as she lets herself be misled by a sequence of events and behaviours. Their relationship, therefore, is

subjected to a series of difficulties that arise from their pride and prejudice until they are able to learn to respect and see each other in a different light. Finally, they end up 'acting out a conservative ideology whereby the dominance of the rigid ruling class is softened by some energy and virtue rising from below, the inheritance is renovated, not reformed,' which was prevalent in the portrayal of eighteenth-century hero and heroine (TODD, 2013, p.155).

As to other characters in the narrative, their representation seems relevant only to the extent that they either contribute or hinder the development of the protagonists' relationship. Therefore, Mrs Bennet is only a foolish mother who is desperate to see her daughters married and whose behaviour is pivotal in the detachment of Mr Bingley and Jane Bennet promoted by Darcy and Miss Bingley. Such a separation is later one of the charges Elizabeth holds against Darcy. Lydia, the youngest of the Bennet sisters, is an incontrollable flirt who jeopardizes her family's reputation, that is, her sisters' chances of marrying well. After her arranged marriage with Mr Wickham she is sent to the North, an action that may reveal she has been ostracised. As for Mr Collins, compared to the other eligible men in the narrative, he is considerably an unattractive partner, easily refused by the protagonist. His presence provokes a crisis in the Bennet household, as well as his marriage to Charlotte Lucas. All of the above characters are strategies that impose obstacles that must be conquered by both hero and heroine. They are examples of the comic nature of the romantic comedy.

However, not all of the characters represent difficulties for the protagonists' path to marriage. It is while visiting Charlotte, now Mrs Collins, that Elizabeth reaches a turning point in the narrative: the exhaustive process of reading and rereading Darcy's explanatory letter and her realisation of how wrongly she has thought of and acted towards him. Also, Mr and Mrs Gardiner are the ones who take Elizabeth to Pemberley, where she learns of a softer facet of its master and sees the beautiful grounds of the estate.

This layer – which can be considered more superficial, because it is more easily readable – does not require the analysis of questions such as the impact of social class, money and marriage in the lives of women. The fact that the protagonists overcome their difficulties and have a happy ending brings pleasure. In Janet Todd's words, 'a reader of *Pride and Prejudice* can let her mind or imagination reproduce and luxuriate in the central wish-fulfilling element that is in the novel' (2012, p. 153). That is possible 'despite the fact that it is delivered under a probabilistic carapace and riddled with irony: not just the Cinderella story of a humble girl marrying a prince but the worthy lowly girl catching or taming a deliciously arrogant master' (ibid, p. 153). At the same time, it should be mentioned that Elizabeth is a strong young lady, one of a superior kind when compared with the other ones in the narrative.

She resembles the women from Shakespeare's romantic comedies who are often superior to the men (BAMBER, 1982), which makes her both relatable and desirable.

2.2 *THE LIZZIE BENNET DIARIES* (2012/2013)

In *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries,* the plot of *P&P* is transposed from Regency England to twentieth-century California-USA. Transposition is understood here as one of the ways in which transfictionality happens. According to theorist Richard Saint-Gelais (2005, p. 612-613), it refers to the fact that any two or more fictional works share elements such as characters, events or locations. In this process of sharing, transposition is the shifting of the fictional world to a different temporal or spatial setting[11]. In the case of *The Diaries*, it can also be considered a modification, because instead of preserving the design and the main story, it changes the plot, especially regarding the journey of Lydia Bennet.

Besides the fact that *The Diaries* share the characters and the plot with a source text, it should be mentioned that the ways its narrative is spread through different media characterises it as a transmedia storytelling project. This dissertation uses the definition of transmedia storytelling as proposed by Henry Jenkins (2006), since he seems to be an inspiration for the protagonist Lizzie Bennet. For Jenkins (2006), transmedia storytelling refers to a narrative that is conceived as spread through different media. Ideally, its branches are complementary to each other, presenting new information, and not replication only[12]. *The Diaries* is, then, a project that consists of a videoblog on YouTube by protagonist Lizzie Bennet. The narrative develops throughout social media, characters' YouTube channels and books, as well as online merchandising. The infographic in Appendix A presents a panoramic view of the storyworld of *The Diaries.* Also, the following sections provide a general overview of each of the branches of the narrative.

[11] For further reading, refer to Saint-Gelais, Richard. 2005. Transfictionality. In: **Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory**, ed. David Herman, Manfred Jahn and Marie-Laure Ryan, 612–613. Oxfordshire, Routledge.
[12] For further reading, refer to Henry Jenkins' *Convergence Culture* (2006); Marie-Laure Ryan and Jan-Noël Thon' *Storyworlds Across Media* (2014); and Marie-Laure Ryan's *Transmedia Storytelling as Narrative Practice* (2017).

2.2.1 The Lizzie Bennet Diaries

The Lizzie Bennet Diaries names the core narrative of the storyworld. It comprises the canonical narrative of the work. Canonical narrative is a term coined by Jason Mittel (2013) to refer to the central storyline around and along which secondary narratives are connected. *The Diaries* is a videoblog series, that is, it uses the concept of the weblog – an Internet-based website in which individuals of small groups keep uploading material in an informal/conversational style – on YouTube. Instead of writing a diary or a journal, Lizzie Bennet uploads 5-to-6-minute-long videos in which she discusses events happening in her life. She is aided by her friend, Charlotte Lu, who shoots, edits and posts the videos. This canonical narrative extended for a hundred episodes and was aired on YouTube from 9 April 2012 to 28 March 2013. It is set in the present time in California-USA as if it were part of the real world, so the audience may follow it as if it were true. Its format, therefore, blurs the limits between fictionality and documentation. In this sense, the actual context of North Americans is used as a background for the story. By 2012, the United States of America had undergone a serious financial crisis, which mostly impacted the mortgage and educational funding sectors of the North-American economy. In this environment, the Bennets are considering a second mortgage for the house in order to pay the first, and both Jane and Lizzie are not being able to repay their student loans. Also, all of the daughters live at home; Jane is underpaid; and Lizzie is not employed yet.

The protagonist starts the vlog as a project for her master's in 'Mass Communication with a focus on New Media' (SU; RORICK, 2014, p. 1). Around the same time, a new neighbour, Bing Lee, a doctor-to-be, arrives in the neighbourhood, soon followed by his sister Caroline, and a friend, Darcy. Lizzie has two sisters: the older one, Jane, who works in the fashion industry; and Lydia Bennet, who goes to community college, but is more interested in dating, going shopping and parties. In Lizzie's point of view, Lydia is vulgar, almost a slut. Mrs Bennet from the videoblog is just as fixated on marriage as her homonymous character from the novel is. The difference is that while marriage was still the norm for young ladies in Regency England, in twenty-first-century California-USA such fixation sounds anachronistic. It should be mentioned that Mr and Mrs Bennet are not present in the videos. Instead, Lizzie uses a technique to represent them. She uses a role playing technique she calls 'costume theatre,' which means using a piece of clothing or an accessory of a person in order to remind the audience of said character, and role-play the conversation.

The romantic comedy layer is established when the Bennets meet Bing Lee, Darcy, and Caroline Lee at the Gibson wedding. In this event, Jane Bennet and Bing Lee dance most of the night together and the possibility of a relationship springs from such encounter. On the other hand, just as in the novel, Lizzie is slighted by Darcy who says she is only 'decent enough' (The LBD – Episode 7). Around the first quarter of the narrative is spent in discussions about Jane Bennet and Bing Lee. Also, the portrayal of Mrs Bennet as an anachronistic character is fundamental for the composition of the romantic comedy layer of the narrative. Furthermore, the evidence on Jane and Bing calls attention to the fact the Lizzie is single. She tries to avoid conversations of the kind, and establishes herself as being fine with the fact that she is single. Romantic entanglements remain the focus, but in parallel Lizzie counter-argues that women have more important issues to think about. In the case of the Bennet family, their house mortgage, and their student loans seem to be the issues to be discussed.

In the meantime, Lizzie meets George Wickham at a bar. He is a swimming coach. She witnesses George and Darcy's encounter, which does not happen in friendly terms. Just as in the novel, Wickham is responsible for intensifying Lizzie's hatred for Darcy. Lizzie and George date for a while, but he leaves town soon. When the semester is finished, Lizzie, Jane, Lydia and Charlotte go to VidCon, which is a conference for producers of online videos. This is one of the moments in which reality and fiction are blurred, since this is a real convention, which actually took place at that time. In this convention, the girls hope to make business contacts, and they eventually encounter Mr Collins, who is the CEO of Collins and Collins, a company which works in the field of online video. While the girls are at VidCon, Mrs Bennet decides to remodel the house, in the hopes of selling it for a better price. Jane and Lizzie go to Netherfield, and Lydia and the parents go to cousin Mary's house.

When at Netherfield, Jane and Bing's relationship develops, and Lizzie has a hard time making sure no one knows about the videos. Eventually, Bing Lee appears on screen and she has to deal with ethical issues. Meanwhile, Darcy is always present wherever she is, which in her mind means he is testing her. She is too biased to see that he has feelings for her. Of course, this information is implied by the reader acquainted with *Pride and Prejudice*, since Darcy does not appear on camera and the audience has only Lizzie's account to rely on. Caroline's presence is also of relevance in this part of the narrative, since she motivates Lizzie's dislike of Darcy. Once the Bennet residence refurbishing is finished, Lizzie is back at home.

Jane and Bing's relationship seems to be going well. Mr Collins reappears in the neighbourhood, and is a constant presence, which displeases Lizzie. She does not agree with Mr Collins' line of work in online videos, but her mother seems to be encouraging his presence in the Bennet household. In Episode 39 – *The Insistent Proposal*, he makes a job offer to Lizzie, who refuses it. The marriage proposal is transposed as a job one, and Mrs Bennet is just as insistent upon Lizzie accepting the offer. Of course, Mrs Bennet does not appear on camera, but Lizzie role-plays her reaction to the refusal, which denotes her concern for their financial security as well as her sense of loneliness for not being supported by her husband. While Lizzie does not accept Mr Collins proposal, because she has the idealistic hope of changing culture through her work, Charlotte is more pragmatic, and is concerned with her family's debts. Just as in the novel, where Miss Charlotte Lucas devotes her attention to Mr Collins in order to present herself as a lady suitable for marriage, in *The Diaries*, Charlotte Lu carries a conversation with Mr Collins so as to have him offer her the same job.

Charlotte accepts the offer and has a very intense argument with Lizzie, who tries to dissuade the friend from her decision. Both of them are hurt, and Charlotte departs. While Lizzie is still dealing with her friend's departure, Wickham tells her his version of the story with Darcy, which Lizzie fully believes, since she is prone to disliking him. Caroline throws her brother a birthday party, and a couple of days later, she and Darcy unexpectedly drag Bing away to Los Angeles. Bing departs without an explanation to Jane, who is left heartbroken. She decides to take a job offer in Los Angeles in the hopes of seeing Bing Lee. Lizzie receives a phone call from Charlotte who invites her for a visit, since it is still vacation time. While the protagonist is visiting Collins and Collins, Mr Collins invites her to extend her visit, and she transforms her last semester of graduate school into four independent studies. However, while she is very assertive about other people's lives and decisions, when it comes to her own she is very insecure. She has to be encouraged by Charlotte to take the independent studies.

During Lizzie's extended stay at Collins and Collins, Darcy and his associate Fitzwilliam, come to the company in order to analyse its prospects. While she believes his visit is business-related only, he is there to see her. It is finally in Episode 60 – *Are you Kidding Me?* that Darcy appears on camera. He declares himself to her, much in the same manner as Mr Darcy does in the novel, 'against his better judgment.' He says his heart overwhelmed his judgment, and stresses how much social classes are still relevant in society. She refuses him for his arrogance and conceit, and lays two claims against him: the fact that he was responsible for separating Bing and Jane, and Wickham's story. Lizzie loses control,

and tells him to watch her videos. In the next episode, she is concerned with the consequences of that, when he reappears and delivers a letter of explanation. Unlike the novel, where the reader has access to the letter, in *The Diaries* Lizzie does not share its content. She only says that he does not apologise for his behaviour towards Jane. This situation builds up the suspense for the audience. There seems to be a play with those readers who are acquainted with Mr Darcy's letter from the novel.

Eventually, Lizzie tells Charlotte, in a role-play situation, that the letter is about George Wickham and the fact that he spent all the money Darcy's father had left him. When he demanded more, and Darcy refused, he spread fake information saying he had been denied what was his right. Later in the narrative, Gigi Darcy comes to the scene and explains she was involved with George Wickham, and that he left her in exchange for money. George Wickham reappears in town around Lydia's birthday and tries an approach, but Lizzie cuts him off.

Now Lydia's birthday is an important moment in the narrative. Lizzie gives her the book *Where Did I Park My Car? A party girl's guide to becoming a successful adult,* which reveals Lizzie's opinion of her little sister: she is irresponsible, uncommitted, and extravagant; she is a party girl. Lydia is offended and they have a very serious fight, which is prolonged from Christmas to Valentine's Day. Lydia is feeling unwanted and unvalued by her family. She travels to Las Vegas to spend New Year's. Meanwhile, Lizzie conducts part of her masters' research at Pemberley Digital, Darcy's company, where she meets Gigi Darcy, who explains what had actually happened in the Wickham situation. While the protagonist is at Pemberley, she is better acquainted with Darcy as they spend time together. They are interrupted by the news that George Wickham is releasing a sex tape on the web with 'YouTube star Lydia Bennet.'

Lizzie and Jane travel back home. They find out that Lydia is unaware of the videos. She has been trapped by George Wickham: he made her prove her love for him by letting him record their intimacy. Unlike novel Lydia, web Lydia is devastated. Eventually, Darcy pulls off the website and the tape never goes fully online. Lydia is completely torn by the situation. Lizzie decides to watch her sister's videos, and she finally understands that Lydia wanted attention. She was a totally different person from that one that Lizzie saw. Because she went home, Jane lost her job in Los Angeles. While she is at home, trying to figure out what to do, Bing Lee returns, and they start their relationship over, but as friends. Meanwhile, she is accepted by a company in New York, and decides to move regardless of Bing Lee. When he

asks to move with her, she accepts as long as they live their lives and the relationship does not interfere with her future.

As for Lizzie, she learns from Lydia that Darcy was responsible for taking down the website, but she has not heard from him. She leaves him a phone message, but he does not reply. A couple of days later, coincidentally on Lizzie and Charlotte's birthday, he appears at the Bennet family. They talk, get to understand each other, and the relationship is established. He invites her to move to San Francisco and work with him at Pemberley Digital, but she decides to open a company of her own. Finally, she also gets to know and understand her sister Lydia better, and helps her recover from the trauma.

2.2.2 Questions and Answers Videos

This section of the narrative happens inside the canonical story. It comprises ten episodes in which Lizzie and guests, such as Charlotte Lu, Caroline Lee, Bing Lee and William Darcy, answer questions from the audience. They are selected questions, which are scripted but never rehearsed by the actors[13].

2.2.3 The Lydia Bennet Diaries

In parallel with Lizzie's vlog entries, Lydia decides to start her own videos after her sister's Episode 28 – *Meeting Bing Lee*. The youngest Bennet's videos are made during the moments she is apart from Lizzie, which happens three times along the canonical narrative. The first one comprises the period the Bennet's house is being remodelled and, while Jane and Lizzie stay at Netherfield, Lydia and their parents stay at cousin Mary's house. She records seven episodes with her phone. She seems to be trying to get her sisters' attention. The second moment happens while Lizzie is doing research at Collins and Collins. It comprises twelve episodes, which mostly present Lydia's escape to visit Jane, who is also away in Los Angeles. Finally, the third section of Lydia's videos present the period she is not speaking to Lizzie, after their fight in episode 73 of the canonical narrative. She is in Las Vegas where she encounters George Wickham. Overall, Lydia is presented as a much more

[13] Retrieved from at http://www.pemberleydigital.com/the-lizzie-bennet-diaries/faq/. Accessed on 16 Nov. 2017.

vulnerable girl in her own vlogs. They deepen the audience's understanding as to why she behaves in certain ways in Lizzie's videos. They also contribute to explaining her falling prey to George Wickham, which consists of the greatest move away from the plot of *P&P*.

2.2.4 Mary of the Lu

Mary Lu is Charlotte Lu's younger sister. She becomes interested in media and communication, and spends some time at the Collins and Collins offices as a trainee with her sister. Through her learning process the audience gets glimpses of how Charlotte is feeling after her fight with Lizzie over accepting Mr Collins' job offer. It comprises seven episodes.

2.2.5 Gigi Darcy's vlog

Gigi Darcy, William Darcy's sister, works at Pemberley Digital, where she is assigned to test an app called *Domino*. While she tests the app, the audience is better acquainted with her perspective on the situation which she went through with George Wickham. As well as Lydia and Charlotte, the audience requested to know more of her, so the vlog seemed to have this function of deepening her story. Also, the app she tests is connected to a next video series developed by the group, also an adaptation from a Jane Austen's novel, this time the unfinished *Sanditon.* This new web series was meant to keep audiences involved during the summer of 2013 until the release of *Emma Approved*, an adaptation of Austen's *Emma.*

2.2.6 Better Living with Collins and Collins

Collins and Collins is a company in the fields of mass media communications and new media. It is run by Rick Collins, who is Charlotte and Lizzie's old schoolmate. Just as in the original, Mr Collins is pompous and verbose. Unlike Lizzie's dream of making the world a better place in a utopian manner, Collins and Collins is designed to find solutions for everyday problems. They are sponsored by venture capitalist Catherine de Bourgh.

2.2.7 Social Media: Twitter, Facebook, Tumblr, LinkedIn, LookBook

Social media play an interesting part in the storyworld of The Diaries. Each of the main characters has accounts on Twitter and other social media according to their interests. In general, the audience can follow conversations between Caroline Lee, Bing Lee and William Darcy, which reveal part of their point of view concerning Lizzie's city and people. On the other hand, it is possible to follow Lizzie and Charlotte's conversations as well as Lydia Bennet's account. The characters also interact with the fans, which is a common feature of narratives of this format (LISTER *et al*, 2009). This blurs the line between reality and fiction.

2.2.8 The Secret Diary of Lizzie Bennet

The Secret Diary of Lizzie Bennet was published around a year after the videoblog finished. Its timeline is only a couple of days different from the canonical narrative on YouTube. It goes from 7 April 2012 to 29 March 2013, and presents Lizzie's thoughts more closely as a regular diary would do. Although it extends the narrative, it also repeats parts that had been discussed in the videos. One of the most important elements for the narrative is Darcy's letter, which ultimately is not fully revealed in *The Diaries*. It seems to be part of a greater campaign to keep fans involved with the storyworld of *The Diaries.*

2.2.9 The Epic Adventures of Lydia Bennet

This book was released in 2015 and just as the *The Secret Diary of Lizzie Bennet* it is designed to maintain fans involved with the narrative. This sequel tells Lydia's process of recovering from Wickham's sex tape drama as well as her process of maturing and deciding her future. It resembles a bildungsroman[14].

[14] Both *The Secret Diary of Lizzie Bennet* and *The Epic Adventures of Lydia Bennet* are published by Simon and Schuster, a publishing house famous for its releases of young adult romance novels.

2.3 SUMMING UP CHAPTER 2

As romantic comedies, both the layer of *Pride and Prejudice* and that of *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* focus on the love entanglements of their protagonists. Just as the novel, *The Diaries* have a happy ending for most of the characters, with the exception of Lydia, who, unlike novel Lydia, is broken by the situation with Wickham. Even though the romantic comedy does not endeavour into discussing the reasons from which conflict arises (DOBIE, 2003), both the reader and the audience get glimpses of the situation of women in their respective contexts (RADWAY, 1991). In *P&P*, even if it is still related to marriage, Elizabeth tries to be independent to the extent she can choose her partner. Meanwhile, Mrs Bennet is concerned with her daughters' future in a context that does not allow them to inherit property. As for the other characters, Jane and Mr Bingley are considerably mild and have their lives determined by other people. They do not get a hold of their decisions, for Darcy is responsible for both their separation and their union. Lydia diverges from the normal fates of girls who have engaged in scandalous behaviour. It is true she is sent to the north with her husband, and she does not enjoy Pemberley with her sister, but she remains unchanged.

The Diaries romantic comedy is anchored in Lizzie's criticism of her mother's fixation with getting her daughters married. What happens is that Lizzie is as concerned about her sister's romantic entanglements, and this seems to mirror the fact that, in the novel, Elizabeth ends up doing exactly what her mother expects her to do, that is, marry. As in the novel, both Lizzie and Jane establish relationships with Darcy and Bing, respectively. Despite their struggles, they also seem to find themselves regarding their careers. Charlotte also finds her happiness through the choices she made. It seems they are all being tested by the choices they are supposed to make. In this sense, only Lydia does not have a happy outcome. She ends the narrative still recovering from Wickham's situation. She seems to have been punished for the choice she made.

3 FROM A NOVEL TO A VIDEOBLOG DIARY FORMAT

> *The device used to store images (fixed or in motion) is not simply the artificial, mechanical replica of the human eye or head […]; the camera is much more than that; its functions turn it into 'a storeroom' of images that portray our life experience; the camera is an external hard disk able to immortalize the essential fragments of our existence. Within the communication society the camera becomes an indispensable attachment, a safe backup for all the images that are responsible for our state of mind and emotions.*
>
> **Dan Curean,** *From Eye to 'Cinema Eye' – Approaches on the Moving Image Tools*

A diary is a record where you register your innermost thoughts, fears, doubts and frustrations. Or, it can simply contain perceptions of current events in the life of a person. The process of externalisation is also a process of healing, learning and growing. As a private expression, what is written in a diary is usually not shared with other people. That version of oneself is rarely seen by others. Therefore, when you approach someone's diary, the expectation is to find the most intimate, inner perceptions and revelations of one's heart and mind. For Mathews (1950, p. xv), a diary consists of a 'day-by-day record of what interested the diarist, each day's record being self-contained and written shortly after the events occurred, the style being usually free from organized exposition.' To a certain extent, reading a diary gives you the impression of an incursion into a person's private life, because of its illusion of realism.

Writing a diary was a private activity consolidated during the 17th century in Europe (RUSH, 1970). It is related to the *zeitgeist* of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the turn to Humanism. It was part of an ongoing social transformation, which was itself based on changes in family structures. In the 18th century, 'a new private realm' was established, especially in the urban centres of Europe and North America (DOVEY, 2000, p. 159). This private arena was grounded on subjectivity developed in the 'intimate sphere of the conjugal family and the existence of a private civil society based in commodity exchange and 'social labour' (ibid, p. 1590). This is the establishment of the philosophical movement termed Enlightenment as well as the economic one, Liberalism. The conception of a rational

individual springs from such environment, still predominantly male in terms of public discussions. Mary Wollstonecraft through her *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792) is the female voice claiming for society to see women as rational creatures as much as men. According to Jon Dovey (2000, p. 162), 'the sense of self that determined the existence of the public sphere based on rationality was, then, based on sentiment and intimacy as defining qualities of humanity.' In such a context, the letter and the diary became channels for the expression of subjectivity, that is, they became original forms of first-person media.

In Literature, both letter and diary characteristics were amply deployed from the 18th century onwards (RUSH, 1970). Precursors of the novel such as Daniel Defoe and Samuel Richardson saw in the diary's realism its potential for legitimising this new literary genre (WATT, 1957; ROSE, 2012). Dovey (2000, p. 163) informs that 'these new literary forms of expression quickly found a life of their own in the new form of the novel with its emphasis on the domestic and the beginnings of an account of individual psychology.' As an individual's private expression of inner thoughts and feelings – or an emulation of one –, inconsistencies are a natural occurrence, which deems the narrative not always reliable. At the same time, even if the narrating I is not exactly the same person as the experiencing I, a sense of authority over the narrated facts remains.

Acknowledging the relevance of subjectivity for the 18th century is important for the discussion on *Pride and Prejudice* and *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* in two different perspectives. Firstly, Jane Austen, from whose novel *The Diaries* is adapted, is an heiress to the ways subjectivity was portrayed by the forefathers of the novel, mainly Richardson and Fielding (BREE, 2013). Secondly, according to Jon Dovey, 'there are striking parallels […] between eighteenth-century classical liberalism and late-twentieth-century neo-liberalism. In both cases we might argue that new expressions of subjectivity arise from particular experiences of the individual within a market-based economy'[15] (2000, p. 163). Jane Austen's late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were stages upon which the transformations brought by Humanism, Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution developed. As for the turn from the twentieth to the twenty-first century, the advances in technology and the expansion of the Internet, along with the decline of grand narratives, have created a scenario of rapid changes in society (LISTER et al, 2009).

[15] Jon Dovey draws from the German philosopher Jürgen Habermas' *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1962) the account of how a public sphere sprung from the political and cultural transformations under current in the eighteenth century. Dovey is aware of the fact that Habermas does not consider difference in general, and women in particular, when he refers to the bourgeois public sphere which was formed mainly 'through literary and cultural processes of coffee houses, salons, theaters, museums and concerts' (DOVEY, 2000, p. 159).

Both *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) and its modern adaptation, *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* (2012/2013) inherit such representations of subjectivity, especially when it comes to the portrayal of female characters. Furthermore, both constitute relatively new types of narrative in their own time. In this sense, this Chapter 3 discusses the ways the novel and the videoblog are constructed, considering that in both cases the weaving of the narratives also contributes to the revelation of deeper levels of meaning. In order to conduct such investigation, elements from Narratology, such as focalisation and types of narrator, gain relevance to the extent that they contribute to understand meaning in the novel. As for the videoblog, discussions on the filmic narrator, serialisation, and the camera contribute to discussing meaning.

3.1 REVEALING MEANING THROUGH THE WEAVING OF *PRIDE AND PREJUDICE*

Beneath the satisfying storyline of the romantic comedy, it is possible to identify the representation, if not the overt discussion, of the situation of women during Regency England. Despite the conservative ending in marriage, and the maintenance of the social structure, topics such as marriage, social class and money gain relevance when the reader observes the ways the narrative is organized, for instance. This section analyses the ways the composition of the narrator and focalisation[16], along with other minor structural elements, contribute to the establishment of meaning in the novel. Through the deeper levels of meaning, it is possible to observe that Jane Austen's social criticism, in a reflection of the *zeitgeist* of her time, works in terms of the establishment of individual choice, especially when it comes to considering women as individuals. She is not advocating for structural changes in the British society (JONES, 2012). In this sense, the manner in which the voices of specific characters are structured allows the interpretation of some commentary concerning the situation of women in the storyworld.

[16] In Narratology, it refers to how the narrative is perceived by the narrating agent; it is therefore 'the relation between that which is focalized – the characters, actions, and objects offered to the reader – and the focalizer, that agent who perceives and who therefore determines what is presented to the reader' (Hernam, Vervaeck, 2005, p. 70). Focalisation is a more abstract level of the text; it is in the narrative level, considered the second, by Herman and Vervaeck (2005). Just as the narrator in the third level, focalisation has provoked debate over the anthropomorphisation of its characteristics. Those concerned with eliminating it refer only to focalisation; most analysts, however, consider a perceiving agent and a perceived one.

3.1.1 Seeing through Elizabeth's eyes

Initially, it should be pointed out that the narrator of *P&P* is not a character in the story, which means it hovers above the narrated facts as an extradiegetic instance, according to narratological conceptions[17] (HERMAN, VEVAECK, 2005); also, its narrative flows in the third person of the discourse, which means it is not directly involved with the characters or events that unfold, and that constitutes a heterodiegetic narrator (HERMAN, VEVAECK, 2005). Although it is outside the narrative, one of its main traits, at least in comparison with other novels published at the same time, is its extensive use of free indirect discourse – FID –, which allows readers to access characters' words, thoughts and feelings. The narrator has access to nineteen characters' thoughts (NELLES, 2006), including the most important ones for the narrative: Elizabeth Bennet, her sister Jane and their father, Mr Darcy, Mr Bingley, Mrs Gardiner and Charlotte Lucas. This narrator has a personality and judges characters and situations, but they seem disguised both by the deployment of scenes and summary and of FID, because it 'does not always allow us to separate the words of a narrator from those of a character' (HERMAN, VERVAECK, 2005, p. 98). In this sense, the narrator may seem less visible than it actually is.

Because the narrator may be labelled extra- and heterodiegetic, there is a presumption that it has built the world of the narrative and, therefore, is aware of everything concerning such universe. Nelles (2006) discusses how omniscient Jane Austen's narrators actually are, for they do not know everything, they are not everywhere, and they do not move either backward or forward in time much more than the characters themselves. For the theorist, describing Austen's narrators as omniscient misguides the investigation of their particularities. In order to do that, he thinks of omniscience as a 'toolbox with different novelists using different tools within it in distinctive ways' (2006, p. 119). Such tools would be omnipotence, omnitemporality, omnipresence, and telepathy. One may surmise by their nomenclatures what each means: a) an omnipotent narrator is the creator of the narrative world and is aware of everything in such world; b) an omnipresent narrator is that which goes everywhere and therefore has complete knowledge of events; c) an omnitemporal narrator is

[17] In Narratology, the discussion of narrator types as proposed by Herman and Vervaeck (2005) happens in what they term a third and least abstract level of the work, narration. It is observed in terms of its level, it can be either extradiegetic, when it does not belong to the narrated world, or intradiegetic, when it does. It is differentiated as to what extent it is involved with the narrated world: a homodiegetic narrator has experienced what he narrates, while a heterodiegetic has not.

acquainted with all the past and future events related to the narrative; and d) a telepathic narrator has the ability to penetrate characters' thoughts and feelings (NELLES, 2006).

In terms of omnipotence, *P&P*'s narrator only demonstrates such trait in the final pages of the novel, where it steps forward and generally summarises the characters stories in an accelerated pace. As for omnitemporality, it 'is not just bound by a "now" at the end of the story that it cannot see beyond; it is also bound by the "now" of the action she is narrating moment by moment,' that is, it 'is prohibited from looking ahead to future events even if they will occur before the narrator's final "now"' (NELLES, 2006, p. 123). Concerning omnipresence, the narrator 'does not occupy all of space simultaneously like God, nor teleport itself through space like Captain Kirk' (ibid, 2006, p. 123). It can only follow or access the minds of characters within a three-mile radius around Elizabeth, but most often 'the character whose mind is being read is within Elizabeth's audiovisual field' (NELLES, 2006, p. 123). Finally, the only tool from the omniscience box largely used by *P&P*'s narrator is that of telepathy, mainly through the deployment of free indirect discourse. Even so, it is not a godlike telepathy, since it is restricted to the three-mile radius surrounding Elizabeth.

Jane Austen, along with Virginia Woolf and James Joyce, is one of the writers singled out for her deployment of free indirect discourse. This narration technique means accessing the character's discourse, feelings, thoughts, that is, all of their perception, through the narrator's voice, as well as to roam from viewpoint to viewpoint freely. Jane Spencer (2012, p. 118) states that 'free indirect discourse can achieve a wide range of effects between the poles of satiric exposure and sympathetic involvement.' Such effects will depend on a number of different circumstances:

> the size and nature of the gap between narrator's and character's expressions; the concentration on indirect speech, indicating an external perspective, or on indirect thought, indicating great internalization; the emphasis in internal presentation on the character's reflections or on their sensation; the degree to which the style is used to create a sustained focalization of the narrative through a particular character. (SPENCER, 2012, p. 189)

In the case of *P&P*, as well as many of its contemporaries, this narrative resource allowed women writers to speak with authority (DOODY, 1980). When the narrator incorporates the voices of characters, we tend to see such strategy at the service of irony. Mr Collins, when at Longbourn conversing about Lady Catherine de Bourgh, has his voice thus appropriated by the narrator: 'The subject elevated him to more than usual solemnity of manner, and with a most important aspect he protested that *he had never in his life witnessed*

such behaviour in a person of rank—such affability and condescension, as he had himself experienced from Lady Catherine' (*P&P*, p. 45, my emphasis). Only Mr Collins is capable of considering condescension as a positive attribute of a person's character. When the narrator exposes his voice, it ridicules and subverts the clergyman's original intention of praising Lady de Bourgh. This early moment prepares the reader for many a situation in which Mr Collins behaves inappropriately towards Elizabeth and even Mr Darcy, and is therefore ridiculed.

The same holds true when the narrator lets Mrs Bennet's voice populate its own. It is clear the narrator could not do justice to the mother's enthusiasm on the perspective of seeing Jane married to Mr Bingley. Also, the long list of advantages accentuates the impropriety of her exposing herself and her family at the dinner table during the ball at Netherfield. The narrator goes:

> It was an animating subject, and Mrs. Bennet seemed incapable of fatigue while enumerating the advantages of the match. *His being such a charming young man, and so rich, and living but three miles from them*, were the first points of self-gratulation; and then *it was such a comfort to think how fond the two sisters were of Jane, and to be certain that they must desire the connection as much as she could do*. It was, moreover, *such a promising thing for her younger daughters, as Jane's marrying so greatly must throw them in the way of other rich men*; and lastly, *it was so pleasant at her time of life to be able to consign her single daughters to the care of their sister, that she might not be obliged to go into company more than she liked*. […] She concluded with many good wishes that Lady Lucas might soon be equally fortunate, though evidently and triumphantly believing there was no chance of it. (*P&P*, p. 68, my emphases)

This passage is of capital importance for the unfolding of events since it is after listening to Mrs Bennet most attentively that Mr Darcy decides to talk to Miss Bingley, take Mr Bingley and withdraw to London for the rest of the winter. At other moments, free indirect discourse is deployed in order to reveal the feelings and thoughts of characters and, instead of instilling irony, the strategy aims at provoking the reader's sympathy for the character. This is especially true concerning Elizabeth, the protagonist, since most of the narrative is perceived through her point of view. When she reads and rereads Darcy's explanatory letter, the reader follows her process of realising how mistaken she had been:

> From herself to Jane—from Jane to Bingley, her thoughts were in a line which soon brought to her recollection that Mr Darcy's explanation there had appeared very insufficient, and she read it again. Widely different was the effect of a second perusal. *How could she deny that credit to his assertions in one instance, which she had been obliged to give in the other? He declared himself to be totally unsuspicious of her sister's attachment; and she could not help remembering what Charlotte's opinion had always been.* Neither could she deny the justice of his description of Jane. She felt that Jane's feelings, though fervent, were little displayed, and that

> there was a constant complacency in her air and manner not often united with great sensibility. (*P&P*, p. 141, my emphases)

Revealing Elizabeth's thoughts and feelings through FID allows the reader to see her internal process of maturing through reappraising her behaviour, realising her wrongs and paying justice where it is due. This happens in the level of narration and therefore requires the deployment of linguistic strategies such as the suspension of reporting clauses, and the presence of linguistic features indicating a character's perspective or voice that would be otherwise uncommon within a third-person, past-tense discourse. This presence may be revealed, for example, through proximal deixis, temporally back-shifted exclamations, exclamatory questions, un-shifted modals, syntactical informalities and fragments, specific locutions and intonations that may be traced to a certain character (KEYMER, 2013).

The narrative starts with the narrator presenting the reader with one of the most famous sentences in literature: 'It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife.' (*P&P*, p. 1). The idea of a truth universally acknowledged had been used by other authors before Austen (KEYMER, 2013). Such truth in the case of *P&P* promises the presentation of a serious topic, but what the sentence actually delivers is an ironic reference to the ways of thinking of families in small communities at the time: 'a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife.' The fact is that young ladies in marriageable years are in want of rich husbands, and not the other way around, as Mrs Bennet would like to believe. In the context of *P&P* and in Regency England, besides being a common step in life, a young man would be in want of a wife only if he were a second son, or pertained to a poor family. Mr Elton in *Emma* and Mr Willoughby in *Sense and Sensibility* are examples of young men in want of rich wives.

As Thomas Keymer points out, 'in ways made inescapable as the novel unfolds,' Austen's narrative 'goes on to suggest not reliable authorial truth-telling, but satirical invocation of a communal voice' (KEYMER, 2013, p. 2). This famous sentence is followed by a chapter which focuses on the dialogue between Mr and Mrs Bennet on the prospects of seeing one of their daughters married to the said single man. Marriage is therefore the topic of discussion in the novel, albeit not in such a romantic light as some readers would prefer it to be. During the first chapters, we are led to believe that the marriage of Jane Bennet and Mr Charles Bingley is at the centre of the narrative. Things change in chapter VII, when Jane goes on horseback to Netherfield and the narrator stays at Longbourn. Upon receiving a letter from Jane explaining her sickness, Elizabeth goes on her famous muddy walk to Netherfield

followed by the narrator, and from the days at Netherfield on, focalisation stands mostly with Elizabeth, which we come to understand is therefore the protagonist.

The focus on Elizabeth reveals that the story will bear her point of view of situations, which is crucial for the building of pride and prejudice between her and Mr Darcy. At the same time, focalisation cannot remain only through her; otherwise it would be impossible for the reader to perceive Darcy's growing admiration for her, as well as Caroline Bingley's contempt. After Elizabeth declines dancing with him, by responding, as usual, in a spirited way, the narrator informs: 'Darcy had never been so bewitched by any woman as he was by her. He really believed, that were it not for the inferiority of her connections, he should be in some danger' (*P&P*, p. 35). It is revealed to the reader that he has begun to appreciate the girl's lively company and spirited conversation, but to Elizabeth he remains a haughty, proud rich man who snubs her at a ball. The reader's expectation of Elizabeth finding out what Darcy feels for her, and later her acknowledgment that she also loves him, provides the suspense that carries the reader throughout a narrative whose most adventurous action might be Elizabeth jumping over a puddle (HALLIDAY, 1960). In order to maintain the suspense, the narrating voice withholds information both from Elizabeth – as with Darcy's growing love –, and from the reader, such as the truth about Wickham. In this sense:

> in a novel concerned above all with uncertainties about true character, with the unreliability of impressions and the elusiveness of explanations, Austen's reticence […] becomes a central technique, replicating for the reader the quandaries of the heroine, and making us undertake, like her, an effort of enquiry and discovery. (KEYMER, 2013, p. 10)

The unfolding of the narrative becomes a *tour de force* for the protagonists and the readers as well. Moreover, the roaming around from character to character, and the absence of actions, reveal that interactions between opinions, ideas and attitudes are as important as any great deed performed by protagonists in adventure narratives, for example. *P&P* is concerned with people's conducts, and focalisation plays an important role in revealing them. Herman and Vervaeck (2005, p. 55) affirm that 'traditionally there exists an inversely proportional relationship between the amount of actions and the degree in which a figure is psychologically developed into a many-sided character.' It should also be mentioned that such focalisation remains in the three-mile radius around Elizabeth due to 'women's enforced passivity and immobility' (NELLES, 2006, p. 127). During Austen's time, women would not go hunting, or travel with friends to foreign countries, unless escorted by family members; they would not roam the streets or visit certain places. They could not even move between

social classes. Thoughts, feelings and perceptions, then, take the place in this life of confinement, which in a sense is broken by Elizabeth.

Focalising on Elizabeth Bennet with the help of an abundance of scenes, which brings a dramatic illusion, deludes the reader into believing that the narrator and its choices of focalisation have no major interference in the point of view presented by the narrative. While in Netherfield, in Chapter VIII, Elizabeth takes part in a conversation with Mr Darcy and Miss Bingley concerning women's accomplishments. As the conversation is presented in a scene, the narrator calls Miss Bingley Darcy's 'faithful assistant' as she agrees with his conceptions and is all the time praising him. The expression may come from Elizabeth's thought, but its deployment at that exact moment is a very specific choice of the narrating agent and its decision to be ironic in relation to Miss Bingley. Below, the extract of the conversation enlightens the idea:

> I cannot boast of knowing more than half-a dozen, in the whole range of my acquaintance, that are really accomplished.'
> 'Nor I, I am sure,' said Miss Bingley.
> 'Then,' observed Elizabeth, 'you must comprehend a great deal in your idea of an accomplished woman.'
> 'Yes, I do comprehend a great deal in it.'
> 'Oh! certainly,' cried his *faithful assistant*, 'no one can be really esteemed accomplished who does not greatly surpass what is usually met with. (*P&P*, p. 26, my emphasis)

In fact, from the very first sentence of the novel, if we are attentive, we see that the narrative is much more author-driven than character-driven. That is, this authoritative entity, which could be understood as the implied author[18], decides what and how to reveal not only the events of the narrative, but also its position concerning the characters in it. Especially the opening and closing paragraphs of chapters reveal that the implied author does not agree with Mr or Mrs Bennet's behaviour; that study and education, in Mr Collins case, are not the only attributes necessary for a man to become a gentleman; that pertaining to the aristocracy, as Lady de Bourgh, or to the working class as Mr and Mrs Gardiner, does not define the best in a person.

[18] As Herman and Vervaeck (2005, p.16) inform, 'the implied author does not actually appear in the text. [It] does not have an audible voice, and yet [it] forms part of the narrative. [It] constitutes the source for the aggregate of norms and opinions that makes up the ideology of the text. In other words, [it] is responsible for the world-view emanating from a narrative.'

3.1.2 Meaning through the structure of the narrative

In terms of the actual structure of the narrative, it is divided in three volumes, which was a common feature of publications at the time since it was 'reader-friendly' and easier for borrowing and family sharing (WOLFSON, 2012, p. 112). Austen's hard work is found in details such as the fact that each volume contains a climax at its end: Volume I ends with Elizabeth's refusal and Charlotte's acceptance of Mr Collins proposal, and the discussion over the entailment of Longbourn. Mrs Bennet had already expressed her distress and incomprehension of the fact that the family estate should pass on to a male heir: 'I do think it is the hardest thing 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 or other about it' (*P&P*, p. 42). The very end of the volume shows an instance where an opinion is expressed concerning the righteousness of the entailment law. The dialogue between Mr and Mrs Bennet upon learning the news of Charlotte Lucas and Mr Collins' engagement brings the discussion of the entailment back:

> 'Indeed, Mr Bennet,' said she, 'it is very hard to think that Charlotte Lucas should ever be mistress of this house, that I should be forced to make way for HER, and live to see her take her place in it!'
> 'My dear, do not give way to such gloomy thoughts. Let us hope for better things. Let us flatter ourselves that I may be the survivor.' (*P&P*, p. 90)

While she has serious worries concerning their future situation, Mr Bennet makes a joke on which of them may survive the other. The conversation follows, and Mrs Bennet says she would not mind Mr Collins and Charlotte Lucas' impending marriage were it not for the entailment. But 'how anyone could have the conscience to entail away an estate from one's own daughters, I cannot understand; and all for the sake of Mr Collins too! Why should HE have it more than anybody else?' Mr Bennet only replies, 'I leave it to yourself to determine' (*P&P*, p. 91, emphasis original). On the one hand, there is no answer that would please Mrs Bennet in this situation, so he leaves it to her to think about the problem, maybe in hopes of dropping the discussion. On the other hand, Mr Bennet leaves it not only to her to determine, but also to the reader. It may be inferred that Austen saw no answer for such question, especially if we keep in mind that her first published novel, *Sense and Sensibility,* had already dealt with the consequences of an entailed estate in the lives of unmarried women pertaining

to the gentry. Also, it is difficult not to bear in mind that Austen herself was deprived of a home upon her father's decease.

If the reader remains in the rom-com layer of the narrative, s/he will possibly follow Elizabeth's biased point of view on characters. Through her eyes, Mrs Bennet and Lydia are foolish, and Lady Catherine de Bourgh is abhorrent. In such strategic closure of Volume I, if the reader sharpens her/his eye, s/he will see that there is more to it than only the protagonist's prejudiced view of those characters. Yes, Mrs Bennet seems overall foolish, unable to control her nerves, but she voices the concern of many a mother of young ladies. It is through her that women are allowed a space to complain about their situation in Regency England: why should they not have the right to their family's estate? In this sense, Lady Catherine de Bourgh joins in the chorus as she tells Elizabeth: 'Your father's estate is entailed on Mr Collins, I think. For your sake,' turning to Charlotte, 'I am glad of it; but otherwise I see no occasion for entailing estates from the female line. It was not thought necessary in Sir Lewis de Bourgh's family' (*P&P*, p. 112). Neither Mrs Bennet nor Lady de Bourgh possess much credibility with the reader due to the fact that they are presented to the reader through Elizabeth's eyes as laughable characters, so the narrator does not have to worry much on what they may think or say. Ironically, though we laugh at Mrs Bennet, she has a serious and valid concern for her daughters' future. Therefore, it is easier for the author to have them question a law created by men that benefit men only. If Elizabeth was to carry such opinions, chances are the novel would not have been accepted by the readership (BILGER, 1998).

Volume II of the narrative encompasses Elizabeth's visit to Mr and Mrs Collins in Hunsford, Darcy's proposal and her refusal, as well as his long letter explaining himself. It contains the 'heart' of the narrative: Darcy and Elizabeth's honest encounter. He professes his love, despite her low connections. She refuses him for his arrogance and sense of superiority, expressed in the two charges she lays against him: that concerning Jane Bennet and that on Mr Wickham. In this volume, the impact of social class in the lives of women is at the centre of the discussion. From this moment onwards, both must reappraise their own feelings and opinions in order to be together. The volume ends with a single-sentence paragraph which reveals one of the destinations of the trip Elizabeth and her aunt and uncle, Mr and Mrs Gardiner, are to take during the summer: 'To Pemberley, therefore, they were to go.' (*P&P*, p. 163). Such an end helps maintain the suspense concerning the possibility of Darcy and Elizabeth ending up together. By now, it is clear for the reader that they are the protagonists and the novel is dedicated to portraying the lives of women, essentially. Therefore, they will have a chance to amend their so far conflicted relationship and Pemberley is the indicative.

Volume III, being the last one, is dedicated to the denouement of the narrative, and its focus is centred on the relevance of marriage for women. As Darcy and Elizabeth begin to see each other in different lights, a crisis happens. Lydia's elopement with Wickham delays the outcome of the protagonists' fates. It adds to the suspense, since in Elizabeth's mind Darcy will never readdress the proposal of marriage to her, for he would not risk his reputation with such low connections. At the same time, when Elizabeth learns he was responsible for settling the marriage between Lydia and Mr Wickham, it also contributes to increase the sentiment she had noticed began flourishing when she visited the grounds of Pemberley.

In terms of structure, there are yet other moments in the narrative that deserve attention: the transition from a chapter to another may also be source of reflection for that reader concerned with a deeper layer of meaning in the narrative. The way the narrative is structured contributes to the revelation of the narrator's irony. By the end of chapter XIV, Mr Collins is in his first visit to Longbourn, in his pursuit of a wife. The Bennet family is gathered in the drawing-room and Mr Collins is applied for some reading to the girls: 'Mr Collins readily assented, and a book was produced; but on beholding it (for everything announced it to be from a circulating library) he started back, and begging pardon, protested that he never read novels. Kitty stared at him, and Lydia exclaimed.' (*P&P*, p. 46). Apparently, there is a judgment on the impropriety of reading novels, that may easily pass with the inattentive reader, but by now, we already know what Mr Bennet and Elizabeth think of Mr Collins. For them, even before meeting him he seemed a pompous man with empty discourse, not very sensible: After listening to Mr Collins' letter, Elizabeth asks her father: 'Can he be a sensible man, sir?' To which her father replies: 'No, my dear; I think not. I have great hopes of finding him quite the reverse. There is a mixture of servility and self-importance in his letter which promises well' (*P&P*, p. 43).

Now back to the scene in the drawing room, Mr Collins chooses the *Fordyce's Sermons*, a conduct manual for young women, and before he has read three pages, Lydia interrupts him. He is of course offended and declares: 'I have often observed how little young ladies are interested by books of a serious stamp, though written solely for their benefit. It amazes me, I confess; – for certainly, there can be nothing so advantageous to them as instruction' (*P&P*, p. 47). The scene ends in apologies for the girl's behaviour. It is worthy going back to a sample of Fordyce's own words, for acknowledging them contributes to understanding the irony and the double voices at play. The Scottish clergyman warns young women not to be too witty if they ever want to marry:

> [W]hen I speak on this subject, need I tell you, that men of the best sense have been usually averse to the thought of marrying a witty female?...men who understand the science of domestic happiness, know that its very first principle is ease…but we cannot be easy, where we are not safe. We are never safe in the company of a critic; and almost every wit is a critic by profession. (FORDYCE, 1767, p. 191)

When Lydia disrespects Mr Collins' reading, she is disrespecting such 'wisdom' by Fordyce, and the whole of society who conform to such ideas of candour, reserve and moderation imposed on women. We should notice that the narrator joins Lydia's confrontation at the beginning of the following chapter: 'Mr Collins was not a sensible man, and the deficiency of nature had been but little assisted by education or society' (*P&P*, p. 47). The judgment on Mr Collins – and on Fordyce – is somewhat disguised by the interruption provoked by the end of one chapter and the beginning of the next one. Also, it is Lydia who dares to defy him and the *Fordyce's Sermons,* and, even though the reader is not yet acquainted with all of Lydia's foolishness, they already have glimpses of her reputation. It should be pointed out that having Lydia, a foolish girl, confronting Mr Collins and the *Sermons* could mean the implied author is ridiculing what could be considered proto-feminism. However, even before Mr Collins arrived at Longbourn, Elizabeth and Mr Bennet had already agreed that the clergyman was not a sensible man. So, Austen chooses Lydia, a secondary character, instead of Elizabeth, to stand forward, possibly because her novel would suffer the judgment of society had she dared to have Elizabeth voicing her displeasure of Fordyce (BILGER, 1998). In Lydia, Austen is free to present that other voice, that in which later she will so openly defend the novel in *Northanger Abbey* (1818).

The structure also plays a relevant role when the subject is suitability for marriage. Chapter XLI ends with Lydia's departure for Brighton, where she is to find her fate – from there she elopes with Wickham, their marriage is arranged, and they are sent to the north, away from everybody's eyes and judgment. In a nutshell, Lydia is ostracised. It happens after Elizabeth tried to reason with her father on the danger of letting Lydia travel on her own, with a friend almost as young as her to a place where the Militia is stationed. Mr Bennet does not seem to have ever taken the trouble of guiding those of his daughters who needed guidance, so he lets Lydia travel. In a subtle juxtaposition, chapter XLII's opening paragraph discusses how Mr and Mrs Bennet ended up married and how unsuitable such match was:

> 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 woman whose weak understanding as illiberal mind, had very early in their marriage out an end to all real affection for her.

> Respect, esteem, and confidence, had vanished for ever; and all his views of domestic happiness were overthrown. (*P&P*, p. 159)

Mr Bennet married for the wrong reasons, for 'youth' does not last; 'beauty' not only is transient, but it also does not sustain the routine of a family; and appearance of good humour is not good humour itself. The reader will later see that Lydia falls for similar reasons and one may argue to what extent her parents are responsible for her foolishness. The aforementioned juxtaposition subtly indicates they have a contribution to their youngest daughter's fate. It is implicit that the reasons for marriage should not be those represented by Elizabeth's parents, but those she and Darcy construct along the narrative. Nevertheless, whether the reader sees such connection or not depends on the way they approach the narrative, and Austen's hard work and ingenuity lies exactly in making such interpretation a possibility and not a certainty.

As we have already observed, the way the novel is structured may reveal the narrator's and, I will dare say, Austen's point of view concerning topics such as ideal choices in marriage, integrity, and didacticism of conduct books, for instance. Also, the choice of an extra- and heterodiegetic narrator could imply a more distanced perspective of events. Such logic, however, is subverted by Austen's large deployment of free indirect discourse. Through such narrative technique, the reader is allowed access to Elizabeth's subjectivity. *P&P* is, therefore, an interesting example of how subjectivity was becoming increasingly relevant for the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in England (and Europe as a whole).

3.2 *THE LIZZIE BENNET DIARIES* REFLECTING UPON ITS OWN TIME

One of the questions concerning adaptations of Jane Austen's work lies exactly in the extent to which they are successful in representing her social criticism since her artistry cannot be directly transposed from her novels to another medium. This section discusses the construction of *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* so as to see if and to what extent the way the narrative is organised contributes to revealing meaning beyond the romantic comedy layer. According to its description on YouTube, *The Diaries* is a videoblog-style 'modern retelling of *Pride and Prejudice*' in which Lizzie Bennet 'narrates the trials and tribulations of her family life with the help of her best friend and aspiring filmmaker, Charlotte Lu, 'practically

perfect' older sister, Jane, and easily excitable younger sister, Lydia'[19]. The Longman Dictionary informs that 'retell' means 'to tell a story again, often in a different way or in a different language'[20]. This investigation will demonstrate that *The Diaries* may be included in the category of adaptations Cartmell and Whelehan (1999) term 'commentary.' It appropriates the plot of the novel and comments on said source text's context and politics, as well as it comments on its own *mise-en-scène*. In this sense, the plot of Regency England *Pride and Prejudice* is relocated to twenty-first-century California-USA through a YouTube channel on the Internet. This means *The Diaries* do not abide by the common sense idea that what is in a diary is private, intimate, even a secret. In fact, Lizzie's – and her family's – life is exposed on the web for anyone to see, follow, comment, and share.

The exposure of the private, domestic life into the public sphere – across print journalism, literature, factual TV programming and digital media – is traced by Jon Dovey (2000) to the 1990s. According to him:

> subjectivity, the personal, the intimate, becomes the only remaining response to a chaotic, senseless, out of control world in which the kind of objectivity demanded by grand narratives is no longer possible. A world where radical politics and critical theory are constantly defining and refining identity politics, the politics of the subject. A world in which the grand narratives are exhausted and we're left with the politics of the self to keep us ideologically warm. (DOVEY, 2000, p. 26)

The spread of different social networks, such as Twitter, Facebook and Instagram, in which common people can share comments, texts, videos and photos, seems to be the result of this desire to make sense of the world, as pointed out by Dovey (2000). It is relevant to note that such spread would not be half as fast, or even possible, were it not for the advances in technologies such as portable camcorders and smartphones, as well as the spread of Internet connection worldwide (LISTER et al, 2009). Furthermore, the decline of grand narratives, along with such advances, allowed for the rising of other modes of telling stories. I want to argue that *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* is a narrative that epitomizes the culmination of all such social transformations. They consist of short videos uploaded to the repository website YouTube. They subvert the logic of a diary as they expose Lizzie Bennet's life. In exposing her private issues, they invite the audience to follow and interact with her on different social media, and she is established as a popular person. Her thesis project becomes a narrative of her life. Finally, such exposure does not come without its conflicts and problems.

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[19] Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL6690D980D8A65D08. Accessed on 23 Nov. 2017.

[20] In adaptation studies, when a printed text is transposed to a visual media, such as film, it is said that it has been transposed from telling to showing. This is because in theory, the change from one medium to another entails differences in the ways of presenting the narrative that should be acknowledged.

Posting personal videos online is an activity that started in the mid-1990s. It follows the new rhetoric of the individual experiences shared in public spaces (DOVEY, 2000). One of the most popular webcam sites of the period is 'JenniCam'. Jennifer Kaye Ringley began a website in 1996. She installed a camera in her bedroom through which she shared her private life online. This amateur phenomenon was observed around 2004 by the business and entertainment industry, much at the same time as YouTube was establishing itself as a repository for online videos (ROSE, 2012). Such activities, then, migrated to YouTube, where the conception of videoblog was popularised. According to Burgess and Green (2009, p. 145), the vlog, a short term for video blog, 'is an extremely prevalent form of "amateur" video on YouTube.' It is 'typically structured primarily around a monologue delivered directly to camera […] produced with little more than a webcam and some witty editing' (2009, p. 145). In terms of content, 'the subject matter ranges from reasoned political debate to impassioned rants about YouTube itself and the mundane details of everyday life' (2009, p. 145). Lister et al (2009) complement:

> A vlog is what happens when people add video into the blog format, so typically a vlog site consisted in a series of short movie posts which were datelined like a diary, and often also have some text introduction. Vlogs were originally living diaries written as we watched day by day. Moreover like the blog the vlog was a networked platform which invited other vloggers to respond by video and thereby constructed global conversations on video. (LISTER et al, 2009, p. 226)

Vlogging is part of the grassroots movement and the participatory culture – which consists of productions originated in fan groups, or common folk activities (JENKINS, 2006) –, since its content is generated mainly by common people who gather viewers around their topics of interest. *The Diaries* follow the trend of creating online narratives, which gained popularity around 2006 and 2007 on YouTube through the *LonelyGirl15* project (LISTER et al*,* 2009; CREEBER, 2011). It was supposed to be watched as a videoblog of a regular 16-year-old named Bree. She set an online community around videos she made about her mundane life. It was later discovered that they were in fact a narrative created by Miles Beckett and Mesh Flinders (HOPF, 2010). *LonelyGirl* reveals a typical feature of web aesthetics, which is the ambiguous status of reality (LISTER et al, 2009). Its use of one to one communication invites the viewers sitting at home in front of their computer screen to interact. Characters from the fictional world play the part of amateur vloggers, and thus, put the question 'is this real or is it fiction?' at the centre of the production.

In order to analyse the ways *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* transposes Jane Austen's social criticism, it is paramount to take into consideration this new aesthetics that the production takes advantage of. Lizzie Bennet appears as though she was making a videoblog for her master's degree in mass media communication. She films mainly from her bedroom with a static camera, and uses, with Charlotte Lu's help, editing resources. Also, unlike a written diary whose entries are usually self-contained, *The Diaries* are presented in a serialised mode. This means that its entries are not random; they are, in fact, interconnected in order to form a narrative. It is an appropriation of television serials' mode of narrating. Finally, their use of time parallels actual time, which adds a greater sense of authenticity to the narrative (CREEBER, 2011).

3.2.1 Lizzie Bennet's (un)reliability

Initially, it is reasonable to observe that the videoblog maintains the same prerogative of a diary: it contains the thoughts and perceptions of a particular character as told by them. Instead of writing either on paper or on a digital format, the protagonist records a short video in which they discuss issues of their interest. In *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, Lizzie Bennet discusses recent events in her life. It is therefore narrated through an intradiegetic, as well as a homodiegetic narrator. In Episode 1 – *My Name is Lizzie Bennet*, the protagonist introduces herself answering the rhetorical question, 'who am I?' which she assumes the audience might be asking, with: 'I'm a twenty-four year old grad student with a mountain of student loans, living at home and preparing for a career. But to my mom the only thing that matters is that I'm single! My name is Lizzie Bennet and this is my life!' Lizzie is clearly the major narrator of a narrative of recent events of her own life. Because of the medium's affordances and limitations, rather than having access to her perceptions without her acknowledging such access, she will herself reveal her thoughts and perceptions. The tendency is, then, on the one hand, of a much more straightforward narrative. On the other hand, access to her perceptions depends on her desire to express them.

In *P&P*, the focus through Elizabeth's point of view does not start immediately. The narrator hovers through the perceptions of other characters before it settles with Elizabeth in Chapter VII. *The Diaries* begin with a straightforward Lizzie explaining who she is and what her life is about directly to the camera, talking to the audience as though she were a regular (or rather, real) vlogger. Marie-Laure Ryan observes that 'when the narrator is an embodied

individual (that is, a first-person narrator), and when the narrative discourse imitates a form of nonfictional communication, such as a letter, a diary, or a written autobiography, then both the narrator and the text belong to the storyworld' (2014, p. 37). As The Diaries are posted online in short instalments – as a series – they pertain to the storyworld which goes beyond what is seen on the videos, and the repercussion of each of them interferes with the development of the narrative. Furthermore, part of such repercussion derives from the interactivity Lizzie establishes with other characters as well as her audience. As she talks directly to the audience, the fourth wall – that imaginary wall which separates the actors from the audience, especially in drama – is broken. Finally, this narratee seems to be both fictional and real, that is, as a video blog posted on YouTube, the series receives comments from real viewers.

Because the novel has an extradiegetic narrator, there is a sense of reliability imparted to the narrated events and perceptions. However, most of the narrative is revealed through Lizzie's eyes. It is only through reading along and collecting other characters' perceptions through free indirect speech that the reader is aware of Lizzie's prejudices and misguided evaluation of Darcy. In *The Diaries*, on the other hand, Lizzie is the narrator and, as one narrating through first-person speech, the reliability of the narrated events and perceptions is compromised, even though they seem more authentic. In fact, such misconceptions become themes throughout the narrative. In the novel, Elizabeth does not begin to acknowledge her misconceptions until she visits the grounds of Pemberley in Chapter XLVIII. In *The Diaries*, in Episode 12 – *Jane Chimes In*, Lizzie says: 'Of course I'm biased. It's my videoblog!' She acknowledges that facts will be talked of through her own perspective and it may not be the most accurate one. This seems to work as an explanation of Elizabeth's prejudice in the novel.

In Episode 15 – *Lizzie Bennet is in Denial*, Charlotte and Jane discuss Darcy's feelings for Lizzie and her denial of them. While Charlotte tries to argue in Darcy's favour, Jane says: 'Lizzie sees what Lizzie sees.' The eldest sister is trying to say that Lizzie sees only what she wants to see. There is a feeling that Lizzie is in fact constructing a narrative of her life. Part of this feeling comes from the fact that she is filming the video diary. Therefore, her right to be biased is granted by other characters. This is an important strategy because it generates the audience's expectation of the protagonist realising she is wrong; her reaction when discovering such fact; and her subsequent moves.

Besides Jane, in Episode 37 – *Lydia vs Mr. Collins,* it is Lydia who endorses the narrator's views of facts. She proposes to show Mr Collins how Lizzie vlogs. They re-enact some of Lizzie's performances of 'costume theatre,' which is a type of role-play (See section

3.2.2 in this Chapter). When they act out Mr and Mrs Bennet, Lydia – playing the former – says: 'Good morning dear, I assume you would like to discuss how pathetically single our daughters are.' Mr Collins breaks character and asks the girl: 'Oh, Mrs Bennet has always been so delightful towards me, and yet Lizzie paints her in such a manipulative light. Is lamenting over her single daughters truly all your mother ever does?' Lydia is, then, very clear about how things work in *The Diaries*: 'Rule #1 about Lizzie's diaries: they are Lizzie's diaries. She sees what she wants to see' (Episode 37 – The LBD). During one of the role-plays, Lydia makes Mr Collins uncomfortable, and he leaves. Lizzie is back on camera and congratulates her younger sister on her success in getting Mr Collins to remain quiet, saying it was 'impressive,' except for the part 'about [her] making up stuff about [their] mom' (Episode 37 – The LBD). Lizzie is convinced that her point of view of the facts is the only one acceptable. The maintenance of such perspective contributes to the expectation that she will eventually come to re-evaluate her opinions, especially towards Darcy and Lydia.

3.2.2 Costume theatre: other characters through Lizzie's eyes

One might say that transposing the content of a narrative constructed with a heterodiegetic narrator who deploys free indirect speech into a first person discourse would seem a reduction of the complexity or richness of the narrative. This is simply because Lizzie does not have access to the perceptions of other characters, unless they talk about them. Also, the fact that the videos are filmed in Lizzie's bedroom, with eventual changes of location, and not everybody who is spoken of appears on camera, may impart a reduction of content in the adaptation process. One of the strategies deployed by *The Diaries* in an attempt at filling such gap – along with the characters' social media spread on the Internet – is called 'costume theatre.' It consists of dressing up with a piece of clothing or an accessory which reminds the audience of another character, and re-enacting a situation the audience did not have access to. Such strategy is deployed both for re-enacting situations that supposedly happened, but also to present imagined conversations. The latter case functions as a reinforcement of Lizzie's judgment of people, and consequent bias.

Early in Episode 3 – *My Opposingly Supportive Parents*, Lizzie portrays her mother in a dialogue with Mr Bennet. In the dialogue, Mrs Bennet believes her husband should introduce himself to Bing Lee, the newcomer in the neighbourhood. She is concerned he has not done it yet, and such delay may prevent them from securing the man for one of their

daughters. Through costume theatre, Lizzie dressed up as her mother says: 'and if you do not go visit Bing Lee tomorrow, we may as well resign ourselves to not meeting him until Emily Lu invites us to her daughter's wedding.' Through Lizzie's portrayal of her mother, it seems Mrs Bennet considers finding a husband a competition. Whether this is an actual representation of the mother's thoughts or only the protagonist's biased perception, the tone is ludicrous. In the same episode, Charlotte and Lizzie re-enact a scene the latter imagines happened between her father and Bing Lee.

> [Mr Bennet] Hello, I'm your new neighbor.
> [Bing Lee] Hello, I'm a rich successful medical student.
> [Mr Bennet] I'm well aware of that. *In fact, my wife has sent me to meet you so that you can eventually marry one of our daughters*.
> [Bing Lee] Are they hot?
> [Mr Bennet] *Attractive, accomplished, even smart*. (Episode 3 – The LBD, my emphases)

The dialogue is clearly not one the two men would have. It is charged with Lizzie's ironic view of the situation, as the highlighted excerpts inform. Her father going to Bing Lee to introduce himself in the hopes, at least in her mother's mind, of getting one of the daughters married sounds ridiculous and old-fashioned. The most common characters portrayed through costume theatre are Mr and Mrs Bennet, Bing and Caroline Lee, and Darcy, who are either completely oblivious of the video diary or come to know it only later in the narrative. Also, they seem to be those of whom Lizzie has a stronger biased opinion. So, while it seems the viewers have a greater possibility of immersion in what would be the reality of the narrative, they are in fact being guided by a focalisation through her perception, which is as biased as novel Elizabeth's one.

In Episode 47 – *It's About Communicating*, Lizzie and Lydia perform costume theatre of Darcy and the protagonist dancing at Bing Lee's birthday party. As Lizzie impersonates Darcy, and Lydia does Lizzie, they talk about George Wickham and the reasons for him having stood Lizzie up at a party. The words used by the protagonist are clearly hers, though it is Darcy being impersonated. He is presented to the viewers through her perspective: 'I'm glad you will dance with me. It's not like other girls will.' It is very likely that it is Lizzie who thinks no one would dance with Darcy, because in her point of view he is stuffy and boring. As the conversation re-enacted by the two sisters goes on, Lydia as Lizzie asks: 'By the way, Darcy, you're a total jerk for the way you acted towards George the other night.' Darcy [by Lizzie] replies: 'George Wickham…pfffft…His feelings do not concern me. *No one's feelings concern me but my own*.' This is clearly how Lizzie feels about Darcy: he is an

egocentric and arrogant person. Moving on, she also lets slip a compliment about Wickham: ‘George Wickham knows better than to show his *strikingly handsome face* around here.’ Darcy would not say ‘strikingly handsome face.’ This is Lizzie’s jargon. So much so that Lydia breaks off character, and says, ‘and his totally rocking body. Am I right?’ The presentation of Darcy through Lizzie’s eyes goes on through a machine-type tone of voice, since she does consider him to be robotic: ‘That man will not make an appearance. Of this I am certain, and *it is all my fault presumably* because no *one can stand to be in my company* because *I am rude and selfish and ruin the lives of all people I come in contact with*’ (Episode 47 – The LBD, my emphases). Lizzie considers it his fault George is not coming to the party. It is also her perspective that being in Darcy’s company is unpleasant, since for her, he is always trying to intimidate or mock her for her inferiority of social class and taste.

Finally, costume theatre seems to be a play on the fact that, though the novel has a heterodiegetic narrator, it is Elizabeth’s point of view which encompasses most of the narrative. Such device in the videoblog pretends to portray scenes that could not be recorded, but, in fact, they serve as a reinforcement of Lizzie’s point of view. It could be considered a commentary, as pointed out by Cartmell and Whelehan (1999), on the source text. Meanwhile, considering that one of the videblog’s prerogatives is its use of a fixed camera, it resolves the issue of how to present other characters that would otherwise not be in a place such as Lizzie’s bedroom.

3.2.3 The camera as an actor in the narrative

The Diaries are filmed by Lizzie and her friend Charlotte, who is mostly responsible for shooting, editing and posting the videos. In this sense, the camera becomes part of the narrative. As Kjetil Rodje (2017) proposes when discussing films such as *The Blair Witch Project* (1999) in which the camera is handheld, it is as much as an actor in the narrative as the characters themselves, because ‘it does not offer a “window onto the world” where the modes of production are made invisible. Unlike ‘traditional’ cinema, ‘the presence of cameras and other recording devices is made apparent within the diegetic universe’ (RODJE, 2017, p. 207). In *The Diaries*, even though the camera is fixed, the fact that it is manipulated by Charlotte and Lizzie within the diegetic world/storyworld and that the latter talks to it makes the audience never actually forget its existence in the narrative. Lister et al inform that in videoblogs ‘the camera has to be a reflexive part of the action’ (2009, p. 230). Such camera

functions ‘as a recording source of the imagery and as a physical presence within the diegetic universe depicted by this same imagery’ (RODJE, 2007, p. 207). This ‘physical presence’ of the camera is enhanced in key episodes when characters either touch or move around it.

In Episode 27 – *Welcome to Netherfield*, Jane and Lizzie are staying at Bing Lee’s house because their mother decided to remodel their own house. Both are in front of the camera when suddenly Caroline Lee, Bing Lee’s sister, appears. Lizzie tries to conceal the camera by stepping in front of it in order to get it covered by her hand. Lizzie is not at home anymore, where only her sisters and Charlotte appear on camera, and know about the videos. In this sense, her use of a recording device in someone else’s house may posit a problem for her. She does not want Caroline to see it for not only does she talk of the Lees and Darcy, she does so at times in unflattering ways. That is the fear in Episode 60 – *Are You Kidding Me?* when she inadvertently tells Darcy – after he has proposed to her against his ‘better judgment’ and she has said no – to watch her videos, while pointing at the camera.

Furthermore, the camera is not just a ‘passive observer’ but a ‘key participant’ in the narrative of *The Diaries* (RODJE, 2017, p. 207). The 1:15 minute of Episode 60 reveals important elements when it comes to the presence of the camera in the diegetic world. It is in this instalment of the narrative that the audience will finally meet Darcy, but suspense is kept up to the last moment. Lizzie is in an office room at Collins and Collins, where she records her videos and also does her internship activities, when Darcy comes in. He is going to declare his love for her. The camera is already on, but both remain standing. As this is a fixed camera, it does not move, of course, so while Darcy tries to have Lizzie listen to him, the audience see only their torso and hear their argument. Up until the last moment, the audience still wonders if that would finally be the moment they would get to know Darcy. The fact that the camera is fixed contributes to the suspense of meeting Darcy that has been kept for the entire show so far – 60 episodes. Such suspense plays with the users’ knowledge of other renderings of the character Mr Darcy. It refers back to the cult of Mr Darcy developed especially after Colin Firth’s rendering of the character in the 1995 BBC series adaptation of *P&P*.

It follows that when Darcy convinces Lizzie to listen to him, both sit in front of the camera, but Darcy does not immediately acknowledge its presence. So Lizzie says, ‘This should be good!’ and looks at the camera as if she were actually looking at someone. The camera represents her audience (the narratee) in the storyworld, for when she looks at the camera, her facial expression reveals a sense of triumph. She looks as though she were saying, ‘Ok, you are finally going to see who Darcy is and how he behaves.’ Darcy, then, sees the

recording device and exclaims, ‘You’re filming!’ to which she replies, ‘If you’ve got something to say to me, you say it here and now’ (Episode 60 – The LBD). Of course, for the sake of the romantic layer of the narrative, Darcy would eventually appear on camera. However, there is an ethical issue at play. Because Lizzie is angry with him for what he had done to separate her sister and Bing Lee, not only is she unworried about ethics, she demands he should speak in front of the camera. Episode 60 therefore corroborates Kjetil Rodje’s conception of an intradiegetic camera, for it operates as an actor, ‘both in terms of performing a role as ‘real’ recording devices and in terms of affecting other entities within the films as well as the films’ audiences’ (RODJE, 2017, p. 208). Because it functions as an actor in the diegetic world/storyworld, it influences the development of the plot, and the discussions of certain themes.

3.2.4 Charlotte’s point of view through the editing process

Because the narrative is first person bound, it would seem that focalisation would happen only through Elizabeth and therefore the viewer would not have access to the complex weaving of personalities as presented in the novel. However, it should be noted that when Jane and Lydia, for instance, allow Lizzie to have her own version of the facts – ‘Lizzie sees what Lizzie sees’ –, they simultaneously inform the viewer that such version is not the only one. If Lizzie sees what Lizzie sees because it is her videoblog, the counter argument is also true: other people involved see it in a different light. But this is her videoblog, so she is entitled to narrate her own story. While in the novel the readers are led to see/understand the storyworld through Elizabeth’s eyes and take it as the reality of the storyworld for most of the narrative, in *The Diaries* she acknowledges in the early episodes she is biased. Other characters also acknowledge it, but grant her the right to maintain her point of view.

The strategy developed to present the viewer with the counter argument to Lizzie’s view seems to have been placed mostly on her friend, Charlotte Lu. This is the limitation of the vlog format as a video diary: as a diary it does not make sense to have the points of view of many characters, instead it is the diarist’s perception of them. In any case, Charlotte Lu is responsible for shooting, editing and posting the videos and such tasks are fundamental to the end product presented to the audience (FULTON et al, 2005). Therefore, it is possible that in some way the narrative is also focalised through her, or that she also performs the task of a narrator as the following discussion aims to argue. Also, she operates a camera that pertains to

the storyworld. Such device 'creates a sense that the viewpoint is located within the diegesis and is giving us an internal perspective on the action, one that is therefore more "authentic", but less privileged and authoritative, than an externally located viewpoint' (FULTON et al, 2005, p. 112). It is possible that this 'internal perspective' is also Charlotte's.

Episode 2 – *My Sisters, Problematic to Practically Perfect*, where Lizzie presents Charlotte to her viewers, contributes to understanding that they might be two facets that complement each other in terms of narrative construction:

> [Lizzie] Charlotte and I have been friends since we were fetuses.
> [Charlotte] Our mothers were bridge partners when they were pregnant with us.
> [Lizzie] And they went into labor within ten minutes of each other at the same book club meeting. What were they reading?
> [Charlotte] *Sense and Sensibility*.
> [Lizzie] So it's pretty much destiny. We've been inseparable ever since. Charlotte is as constant in my life as my sisters.
> [Charlotte] And I always will be.
> [Lizzie] Especially now because she is shooting and editing these videos, fulfilling her need to have total control over our friendship. (Episode 2 – The LBD)

As it is seen in the dialogue just presented, there seems to be a synergy between the two friends. They are constant in each other's lives, although viewers have access only to Lizzie's life. It sounds possible to affirm, then, that focalisation is, at times, shared between the two of them. One balances the views of the other. The reference to *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), Austen's first published novel, contributes to hint at the equilibrium established between these two different personalities. In terms of focalisation, that is possible exactly due to the fact that in the storyworld of *The Diaries* Charlotte shoots and edits the videos for, were she only a character as Lydia or Jane, she would not perform such a role as a focaliser. She is almost in equal terms with the protagonist through whose perspective the narrative is told. Therefore, in a certain sense, it could be argued that Charlotte embodies Peter Verstraten's concept of the filmic narrator. Verstraten (2009) informs that because films involve both image and sound, the narrator cannot simply be considered the same as that from a literary piece. Instead, it comprises two instances, an auditive and a visual track. The first refers to any type of sound presented, while the second includes everything that appears on screen. What happens is that, at times, each track may provide different, or diverging, information.

While in feature films, where the recording device functions as a window into a particular world and is therefore an extradiegetic element, in *The Diaries*, being an intradiegetic element, it requires a character to operate it. So, although it is known that the editing is done by the group of people involved in the production outside the storyworld, the fact that in the storyworld such task is attributed to Charlotte may render her as a

representation of the filmic narrator. Following such rationale, the narrative is being focalised through and narrated by both Charlotte and Elizabeth and therefore they are both character-narrators who share the same importance in the narrative.

The editing and production processes are not only relevant to establish the fictionality of *The Diaries*, but, in narratological terms, they also interfere with the focalisation of the narrative and therefore with the points of view portrayed. Charlotte does most of the editing, so the narrative is also seen through her perspective. She is the one who does the montage and presents the final video to the audience. This investigation of Charlotte's contribution to the narrative is going to deal particularly with Episodes 5, 8, and 15. In Episode 5 – *After the Wedding: the Real Bing Lee*, the audience is already familiar with the fact that Charlotte shoots, edits and posts the videos, but in this one she is absent from the shooting process. It is Jane who appears on screen to tell the audience about the neighbour's wedding in which the Bennet family got acquainted with the Lees. The video starts with Lizzie setting the camera on to a close up of her chest. Her sister says: 'I'm sure the Internet is going to appreciate a close up of your boobs.' Lizzie, then, tells Charlotte, while looking at the screen of the recording device: 'Charlotte edit this out!' Of course Charlotte did not edit that part out, otherwise we would not be discussing it. Also, she adds to the screen the abbreviation 'LOL' that stands for 'laughing out loud,' slang in the digital world. So, not only does Charlotte disobey Lizzie, she laughs at her. It is true that these seem to be silly situations, but they will later build into a more incisive presence of Charlotte as a focaliser in the narrative.

Still in Episode 5, while Lizzie explains to Jane that Charlotte is absent because she drank too much at the Gibson wedding, Charlotte mutes the audio. She, then, inserts, in her own voice-over, what she would like Lizzie to say about her, instead of mocking her for being drunk at the wedding: 'I just wanna take time and say that Charlotte is so smart and amazing, and sometimes I forget how much I owe her for being the bestest [sic] friend I could ever have.' This Episode is an interesting instance to observe Charlotte as a representation of the filmic narrator. According to Peter Verstraten, 'the function of the filmic narrator is to regulate the interaction between sound (in this case, the spoken word) and image,' and this interaction may happen 'on a sliding scale that runs from exact correlation between the auditive and visual tracks to the complete divergence of those tracks' (VERSTRATEN, 2009, p. 131). In Episode 5, while visually the audience sees Lizzie making fun of Charlotte, they listen to Charlotte correcting her, giving her a line praising and thanking her friend. Charlotte exerts a certain authority in this episode, not only because she edits it, but also because she does not complain of Lizzie's behaviour towards her. She simply corrects Lizzie, telling her

what she should have said instead. This is clear in her use of a first-person discourse that belongs to Lizzie, and not herself. Finally, Charlotte adds devil horns to Lizzie at the end of the episode: a final statement that Lizzie is wrong in making fun of her.

Episode 8 – *Charlotte's Back* further reinforces Charlotte's relevance to the narrative. Once more, she functions as a counterpoint to Lizzie's point of view and her deployment of editing is fundamental to such interpretation. In this episode, Lizzie expresses her frustration with what she understands is Jane being forced to marry a person chosen by their mother. Charlotte's argument is that she is overreacting:

> [Lizzie] Things are finally getting back to normal after the Gibson wedding. Or as normal as they can be when your sister is contemplating an arranged marriage.
> [Charlotte] Over drama much?
> [Lizzie] My mother picked out the man she wants my sister to marry. That's not normal!
> [Charlotte] By that definition, friends setting you up on a blind date is an arranged marriage.
> [Lizzie] Except in this case you replace friend with crazy mother.
> [Charlotte] What's wrong with Bing, I mean, besides the fact that your mother likes him?
> [Lizzie] Ahm…(Episode 8 – The LBD)

Just as Elizabeth in the novel, Lizzie has a formed opinion of her mother which functions as a frame to understanding the matriarch's behaviour. While it does reveal some truth about Mrs Bennet, it is biased since it does not allow for a more complex analysis of her motives for being so desperate to have her daughters married. When Lizzie is unable to give Charlotte another reason for disliking Bing Lee, the scene is frozen. Charlotte adds a voice-over commentary by herself, warning the protagonist: 'Hey Lizzie, do not taunt the girl who does your post-production' (Episode 8 – The LBD). She continues directing her attention to the audience: 'Hey, everyone, Lizzie is having a bit of a crisis, because her sister Jane actually likes a guy her mother wants her to marry, a guy who it turns out is actually nice and funny but that Lizzie had already made up her mind to hate. And Lizzie hates changing her mind' (Episode 8 – The LBD). Although Charlotte could have expressed her opinion, as she does in other conversations with Lizzie, sitting in front of the camera, she chooses to use her position as the editor to do so. The strategy imparts more importance to Charlotte's role because Lizzie cannot immediately respond to the argument.

While in the novel, Charlotte's perceptions are occasionally shared, especially in the first volume, in *The Diaries* not only is she a constant presence, but she edits the videos. Therefore, we should think her point of view is more incisive. Although Lydia calls her a sidekick, Charlotte seems to possess just as much authority over the videos as Lizzie herself.

In this sense, Episode 15 – *Lizzie Bennet is in Denial* figures as an example of Charlotte's perspective on facts. In Lizzie's words, her videoblog was 'hijacked' by her friend and her sister Jane. In fact, she says Jane was conned to doing the video, that is, it was all Charlotte's scheme (Episode 16 – The LBD). The narrative is constructed so that Lizzie is supposedly unable to shoot a video. In order to keep the twice-a-week entries, Charlotte brings Jane to discuss a situation that happened at Carter's Bar. She wants to prove that Darcy likes Lizzie, and that he is not that 'horrid person' the protagonist believes he is. At the beginning of the episode, while Jane hesitates, Charlotte is assertive:

> [Charlotte] We feel that Lizzie isn't being particularly comprehensive with her commentary regarding recent events.
> [Jane] Well, it is her videoblog.
> [Charlotte] But didn't you think her last video was a bit inaccurate?
> [Jane] Lizzie sees what Lizzie sees.
> [Charlotte] …which is why Jane and I are here to reveal the truth to all you lovely viewers, preferably through conflict, as only Lizzie's videos can.
> [Jane] Well, I'm not Lizzie.
> [Charlotte] But this is about Lizzie, and this is what Lizzie refuses to believe happened at Carter's Bar. (Episode 15 – The LBD)

While Jane grants Lizzie the possibility of misinterpreting or refusing certain facts, Charlotte uses her authority as the editor of the videos to share with the audience what she considers the correct version of facts is. Charlotte sees beyond Lizzie's prejudice towards Darcy and is therefore able to see that he has feelings for her friend. It seems Charlotte is the counter balance of focalization in the narrative, a much more vivid presence than the novel. In moments such as these, focalisation happens through her and not through Lizzie.

3.2.5 The editing process as metafiction

In cinema, editing usually deals with time and space. It is through editing shot cuts that fabula and story are conveyed differently. A sequence of cuts can place characters in different places, and can lengthen and/or shorten periods of time (VERSTRATEN, 2009). This is true to films in general, which are around 2 hours long, use different locations for recording and may represent a day or a lifetime of a character. Sound, especial effects and photography are also part of the editing process. In the case of *The Diaries*, they mimic real life to such an extent that the series takes one year and has two instalments a week delivered through YouTube. While in feature films the production and editing processes happen outside

the narrative, just as the reviewing and editing of a novel, in *the Diaries* the process of shooting and editing is brought into the story, as discussed in Charlotte's case as focaliser.

In the case of *The Diaries,* the editing not only is fundamental to the analysis of the narrative structure, but, as well as its production, it is also a topic for discussion inside the story world. In theoretical terms, this issue may be understood as fiction discussing its own process of construction, that is, fiction about fiction. For Linda Hutcheon, this is metafiction (HUTCHEON, 1988). The theoretician establishes such term to designate a narrative's strategy to reflect upon itself, especially when it comes to literature (HUTCHEON, 1988). In Neumann and Nünning's words, 'metafiction describes the capacity of fiction to reflect on its own status as fiction and thus refers to all self-reflexive utterances which thematize the fictionality (in the sense of imaginary reference and/or constructedness) of narrative' (2012, electronic information).

Jon Dovey uses the term 'reflexive film' to refer to those cinematic productions which 'refer to their own process in the final product' (2000, p. 27). For the theorist, this type of production approaches the intricacies of filmmaking itself as part of the meaning intended. In order to do so, different elements may be taken into account, such as: 'the technologies of production in the film text, referring to the editorial and production processes of the film in the film, to questioning the whole process of identity and the production of meaning' (ibid, p. 27). Ultimately, one may say that a film that deploys these strategies is as much about itself as it is about its object. And, even though *The Diaries* are not a film, but a videoblog, the following analysis should inform that Dovey's as well as Hutcheon's and Neumann and Nunning's conceptions seem to contribute to the understanding of its creation of meaning.

The videos are supposed to have an amateur feeling to them in order to comply with the definition of a vlog (BURGESS, GREEN, 2009; LISTER et al, 2009), so the editing process is very apparent and its strategies are used to create and enhance meaning. This renders the narrative a sense of reality, which blurs its limits with fiction. It should be noted, nevertheless, that it is a fictional work, so the editing is not actually performed by the character Charlotte, but is executed by a team of producers. In this sense, it could be said that the narrative has three different levels: the first, more external one, in which the group of executive producers, writers, editors, make-up designers and other professionals work in real life; a second level in which Charlotte, most of the times, shoots and edits the videos (which would consist of the real life of the storyworld); and a third level, which is the storyworld conveyed through the videos. The closeness between such third level and reality, enhanced by

the interactivity proposed by the project is what ignores the fourth wall and may therefore confuse part of the audience unfamiliar with *P&P*, by Jane Austen.

One of the strategies to maintain the amateur feeling to the production seems to be the discussion of the editing process, executed mostly by Charlotte. Such process is more evidently presented in the first quarter of the narrative – first 25 episodes. It is an effort to make it look as though it was real, just as *LonelyGirl15*. This is probably due to the fact that the videoblog is posted on YouTube, which is an open repository engine that allows comments on the videos. Characters are made to interact with the audience and such interactivity blurs at times the lines between fiction and reality. So, there is always a sense of ambiguity, which may make the audience wonder if those are real people or not. In Episode 2, while Lizzie tells Jane that 'this is totally improvised' and therefore she need not worry about what to say, Lizzie's facial expression denotes the contrary: it is not improvised, it is scripted and rehearsed. To use Verstraten's discussion on the filmic narrator, while the auditive narrator says it is improvised, the visual one proves it otherwise (VERSTRATEN, 2009).

Still in Episode 2, Charlotte and Lizzie discuss the protagonist's sign off, that is, how she ends the episode. It happens after she has already signed off and after a cut in the image, which presents a black screen. The episode has finished, but the video itself has not ended. Charlotte says: 'You need a better sign off. Something that sticks with your audience, but isn't so incredibly lame.' Charlotte is the one usually concerned with the production aspects of the videoblog, so she is the one adjusting it to the audience's appeal, as she has probably studied in her master's course. In Episode 8 - *Charlotte's Back*, Charlotte explains to Lizzie how to avoid 'boob close-ups,' which happened in Episode 5, when Charlotte was absent from the shooting process. The dialogue that ensues is worthy discussing:

> [Charlotte] - See! No boob close-ups!
> [Lizzie] - Or you could have edited that part out.
> [Charlotte] - People like the DIY look. See, the video looks more authentic when it's not too polished.
> [Lizzie] Didn't you draw devil horns on me?
> [Charlotte] …and you're on. (Episode 8 – The LBD)

Videoblogs are mostly created and posted by regular people. They are not the production of big entertainment corporations as feature films, for instance, generally are. Therefore, one of their main characteristics is the amateurish look because their creators are usually not professionals. As *The Diaries* create a storyworld in which the videos are part of a certain reality, one that emulates the real world, the videos should comply with such

characteristic. In this sense, Charlotte informs Lizzie of the necessity of their being 'not too polished.' At the same time, Lizzie's question 'Didn't you draw devil horns on me?' and Charlotte's fast escape back behind the camera implies that the videos are in fact thought of and prepared beforehand. There is an intention to make them look amateur, but they in fact are not.

Further on in Episode 8, Lizzie wants to know why Charlotte was absent the week before, and she does not believe her friend had issues to resolve with an aunt. Charlotte tries to change the subject by saying: 'Shouldn't you get back on script? No one cares about my aunt.' And Lizzie replies: 'Yeah, this looks *super authentic* now' (Episode 8 – The LBD, my emphases). The highlighted expression denotes the aforementioned ambiguity at play in *The Diaries*: there is an effort to make them be believable as authentic material when they are actually scripted and rehearsed. Such sense of pertaining to reality is stretched whenever a character directs their ideas to the audience. This would not happen if the interaction between characters and audience happened in the storyworld level, that is, the fictional level only. However, *The Diaries* establish a level of interaction with the real audience due to YouTube's comments section, as well as the characters' social media. In this sense, the fictional characters are made to interact with real YouTube users, and such interactions are hinted at in the videoblog. One example has already been mentioned: when Charlotte says 'people like the DIY look,' she refers both to the narratee and the real audience, for the former is but a representation of the latter (Episode 8 – The LBD).

In Episode 10 – *Cats and Chinchillas*, Lizzie supposes the Internet is already losing interest in the videoblog due to the Jane and Bing's love dilemma. She says: 'On the theory that the Internet is as bored stiff as I am with the continuing Bing Lee saga, I'm going to try a sure fire method to boost my viewership' (Episode 10 – The LBD). She decides to deploy a very popular strategy on the Internet: use pictures or videos of cute animals, because they attract the audience. The curious thing is that Jane enters the bedroom forthwith and the episode is dedicated to discussing once again her relationship with Bing Lee. The picture of a cat playing with a chinchilla appears only at the closing of the episode. Such reference to the video dynamics seems to serve as a reminder as to the characteristics of online production available on the Internet. It might work as a trick to YouTube users into believing the videos are part of the real world. Such strategy is repeated in the early episodes, as in Episode 7 when Lizzie says: 'In my last video, some of *you* thought I went a little dramatic on William Darcy' (Episode 7 – The LBD, my emphasis). This 'you' refers to the narratee, but because YouTube allows almost instant interactivity, it is easy to forget the fourth wall, and imagine

the character is talking of and to real people. The same holds true for Episode 12 – *Jane Chimes In,* in which Lizzie says she is getting comments from the audience. She says: 'I've asked Jane to come here today because I've been getting comments – yay, *keep'em coming* – that imply I might be a tad bit biased in my portrayals of friends and family members' (Episode 12 – The LBD, my emphasis). Nevertheless, the viewer is never actually fooled into believing in The Diaries as a videoblog by a real person. And that is due to its metafictional comments and discussions.

3.3 SUMMING UP CHAPTER 3

This chapter presented an analysis of both *Pride and Prejudice*'s and *The Lizzie Bennet Dairies*' structural composition. The attempt was to map relevant elements present in each narrative through which meaning could be revealed. Therefore, structural aspects were taken into account. It was noticed that the way the plot of *P&P* is arranged in structural terms informs the reader of opinions on marriage and on what is thought of conduct manuals for young ladies. It was also observed that such conceptions are not openly canvassed by the narrator. Instead, the reader should be alert in order to see them. This is due to the fact that the narrative can be analysed in two different layers: the more superficial one, where the romantic comedy lies; and the deeper one, where most of the irony and the ambiguity take place.

In this sense, it was observed that the narrator plays a key role in conveying such meanings, especially for its choice of free indirect discourse. This means that, at times, the limit between what pertains to itself and what pertains to characters is blurred. Focalisation through Elizabeth's eyes contributes to establishing her subjectivity, which allows the reader to follow her process of discovery and learning. Her composition corroborates the eighteenth-century desire for the establishment of subjectivity. As the analysis of themes in Chapter 4 shall inform, Elizabeth wants to be understood as a rational creature, capable of reaching her own decisions. Although avoiding overt questioning of the established institutions of Regency England, the protagonist represents the configuration of individuals in this new public sphere, as discussed by Habermas (1962), even if her public sphere is limited to the domestic realm.

Furthermore, the management of scene and summary implicate in the portrayal of the novels themes. The dramatic illusion caused by the fact that the majority of the plot is presented through scene disguises the moments when the narrator offers judgments of characters. There is a sense that the narrator does not control the narrative, which is falsely

created by the dramatic illusion. In fact, the narrator exerts total control of the narrative, including when it decides to follow or not certain characters, to tell or withhold information. This is particular necessary for the construction of the suspense in the narrative, as the narrator reveals to the readers more than Elizabeth, the protagonist, knows herself. We therefore expect her to discover, and react to what we already know: Darcy's love.

In *The Lizzie Bennet* Diaries, the narrative construction seems to reflect upon itself, that is, it is aware of its own process of construction. Probably because it is a relatively new narrative style, not yet an established genre, there is this need of discussing itself, its own characteristics. While it tells the story of Lizzie Bennet, it also explains to the audience how video blogging on YouTube works. At times, this effort seems to be conscious such as those moments Charlotte talks about the production and editing of the videos; at other times, they work along with the plot, as those moments when Lizzie talks to the audience about their comments. These discussions on editing and producing the videoblog may provoke the audience's awareness of both its fictionality and its strategies of construction as a possible new genre of storytelling.

In terms of focalisation, it is also the focus on the editing process that allows for a varied point of view, since it is a diary, which usually means a single point of view. It falls on Charlotte's hands mostly the task to counter-argue Lizzie's misconceptions. While it seems like a reduction of the complex weaving of point of view revealed by the heterodiegetic narrator of Pride and Prejudice through free indirect discourse, it becomes an opportunity to explore in greater depth the characteristics of Charlotte. Also, due to the relevance of the editing process to the narrative, it should be at least wondered to the extent which it is also narrated by Charlotte. Bringing Charlotte forward inevitably brings her opinions concerning Jane and Bing's relationship and Darcy's and Caroline's behaviour, and this reinforces the complexity of the discussions. Moreover, focalisation in *The Diaries* allows for the rising of some comedic and ironic comments, especially through Lizzie's use of costume theatre. Since there is no heterodiegetic narrator, this entity's irony present in *P&P* is, to some extent, transferred to Lizzie. Her comments ridiculing her mother somehow transpose the narrator's irony towards Mrs Bennet, already expressed in the first chapter of *P&P* and later mingled with Elizabeth's own view through free indirect discourse.

Finally, *The Diaries* emulate the dynamics of subjectivity present in the turn of the twenty-first century. As Dovey (2000) points out, postmodern society has resorted to individual experiences, and narratives, to make sense of a world in which the grand narratives no longer forge security. The advances in technology such as the portable webcam and

smartphones have allowed common people to produce their own narratives, and interact with other narratives mostly in their own terms. This conception was taken as a model for *The Diaries*, and the portrayal of Lizzie as if she were a regular person blurs the limits between fiction and reality. According to Lister et al (2009), this is an intrinsic feature of web narratives. The closeness established with the audience makes the characters' struggles more easily relatable.

4 JANE AUSTEN'S CRITICISM REWORKED

> *[Jane Austen's] treatment of the themes, as in the case with Shakespeare, is never to be dated, because she deals with certain aspects of human emotions, which remain the same, regardless of any possible changes in patterns of behavior.*
>
> **Luciane Oliveira Müller**, *Revisiting Jane Austen*.

Analysing the adaptation of any given work of art is relevant both for maintaining the discussion on the source text, and for revealing elements of the context of the new production. As Luciane Müller (2014) points out, Austen's longevity is due to her treatment of human emotions which have not changed; one might refer to them as universal aspects of human sentimentality. It is in the 'change in patterns of behavior' both in *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) and in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* (2012/2013) that this chapter focuses, especially concerning marriage, money, and women behaviour. In order to understand the ways in which the main themes of *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) have been transposed in *The Diaries* it is worthy to, at least, glimpse into the tradition that this modern adaptation inherits. Considering that the object of analysis is a product of popular culture whose main characters are women, it is only natural that discussions on the representation of women which draw on second-wave feminism and post-feminism should be used. It must be noted, however, that they will be necessary to the extent that they contribute to set the context for better apprehending the new meanings produced by *The Diaries*[21]. It is not the intent of this work to establish value judgment on these cultural movements since this has been endlessly – and tirelessly – done by theorists better suited for the job[22].

[21] Especially if one considers that Bernie Su, Kate Rorick and Margaret Dunlap, some of the writers of the show, have stated in the bonus track of the DVDs that they intentionally created a narrative which would reveal the process of growth of modern women. To what extent this is reliable the analysis in this chapter should be able to tell.

[22] As with any other sociological and cultural studies field, there have been many different approaches to women's issues that go from women's rights to issues of social class, race and the body. For further readings on feminism and post-feminism and their relations, refer to Yvonne Tasker and Diane Negra et al (2007), Angela McRobbie (2009), and Imelda Whelehan (2010); for post-colonialist issues refer to Gatai C. Spivak (1999); the body and queer theory, to Judith Butler (1990); the critique on feminism, Dafne Patai (1994) and Carmen Marín (2008).

The aforementioned tradition may be traced back to the 1970s and 1980s, when universities simmered with discussions on women's issues such as equal pay, workplace harassment, education and domestic violence in a completely patriarchal society (MCROBBIE, 2009). As these debates spread in educational spaces, government and institutions saw no other way than listen to such demanding voices, and a rearrangement of women's position in society happened, even if for upper- and middle-class women mostly. In this sense, when the 1990s came, and feminist issues became more 'widely disseminated within popular media forms,' there was an ever-growing sentiment that feminism had achieved success, at least in an all-white upper- and middle-class environment (TASKER; NEGRA, 2007, p. 1). This was granted by the sense that women had achieved value in the traditionally male working environments and have therefore become empowered consumers. The restriction of feminism's achievements to such gains made it seem no longer necessary. At the same time, a stereotypical feminist which condemned marriage – derived from the most radical strands of feminism –, for instance, came to represent the movement in derogatory terms in popular culture (MCROBBIE, 2009; WHELEHAN, 2010).

It seems that such context contributed to the flourishing of popular culture productions such as *Sex and the City* (1999). Among the variety of women they portray, there are those who have benefited from education; though not always successful, are fully capable of maintaining themselves; are free to manage their sexuality. But they are also women who are submitted to another regime, that of the body. Anti-ageing and lifestyle have become an everlasting search in a consumer market. Women are viewed as potential consumers in a neo-liberal environment. Other depictions of women, such as in the *Bridget Jones's Diaries* (2001), focus on a woman who, as Bridget Jones, is concerned with her love life; the fear of becoming a spinster; and the biological clock ticking each day faster (MCROBBIE, 2009; WHELEHAN, 2010).

Such women as Jones are not afraid to discuss their anxieties and failures concerning relationships, as well as their desire for a happily-ever-after ending. Finally, as individual subjects, and consumers, these women are expected to enjoy the gift, and the curse, of choice. Women are not seen as a group, but as individuals who are enabled to make their own particular choices. It should be noted that this change of focus from social groups to individuals is not present solely in the realm of women representation. Jon Dovey (2000) points out that this comes from the fact that grand narratives do not answer to society's anxieties anymore. Regarding women, McRobbie points out that the burden lies in the fact that they are 'compelled to be the kind of subject[s] who can make the right choices' (2009, p.

19). For her, this is the establishment of a new gender regime: women are now submitted to this consumer market. In this sense, trying to negotiate these views of women's roles and possibilities is sure to generate ambiguity. Women have conquered the right to choose, but this possibility is a double-edged sword: both because you are expected to make the right choices and because you might not have a favourable environment to support you on the consequences of such decisions.

When it comes to Jane Austen adaptations or Austen-inspired popular culture productions, there has been some debate as to how much they focus on the romantic comedy layer at the expense of social criticism (FRANCUS, 2010). Linda Troost and Sayre Greenfield (2001, p. 8) argue that 'the late twentieth century still has not sorted out women's roles, and the on-screen depictions of Austen's characters echo the ambiguous position of women in the 1990s: feminist, traditionalist, or sometimes both, depending on whom one asks.' Deborah Kaplan (2000) – as well as McRobbie (2009) and Whelehan (2010) – argues that such focus on the romantic layer is part of a postfeminist sensibility, which acknowledges concerns related to feminist issues, but at the same time treats them as though they had already been resolved. Emma Thompson's *Sense and Sensibility* could be an example: Elinor's and Marianne's marriages in the film have a much higher level of romance in comparison with the 'solid alliances grounded on mutual affection and respect' portrayed in the novel (DOBIE, 2003, p. 249). The fact is that while 'the romantic comedy typically underplays the social realities from which conflict springs,' works such as *Sense and Sensibility* (1811) and *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) 'dissect them' (ibid, 252). At the same time, 'the romantic comedy places greater emphasis on romance and sexual attraction, building its hero into the object of an all-consuming fantasy' (ibid, 252). In this sense, because Austen's plots are centred on the marriageable years of young ladies, they favour the exploration of love ideals and thus the romantic comedy.

Along with the context of post-feminism in popular culture, there are other explanations for this desire for romantic comedy in films and other types of mass cultural productions – Jane Austen adaptations included. Firstly, as Susan Bordo (1999) points out, despite the sexual revolution of the 1960s, the male body as a sexual object almost disappeared from the screen. Meanwhile, there was an increase in the portrayal of the female body as such. Therefore, an uncharted terrain remained to be explored: the female gaze, that is, the male body as a pleasurable sight (VOIRET, 2003). This transformation was catapulted

by the 'harlequinization'[23] of mass-market romance (KAPLAN, 2001). Secondly, the 1980s conservative British government with its restricting social and economic policies divided England. So, 'heritage productions functioned as a palliative, promoting a sense of unbroken tradition and reaffirming national identity. The rural and elegant scenes of Jane Austen's novels became a symbol of a prosperous England (DOBIE, 2003, p. 247; VOIGTS-VIRCHOW, 2007). Thirdly, the 1990s witnessed what Jon Dovey (2000) calls the 'feminisation' of public life. He analyses how public discourses in Britain and The USA came to be more grounded on individual subjective experiences than on general totalising views during that decade. The repercussion at the time of Princess Diana's death and President Clinton's sexual behaviour points to such change in the public discourse. All this comes to say that there has been a social fermentation that favours the production of romantic comedies centred on the lives of young women. Ultimately, those involved in adaptations of novels have recognised two reasons for choosing Jane Austen's works: the 'feminocentrism' and the representation of individual experiences (DOBIE, 2003).

Furthermore, films and other entertainment productions are a 'significant barometer of culture because [their] profitability depends on the anticipation and nurturing of aesthetic and social preferences' (DOBIE, 2003, p. 252). So, the recognition of a niche in the assumption of a young woman's craving for sentimentality has become profitable for the film industry, despite what Francus (2010) calls ingenuity of the genre. The analysis of the transposition of themes, such as marriage, money and social class, from *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) to *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* (2012/2013) attempts at analysing to what extent the social criticism visible in the novel is also seen in the video diary; or if the production focuses on the romantic layer at the expense of other experiences or social issues; also, through this analysis, how women are portrayed in both narratives.

Moreover, *The Diaries* may figure as an important site for observing elements of sentimentality contemporary society might refuse to acknowledge, but that are craved by everybody. The aforementioned criticism on romantic comedies could be an indication of such denial. When it comes to women, there seems to exist conflicting ideas as to how they should behave. In order to be strong, assertive, to take positions in society, women should refrain from expressing sentimentality. Just as it has happened with men for centuries, it seems women may be considered weak should they let their feelings come to the surface. This

[23] "Harlequinization," as discussed in Section 1.4, Chapter 1 – Jane Austen in Context, is the term used by Deborah Kaplan (2001, p. 178) to describe the phenomenon which has happened to the mass-market romance and some adaptations of Austen's works. It refers to 'the focus on the hero and heroine's courtship at the expense of other characters and other experiences.'

is reflected, for instance, in the way literature and productions destined to young adults, especially young women – popularly termed 'chick-lit' or 'chick-flick' – which focus on sentimentality are socially undermined[24]. However, Janet Todd (2013) argues that it 'is no accident that the fictional mass-romance boom paralleled second-wave feminism.' Amidst the social and cultural changes as pointed above, mass-market romance in the 1980s and chick flicks in the 1990s and 2000s seem to be a source of 'compensatory consolation' (TODD, 2013, p. 158). The analysis of The LBD may inform that the popularity of these productions cannot be simply hailed as desire for a past long gone or for the refusal of feminist's gains. Setting aside commercial interest that springs from the neo-liberal economy, these productions may reveal an urge to find balance, to make sense of how social interactions work in an ever-faster changing society.

Therefore, the following analysis aims at understanding *Pride and Prejudice* and *The Diaries* in two ways. Initially, both works maintain the romantic comedy layer which attracts the public more easily as a piece of entertainment. At the same time, they discuss issues that have great impact in the lives of women. In the case of *P&P*, marriage, money and social class greatly determine how they circulate in society. Also, subjectivity plays an important role through the composition of characters. Each character represents certain qualities that are more or less acceptable, and the weaving of their contradistinctions contribute to representation of the most acceptable ones (RYLE, 1966). Commensurately, *The Diaries* make it possible to discuss sentimentality, which we seem to deny cherishing. Besides that, other dilemmas in a young woman's life, such as career paths and leaving the parents' home, as well as the modern confusion between the public and the private that has been brought to the fore especially with the advances of technological devices. It seems that such play between the public and the private spheres of a person's life permeates the other aspects, particularly, marriage, social class and money in the case of this investigation.

4.1 MEANING UNDERNEATH THE SURFACE OF *PRIDE AND PREJUDICE*

The second of Austen's published novels is the one most adapted. It was also her and her family's favourite work. Because *Pride and Prejudice* is an early-nineteenth-century

[24] Janice Radway lengthily discusses mass-market romance in *Reading the Romance: women, patriarchy and popular literature* (1991). The theorist observes contradictory elements related to both the production and the consumption of this genre of literature. While it maintains some patriarchal views of the world, it is also a site for the discussion of women issues.

novel written by a British woman whose protagonist is a young lady in her marriageable years, meaning can be revealed in two different levels: the first contains the romantic comedy, easily sold in early nineteenth century; the second reveals, mostly through irony, Austen's hard work in the way she strategically structured the narrative's themes.

In her study of what she terms subversive comedy in Frances Burney, Maria Edgeworth and Jane Austen, researcher Audrey Bilger (1998) draws attention to the ways both women and humour came to be seen in the eighteenth century and how that may have contributed to shape a woman's place and possibilities in society. According to her, 'unless we recognize the efforts that were made to control women's behavior, we are apt to misunderstand the specific forms their comedy takes and thus overlook some of their most trenchant social criticism' (BILGER, 1998, p. 16). Different writings from conduct books such as *Fordyce's Sermons* to essays – as the one in which the poet Addison relates the male image with Humour (of good quality) and the female one with false humour (of bad constitution) – made consistent efforts to keep wit and laughter out of a woman's reach. So, 'unlike earlier views of women as disobedient and seductive daughters of Eve, the late eighteenth-century ideal of the domestic woman wrote resistance out of female character' (BILGER, 1998, p. 21).

Women were raised to obey their parents, but mostly their fathers, brothers and husbands. They were raised to be sweet, delicate, obedient wives who would maintain the stability and security of a home. In this sense, 'because the preference for sentimental comedy relied so heavily on images of domestic order and because domestic order required that women be subordinate to men, social fears of noncompliance and disruption made it difficult for a writer to be comic, critical, and female' (BILGER, 1998, p. 21). In this sense, understanding *Pride and Prejudice* as having at least two layers of meaning corroborates such argument as that by Gilbert and Gubar (2000), who establish that 'women from Jane Austen and Mary Shelley to Emily Bronte and Emily Dickinson produced literary works that are in some sense palimpsestic, works whose surface designs conceal or obscure deeper, less accessible (and less socially acceptable) levels of meaning' (GILBERT, GUBAR, 2000, p. 73). Those 'less accessible levels,' in *Pride and Prejudice*'s case, reveal opposing views concerning marriage, money and social class in a woman's life, and make it possible to picture the portrayal of women in that period.

4.1.1 Marriage, social class and money in the lives of women, and the play between impression and reality

Although Jane Austen did not leave room in the novel for the overt discussion of philosophical, political or social topics, such as in characters' monologues (SPENCER, 2012), the way she did craft her characters allows for the discussion of social topics such as marriage, social class and money. The analysis begins with a discussion on marriage because it certainly centralises the other two themes, money and social class; and it is the destiny of women in the historical timeframe of *Pride and Prejudice*. As we have seen in Chapter 1, Austen lived in a time when, depending on a woman's social class, she could not attempt any professional career; she generally did not inherit property and therefore depended on fathers, brothers or husbands to provide them with a living. However, she could not rely on parents forever, so marriage was her chance of security. Such is the context of women in *Pride and Prejudice* whose plot is set during Elizabeth's marriageable years, which includes it in the group of works termed courtship novel (GREEN, 1991).

The plot problematises different types of marriage and points to the one which would be the most desirable. The opening chapter of the narrative already points to it as the discussion between Mr and Mrs Bennet about the upcoming new neighbour, Mr Bingley, who is single 'and in possession of a good fortune,' is presented as a scene. Aside from the topic itself, the way the couple interacts and the way the chapter ends, with a comment from the narrator, sets the tone for the type of marriage she will later demonstrate as the desirable one. The narrator says:

> 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. When she was discontented she fancied herself nervous. The business of her life was to get her daughters married; its solace was visiting and news. (*P&P*, p. 3, emphasis original)

This paragraph hints at the incompatibility of the couple that is further developed later in the novel. Mr Bennet does not respect Mrs Bennet; he is always ready to find in her a reason to laugh. Their lack of connection is shown, for example, when Mrs Bennet applies to Mr Bennet to order Elizabeth to accept Mr Collins' proposal. The way he handles the situation clearly reveals how different they feel:

> [Mr Bennet] Your mother insists upon your accepting it. Is it not so, Mrs Bennet?
> [Mrs Bennet] Yes, or I will never see her again.
> [Mr Bennet] An unhappy alternative is before you, Elizabeth. From this day you must be a stranger to one of your parents. – Your mother will never see you again if you do *not* marry Mr Collins, and I will never see you again if you *do*. (*P&P*, p. 77 emphasis original)

Mrs Bennet is not herself an exemplary mother, as she is too indulgent with her younger daughters, and neither is Mr Bennet an exemplary father. Although he is sensible, well read and intelligent, he neglects his offspring. We see later in the novel, that Lydia's elopement may ruin not only her own life prospects, but also her sisters', so her misguided education jeopardises the whole future of the family since, if not for Darcy's love for Elizabeth, Wickham would not have married the youngest Bennet daughter. The aforementioned paragraph on the Bennet couple may be understood as an implicit explanation/hint for Lydia's behaviour and the cost of marrying unsuitable partners.

In a sense, Mr and Mrs Bennet's conjugal life posits a challenge to Charlotte Lucas' opinion of marriage, which she expresses very early in the novel in a conversation with Elizabeth concerning Jane's discretion towards Mr Bingley. While Charlotte sustains that there is plenty of time to fall in love after the wedding and that, therefore, the woman must show more affection than she actually feels in order to 'secure' a husband, Elizabeth says Jane and Bingley have not interacted long enough in order to know each other's 'leading characteristic[s]' (*P&P*, p. 14). In Charlotte's opinion, 'happiness in marriage is entirely a matter of chance. If the dispositions of the parties are ever so well known to each other, or ever so similar beforehand, it does not advance their felicity in the least' (*P&P*, p. 14).

Charlotte Lucas deals with marriage in a very practical way: for her, it is only a matter of subsistence and therefore security. It is almost a business transaction in which she provides the home with a mistress, and Mr Collins provides financial security. Money and marriage cannot be thought of separately. It is not fortuitous that the one characteristic of a single man mentioned in the famous opening sentence should be 'good fortune.' The one reason why Mrs Bennet is so concerned with her daughters' marital prospects is to secure their future. Charlotte's case illustrates the situation. If you read beyond Mrs Bennet's affectation and nervous crises, you understand that her desire of marrying her daughter is founded on a legitimate concern: Longbourn estate is entailed to a distant cousin, Mr Collins, and the family has no male heirs. That means destitution when Mr Bennet passes away. *Pride and Prejudice,* along with all the other five novels by Austen, discusses the connection between

sustainment, money and marriage in a woman's life. In this novel, Charlotte's decision to marry Mr Collins despite his personality accounts for the situation of women in Regency England, although it is not approved of by the protagonist.

While the Lucas family rejoiced with the news of the engagement between Mr Collins and Charlotte, the latter analysed her situation. It is through the narrator's deployment of free indirect discourse that we learn of her thoughts:

> Charlotte herself was tolerably composed. She had gained her point, and had time to consider of it. Her reflections were in general satisfactory, Mr Collins to be sure was neither sensible nor agreeable; his society was irksome, and his attachment to her must be imaginary. But still he would be her husband. (*P&P*, p. 85)

Charlotte is a twenty-seven-year-old woman, daughter of a large family. At this age she has already become a burden to her parents, and she has a practical vision of marriage. She does not have an ideal of romantic happiness. Instead, all she wants is be called the mistress of a home, which means to have security and sustainment. The narrator makes it clear when it complements Charlotte's thoughts with a brief explanation of the situation of women pertaining to Ms Lucas' social rank:

> 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 women of small fortune, and however uncertain of giving happiness, must be their pleasantest preservative from want. (*P&P*, p. 85)

Charlotte is well aware of Elizabeth's judgment of her acceptance of Mr Collins' proposal – both because she knows her friend's opinion concerning marriage and Mr Collins, and because the clergyman himself had proposed to Elizabeth only a couple of days before. Therefore, she decides to talk privately with Elizabeth and tell her the news. After an awkward conversation, Elizabeth is left to reflect on her friend's decision: 'Charlotte the wife of Mr Collins, was a most humiliating picture! – And to 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 tolerably happy in the lot she had chosen' (*P&P*, p. 87). By her analysis of her friend's choice, we begin to learn how Elizabeth feels towards marriage and money.

Elizabeth's and Charlotte's conceptions of happiness in matrimony could not be more different: for the former, it lies in the compatibility of the couple's personalities and perceptions of the world; for the latter, it lies on the financial security it can provide. In a sense, these two characters' voices are populated with voices from the social context they live

in. Regency England witnessed a gradual change in the reasons for marrying: Charlotte represents the old norm, that of arranged marriages according to familial and property interests; Elizabeth represents the coming of a new norm, one in which marriage is based on mutual affection (GREEN, 1991).

Despite Elizabeth's opinions on Charlotte's decision to marry Mr Collins, it is curious that she does not maintain the same parameter when she judges Mr Wickham. When her aunt Mrs Gardiner warns her on the imprudence of 'an affection which want of fortune would make so very imprudent,' she agrees with her aunt. And, when she learns that Wickham has directed his attention somewhere else, she is not as judgmental as she had been towards Charlotte: 'The sudden acquisition of ten thousand pounds was the most remarkable charm of the young lady to whom he was now rendering himself agreeable' (*P&P*, p. 102). The narrator is quick to observe, and judge, might we add, Elizabeth's change of behaviour: 'Elizabeth, *less clear-sighted* perhaps in his case than in Charlotte's, did not quarrel with him for his wish of independence' (*P&P*, p. 102, my emphasis). As the protagonist accounts for Lydia and Kitty's sadness for his change of affections, she says 'they are young in the ways of the world, and not yet open to the mortifying conviction that handsome young men must have something to live on, as well as the plain' (*P&P*, p. 103). What about the handsome as well as the plain women? Need they not 'have something to live on' too?

The aforementioned scenes may confuse the reader as to what is the direction the novel takes towards the combination of marriage and money. While Charlotte was wrong, in Elizabeth's eyes, to seek security, Mr Wickham not only is allowed but encouraged. It clearly contradicts what this dissertation has been trying to advocate so far – that, although Austen maintains the traditional social structures such as matrimony, she tries to change them from within – Elizabeth's marriage to Darcy being the foremost example. It is through a subtle detail in the narrator's voice that we may be able to dissipate confusion. She calls Elizabeth 'less clear-sighted' in Wickham's case, which means she was clear-sighted when judging her friend's decision. Describing Elizabeth with such adjective, the narrator is telling the reader that Elizabeth is overall right when she condemns the traditional terms in which marriages were sealed.

Money remains a topic of conversation for Elizabeth now when she is talking to Colonel Fitzwilliam, Darcy's cousin. As they talk about Mr Darcy and she points out how much Darcy 'enjoys the power of doing what he likes,' the following dialogue exchange unfolds:

> ‘He likes to have his own way very well,’ replied Colonel Fitzwilliam. ‘But so we all do. It is only that he has better means of having it than many others, because he is rich, and many others are poor. I speak feelingly. A younger son, you know, must be inured to self-denial and dependence.’
> [Elizabeth replies]
> ‘In my opinion, the younger son of an Earl can know very little of either. Now, seriously, what have you ever known of self-denial and dependence? When have you been prevented by want of money from going wherever you chose, or procuring any thing you had a fancy for?’ (*P&P*, p. 125)

This conversation reveals the connection between money and social rank. A son of an Earl – even if a second one – has still more chances in the world than the second sons of less privileged families. Although Elizabeth does not directly point to the situation of women – probably another moment in which Austen chooses to remain an observant and lets us think over her possible meanings –, we may argue that, when the protagonist overtly questions what perils a second son of an Earl might have, she might be thinking: do you have any idea as to what a woman who depends on men around goes through because of money shortage?

Now, if, in order to have security, women must marry, another difficulty arises, that mentioned by the narrator in Charlotte’s case: the social class ‘well-educated women of small fortune’ pertain to (*P&P*, p. 85). Social class, and its relation to money and marriage, is paramount for the action in *Pride and Prejudice*. Austen seems to have observed the transformations that were under process in Regency England’s society, and the emergence of another rank – the term social class was not in use then – that to which pertained the working people. As we shall see, there are various moments in the narrative when social class is at stake, under the narrator’s scrutiny, especially after observing characters’ attitudes. But, firstly, let’s locate Elizabeth Bennet and her family in the context of England.

According to David Spring, some theorists ‘have had trouble in agreeing on what to call “the three or four families in which the British author crafted her novels”’ (2009, p. 45). Among other definitions for her scope of analysis, throughout more than a century and a half of investigation, it has been called ‘middle class,’ ‘ordinary and middle life’; or she was named ‘the aristocracy’s annalist, or more commonly the gentry’s’; and finally a ‘bourgeois Jane Austen’ (ibid, p. 45). Spring tries to define what social class Elizabeth Bennet, the protagonist, pertains to and his conclusion is that she is part of a segment of the ‘modest rural gentry,’ which was a layer of society whose estates ‘in covering England in their thousands, managed to supply their owners with comfort and status sufficient to make them natural leaders of their local communities’ (ibid, 2009, p. 45). Elizabeth’s family seems to belong, then, to a group of such rank, which could be designed as ‘smaller-income gentry,’ once they do not lead their community however much Mrs Bennet pretends to do so.

Other family members related to Elizabeth who are mentioned in the narrative are Mrs Bennet's sister, married to a Mr Phillips, who succeeded her father as an attorney; and her brother, Mr Gardiner, who was 'settled in London in a respectable line of trade' (*P&P*, p. 18). His wife, Mrs Gardiner, was Jane and Elizabeth's favourite. While the Phillips join Mrs Bennet's improper and vulgar behaviour in general, when it comes to officers and gossip, the Gardiners are much more sensible and well educated. The narrator describes Mr Gardiner as a 'sensible, gentlemanlike man' who 'as well by nature as education' was superior to Mrs Bennet. It also adds that 'the Netherfield ladies' would be surprised to know that 'a man who lived by trade, and within view of his own warehouses' is 'so well bred and agreeable.' Of Mrs Gardiner, she observes that the lady 'was an amiable, intelligent, elegant woman.' (*P&P*, p. 95)

As for the Darcys and the Bingleys, the former come from a noble lineage and possess great extensions of property, while the latter ones come from 'a respectable family in the north of England.' (*P&P*, p. 10). Mr Bingley 'inherited property to the amount of nearly an hundred thousand pounds from his father.' Except for Mr Bingley, the rest of the party – Miss Bingley, Mr and Mrs Hurst and Mr Darcy – show a great sense of superiority during their stay at Netherfield. Miss Bingley and Mrs Hurst are quick to judge the inferiority of Jane's connections, as the following dialogue exposes:

> [Mrs Hurst] I have an excessive regard for Miss Jane Bennet, she is really a very sweet girl, and I wish with all my heart she were well settled. But with such a father and mother, and such low connections, I am afraid there is no chance of it.'
> [Ms Bingley]'I think I have heard you say that their uncle is an attorney on Meryton.'
> [Mrs Hurst] 'Yes; and they have another, who lives somewhere near Cheapside.'
> [Ms Bingley] 'That is capital,' added her sister, and they both laughed heartily. (*P&P*, p. 24)

Both sisters mock the fact that Jane's relatives pertain to an allegedly inferior rank, the working class, although they themselves only pretend to be part of the aristocracy. In Chapter 4, the narrator had already informed the reader how little did Miss Bingley and Mrs Hurst appreciate the fact that their own fortune 'had been acquired by trade.' Meanwhile, Mr Bingley, in a demonstration of his 'easy, unaffected manners,' his 'lively and unreserved' countenance and his 'amiable qualities' (P&P, p. 10) protests: 'If they had uncles enough to fill ALL Cheapside,' cried Bingley, 'it would not make them one jot less agreeable' (*P&P*, p. 24, emphasis original). Unfortunately for Mr Bingley, Darcy tends to agree with the women

as he says: 'But it must very materially lessen their chance of marrying men of any consideration in the world' (*P&P*, p. 24).

As the reader may surmise, the value of different social classes and its connection to money and marriage in Regency England is under discussion in *Pride and Prejudice*. In this sense, Mr Bingley's sisters echo – just as Charlotte Lucas's conception of marriage – the voices of the traditional English society when it comes to social standards. In this chorus, Mr Collins and Lady Catherine de Bourgh join avidly. He submits himself to her rudeness and condescension and misinterprets them as desirable qualities. She establishes her superiority in numerous opportunities, as when she tells Charlotte she is welcomed to practice the piano as long as she does so in a servant's room: 'and though Mrs Collins has no instrument, she is very welcomed, as I have often told her, to come to Rosings every day, and play on the piano-forte in Mrs Jenkins' room. She would be in nobody's way, you know, in that part of the house' (*P&P*, p. 118).

Lady de Bourgh's capital moment, however, happens when she pays Elizabeth a visit in order to know if the rumours she had heard of an engagement between the young woman and Mr Darcy were real. Her language is the most aggressive possible when she starts:

> A report of a most alarming nature reached me two days ago. I was told that, not only your sister was on the point of being most advantageously married, but that *you*, that Miss Elizabeth Bennet, would in all likelihood, be soon afterwards united to my nephew, my own nephew, Mr Darcy. Though I *know* it must be a scandalous falsehood; though I would not injure him so much as to suppose the truth of it possible, I instantly resolved on setting off for this place, that I might make my sentiments known to you. (*P&P*, p. 237, emphases original)

As Elizabeth defies De Bourgh, the latter says: '[…] honour, decorum, prudence, nay, interest, forbid it. Yes, Miss Bennet, interest; for do not expect to be noticed by his family or friends, if you wilfully act against the inclinations of all' (*P&P*, p. 239). De Bough foresees misery in Elizabeth's future, if she dares to intrude in her superior social rank: 'You will be censured, slighted, and despised, by every one connected with him. Your alliance will be a disgrace; your name will never even be mentioned by any of us.' (*P&P*, p. 239). Although Lady de Bourgh almost casts a curse on Elizabeth if she dares to join Mr Darcy in matrimony, the protagonist is self-assured and does not let herself be intimidated. She defies de Bourgh's submission to social order. Of course, she later marries the master of Pemberley, not entirely dismantling the prejudices of social class, only bringing fresh air to it.

It is clear from the portraits thus presented that the narrative aims at pointing out that rank does not determine a person's qualities, personality, behaviour. Lady Catherine de

Bourgh's rudeness towards Elizabeth is not so distant from Mrs Bennet's and Mrs Phillips' vulgarity. At the same time, the fact that the Gardiners own their living from trade does not make them any less genteel. Elizabeth knows part of this lesson, as the reader follows her at Rosings Park, for example, where she does not feel at all afraid of the place and of the people as Sir William Lucas and Miss Mary Lucas do. In fact, she felt 'quite equal to the scene, and could observe the three ladies [Mrs Jenkins, Lady de Bourgh and Miss de Bourgh] before her composedly' (*P&P*, p. 110). However, the fact that the protagonist misreads Darcy's personality, which does portray a sense of superiority, but also a difficulty in interacting with people, points to her still limited comprehension of the interference of rank in a person's behaviour. Both herself and Darcy must learn throughout the narrative that a person's sense of propriety and amiability does not come solely from rank, though education may have a great contribution. Such discussion, which is later brought back in *Emma* (1815), is more openly settled in *Persuasion* (1818) where the male protagonist, Captain Wentworth, is first rejected for being a naval officer and later has the opportunity to show his value, while Mr Eliot, a baronet who mishandled the family's finances, epitomises the aristocrats' desire of a time now gone.

When thinking of *P&P*'s themes – marriage, social class and money –, we come to realise that Austen does not overtly advocate against the social institutions established in England. Instead, she proposes particular forms of circulating within. Vivien Jones (2012, p. 285) informs that 'rather than suggesting that women's opportunities might be fundamentally different, Austen's principled heroines use their Enlightenment-inspired confidence to reform those structures from within.' Jones (2012, p. 285) observes that a 'feminist' awareness coexists with an 'essential conservatism.' She sees 'an impulse for reform, together with a readiness to work within traditional structures, is fundamental to Austen's fiction – uncomfortable though that has sometimes been for feminist commentators' (ibid, 2012, p. 285)

4.1.2 The dualities in character representation in *P&P*: expressing subjectivity

As mentioned in Chapter 1, the first draft of *P&P* was named *First Impressions*. A dictionary will, more or less, define an impression as 'the opinion or feeling you have about

someone or something because of the way they seem.'[25] In the novel, a duality is created as impression and reality are contrasted. As Austen's focus is on the individual rather than on social groups, characters[26], through their ideas, opinions and attitudes, perform their parts in the game of illusion and reality. The first indication that such duality is of importance for the narrative is clear when people in the village expect Mr Bingley and a supposed group of people he is bringing for the first ball he is to attend in the neighbourhood. In Lady Lucas' words, he went to London 'only to get a large party for the ball.' Her account is soon followed by a report that 'Mr Bingley was to bring twelve ladies and seven gentlemen with him to the assembly.' Such a number of ladies 'grieved' the girls, but they 'were comforted the day before the ball by hearing, that instead of twelve he brought only six with him from London—his five sisters and a cousin.' Finally, when the party joins the ball, 'it consisted of only five altogether – Mr Bingley, his two sisters, the husband of the eldest, and another young man' (*P&P*, p.6). Gossip, it seems, contributes to the dissemination of false representations.

Much more serious is the false representation Mr Wickham tells Elizabeth of his relationship with Mr Darcy. Along with her conviction that Darcy was responsible for separating her sister Jane and Mr Bingley, the report Wickham gave the protagonist of how Darcy had supposedly deprived him of an income is one of the charges she holds against the master of Pemberley when he first proposes to her. Because Wickham's manners 'recommended him to every body,' and 'whatever he said was said well; and whatever he did, done gracefully,' his tale of misfortunes at Pemberley was easily believed by Elizabeth (*P&P*, p. 58). It also helped that she was predisposed to dislike Darcy. In this sense, she was blinded for little details such as the fact that Wickham 'began the subject himself.' He tells Elizabeth: you could not have met with a person more capable of giving you certain information on that head than myself – for I have been connected with his family in a particular manner from my infancy' (*P&P*, p. 52). It also escaped her that the militia officer awaits for Darcy's departure to unreservedly spread his story about Darcy: 'The whole of what Elizabeth had already heard, his claims on Mr Darcy, and all that he had suffered from him, was now openly acknowledged and publicly canvassed' (*P&P*, p. 95).

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[25] Retrieved from http://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/impression. Accessed in Jul. 2017.

[26] When studying the components of a literary piece in structural terms, character is a category that reveals itself controversial at times due to the fact that they constitute anthropomorphic figures. Narratologists such as Mieke Bal avoid what is considered a mistake: to consider characters as real people and, therefore, analyse them using real people criteria, such as psychology. Although I do propose to analyse the characters with elements from the real world, some of Bal's elements for analysing characters seem relevant for this discussion. She considers patterns of repetition of characteristics, places they appear, the relations established among other characters In: BAL, Mieke. Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative, 2nd ed., 1997.

Mr Wickham, in fact, is central to the importance of what is told and what is withhold: Jane and Elizabeth's decision of not displaying his real character – painfully revealed by Darcy in his explanation letter to Elizabeth – to their family is thought by them to be of capital importance in Lydia's elopement. Despite Mr and Mrs Bennet's general inability as parents, there is a chance they would have prevented Lydia's trip to Brighton where the officers were stationed, had they used such argument with their parents.

Jane Bennet herself is also affected by what she represents to be and what she really is. For Elizabeth and Charlotte, early in chapter VI, Jane's affection for Mr Bingley 'was not likely to be discovered by the world in general, since Jane united with great strength of feelings, a composure of temper and a uniform cheerfulness of manner, which would guard her from the suspicions of the impertinent' (*P&P*, p. 13). While Elizabeth thought it a favourable quality, Charlotte warned 'it is sometimes a disadvantage to be so very guarded. If a woman conceals her affection with the same skill from the object of it, she may lose the opportunity of fixing him' (*P&P*, p.13). As it is, aside from the inferiority of Jane's connections, Darcy's conviction that she did not return his friend's feelings made him convince Mr Bingley to stay in London the whole winter.

The last, and subtler, duality between representation of character and the real character itself is Mr Darcy. A conversation between Elizabeth, Colonel Fitzwilliam and Darcy reveals that along with the latter's sense of his superior rank is also a complete inability to socialise. As the former two tease Darcy for not having danced at his first ball in the country, though partners were scarce, he defends himself: 'I should have judged better, but I am ill qualified to recommend myself to strangers.' Elizabeth defies him to answer 'why a man of sense and education, and who has lived in the world, is ill qualified to recommend himself to strangers?' to which he replies: 'I certainly have not the talent which some people possess of conversing easily with those I have never seen before. I cannot catch their tone of conversation, or appear interested in their concerns, as I often see done' (*P&P*, p. 119). It is through conversing, experiencing and being honest, both with themselves and with each other, that the characters, especially Darcy and Elizabeth, surpass the first impressions and embrace reality.

Besides the contrast between impression and reality, the duality[27] is also represented by the characters' personalities, opinions and feelings, that is, in their perception of and interaction with the world. In order to do that, the narrator's first step when describing the

[27] Mieke Bal (1997) also proposes observing characters through semantic axes, that is, pairs of contrary meanings, which is the attempt in this section, as *P&P* seems fit for observing dualities in the composition of characters.

characters is to generally withdraw the focus from appearances and physical qualities and focus on personality aspects. In this sense, Austen privileges discussions on moral aspects as each character will present a certain degree of pride, prejudice and vanity, topics that may pertain to a greater discussion, that concerning the moral (RYLE, 1966). So, you can approach the novel as pastime activity, or you can stop for a moment and observe the intricacies that are laid out in the composition of the characters in a deeper level. Robert Miles (2013, p. 15) points out that 'the reason Austen tests our critical mettle is that she is the great pioneer of character in the English novel.' She provides us 'not just characters we can understand and sympathize with, but personalities capable of taking up residence in our minds, where they flourish' (ibid, p. 15). He contends that among many factors that contribute for Austen's current popularity, one of the most important 'is surely her capacity to create the illusion of personality' (ibid, p. 15). Much of this illusion is afforded by the deployment of focalisation. From Elizabeth's biased point of view to those other eighteen characters' perceptions – as mentioned by Nelles (2006) – a network of characteristics is presented to the reader.

Regarding personality, then, when Darcy enters the assembly room, he draws attention for being a 'fine, tall person' with 'handsome features, noble mien,' but that is all forgotten when 'he was discovered to be proud; to be above his company, and above being pleased' (*P&P*, p. 6). Not even Mrs Bennet, and her desperate desire to marry her daughters, sees in Darcy an eligible man. Elizabeth is described by the narrator as having 'a lively, playful disposition, which delighted in anything ridiculous' (*P&P*, p. 7) while Charlotte Lucas is said to be 'a sensible, intelligent young woman' (*P&P*, p. 11). The absence of more specific details, and therefore attention to physicality, leaves room for the flourishing of the dualities, either in opposing or complementary terms.

The analysis starts by observing Elizabeth Bennet in a comparison with her friend Charlotte Lucas. As we have seen in the previous section, Elizabeth is shocked when she learns her dear friend is going to marry Mr Collins. Charlotte, being more practical towards marriage, represents the traditional view of such institution, while Elizabeth is more progressive, concerned with marriages based on affection. She also reveals elements of Enlightenment ideas as, for example, in the way she refuses Mr Collins' marriage proposal: 'Do not consider me now as an elegant female intending to plague you, but as a *rational creature* speaking the truth from her heart' (*P&P*, p. 109, my emphasis). Elizabeth, one might say, opposes Hannah More's position for women – one in which they are supposed to maintain England's tradition based on family structure and therefore marriage – to Mary

Wollstonecraft's defence of women's rationality, a position in which women are capable of reaching important decisions on their own and as it better suits them. Of course, she ends up marrying Darcy, which would displease Wollstonecraft (WOLFSON, 2012). Charlotte tells Elizabeth the news that she is marrying Mr Collins, and complements:

> 'I see what you are feeling,' replied Charlotte, – 'you must be surprised, very much surprised, – so lately as Mr Collins was wishing to marry you. But when you have had the time to think it all over, I hope you will be satisfied with what I have done. I am not romantic, you know. I never was.' (*P&P*, p. 87)

When Charlotte says she is not romantic, one might assume Elizabeth is, as she had already turned Mr Collins down for not loving or admiring him. While the former decides to marry, not only to conform to tradition, but also to secure her future, the latter was so surprised 'as to overcome at first the bounds of decorum' that she cried out: 'Engaged to Mr Collins! My Dear Charlotte, – impossible!' (*P&P*, p. 86). In this perspective, Charlotte would be the rational creature defended by the Enlightenment thinkers, if only she did not decide to marry due to societal constraints imposed on the women of her time. That is where Elizabeth's ideas appear as focused on the individual human being as a rational creature: 'She [Elizabeth] had always felt that Charlotte's opinion of matrimony was not exactly like her own, but she could not have supposed it possible that, when called into action, she would have sacrificed every better feeling to worldly advantage' (*P&P*, p. 87). When Jane tries to reason with her sister, Elizabeth says: 'you shall not, for the sake of one individual, change the meaning of principle and integrity, nor endeavour to persuade yourself or me, that selfishness is prudence, and insensibility of danger, security for happiness' (*P&P*, p. 93). The protagonist is very emphatic on her perception that integrity comes first, financial security, second. It is precisely what she demonstrates when she refuses both Mr Collins and Mr Darcy. In the latter's case, no social elevation or money in the world would make her marry the man who, in her words, ruined her sister's happiness forever.

It is also relevant to observe that Elizabeth does not play the games of courtship, as she does not prepare for marriage. As she tells Lady Catherine de Bourgh when she first visits Rosings Park, none of the Bennet daughters is really an accomplished lady, although those of them who 'wished to learn never wanted the means' (*P&P*, p. 113). She could have learned how to draw, dance, paint, and how to speak other languages as Miss Bingley asserts a lady must do 'to deserve the word' of a gentleman of Darcy's lineage (*P&P*, p. 26). As Susan Wolfson posits, 'Elizabeth has no particular care for this business or for the attendant

fashions, ribbons, and bonnets' (2012, p. 114). Instead, 'she bounds three miles across dusty fields, springs over puddles and stiles, appals Bingley's sisters with her muddy petticoat and ruddy complexion; her eyes are bright from exercise' (ibid, p. 114). She also 'will freckle and tan from touring outdoors with the Gardiners, and a walk of several miles with Darcy will clinch their engagement' (ibid, 114).

This contrast between Elizabeth's and Charlotte's points of view towards marriage represents a moment of transition of concepts concerning matrimony. Katherine Green draws from historians such as Lawrence Stone, Randolph Trumbach and John R. Gills, when they argue that new conceptions of the individual rights started to arise in the eighteenth century at the same time as 'a new conception of the spousal relationship, a shift from marriage based on parental arrangement and familial convenience to marriage based on an affective relationship between husband and wife' gained space (1991, p. 1). In this sense, 'rather than suggesting that woman's opportunities might be fundamentally different, Austen's principled heroines use their Enlightenment-inspired confidence to reform those structures from within' (JONES, 2012, p. 285). Elizabeth chooses to marry for affection and not for social or financial security. Therefore, the 'coexistence of a "feminist" awareness with an essential conservatism, of an impulsive for reform together with a readiness to work within traditional structures, is fundamental to Austen's fiction' (ibid, p. 285). In a certain sense, Austen establishes a balance between such different social aspects.

Other changes in the structures and thoughts of the British society during Austen's lifetime may be observed in the opposition between Mrs Gardiner and Lady Catherine de Bourgh. While Elizabeth's aunt lives in Cheapside, London, upon view of her husband's warehouses, Lady de Bourgh owns an aristocratic mansion in Kent. It is possible to observe that the former represents the new social class arising due to the Industrial Revolution, the working class; the latter, on her turn, represents the old order; the former is an elegant, sensible, intelligent woman, despite her supposed low rank; and the latter is arrogant, conceited and condescending. One is the picture of what a woman should be; the other, its complete opposite. Yet another example of how much personality and behaviour should be of more relevance than any social status or financial situation, at least in the universe of Austen's novels. Philosopher Gilbert Ryle's notion of Austen's concern with appropriate degrees of pride seems to corroborate this analysis (1966).

Austen seems to have crafted other characters in such a way as to demonstrate how she sees desirable and undesirable personalities. Mrs Bennet and her daughter Jane play their parts as to what behaviour is recommended or not. Mrs Bennet always feels too much: if she

is nervous, she locks herself in her room; when she praises, she is verbose, and she has no sense of decorum. At the Netherfield ball, while at dinner, she 'was talking to that one person (Lady Lucas) freely, openly, and of nothing else but her expectation that Jane would soon be married to Mr Bingley.' She 'seemed incapable of fatigue while enumerating the advantages of the match' (*P&P*, p. 68). It is after overhearing such conversation that Mr Darcy comes to the resolution of keeping Mr Bingley in London and away from Longbourn.

When Lydia elopes with Mr Wickham, she locks herself in her room and, when she receives Mr and Mrs Gardiner, it is 'with tears and lamentations of regret, invectives against the villainous conduct of Wickham, and complaints of her own sufferings and ill-usage; blaming every body but the person to whose ill-judging indulgence the errors of her daughter must be principally owing' (P&P, p. 192). The narrator's judgment of the inadequacy of Mrs Bennet's behaviour is clear. Her thoughts immediately change when she learns that Lydia will be married:

> Mrs Bennet could hardly contain herself […] her joy burst forth, and every following sentence added to its exuberance. She was now in an irritation as violent from delight, as she had ever been fidgety from alarm and vexation. To know that her daughter would be married was enough. She was disturbed by no fear for her felicity, nor humbled by any remembrance of her misconduct. (*P&P*, p. 207)

Her daughter Jane, on the other hand, is the embodiment of moderation and composure, as well as kindness. She is always willing to see the best in everybody, as Elizabeth sort of accuses her: 'Oh! You are a great deal too apt, you know, to like people in general. You never see a fault in anybody. All the world are good and agreeable in your eyes. I never heard you speak ill of a human being in your life.' (*P&P*, p. 9). Jane does not behave in an affected manner, as does her mother, on the contrary, she is discreet to such an extent that Darcy doubts she is in love with Mr Bingley. When she learns that Bingley is going to stay in London during winter, she suffers quietly. Elizabeth, for her disposition, is angrier than herself. It is only a couple of days later that Jane reveals to her sister how much their mother causes her pain for talking about Mr Bingley's absence: 'Oh, that my dear mother had more command over herself! She can have no idea of the pain she gives me by her continual reflections on him. But I will not repine. It cannot last long. He will be forgot, and we shall all be as we were before' (*P&P*, p. 92). Just as Elinor Dashwood from *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), she tries hard to constrain her feelings, because of her 'mild and steady candour' (*P&P*, p. 95).

In terms of expression of feelings, Mrs Bennet seems to be on one extreme, while Jane occupies the other, and neither of them seems to benefit either from affectation of moderation. It could be argued that Elizabeth occupies the centre, where she is not at all vulgar like her mother, but she does not refrain from expressing her opinions and feelings, and demanding people to explain themselves. She plays an active role, and her assertiveness, her spirited behaviour and her wit are fundamental to secure her the position of protagonist in a story. Ryle's analysis of pride in the novel complements the analysis thus performed. In his words, 'Elizabeth Bennet combines a dangerous cocksureness in her assessments of people with a proper sense of her own worth' while 'Jane is quite uncocksure. She is too diffident. She does not resent being put upon or even realise that she is being put upon' (RYLE, 1966, p. 289). For him, Mrs Bennet 'is so stupid and vulgar that she has no sense of dignity at all, only silly vanities about her dishes and her daughters' conquests' (ibid, 1966, p. 289).

It is also possible to draw a comparison between Elizabeth's and Darcy's youngest sisters, Lydia Bennet and Georgiana Darcy. Both are teenagers, brought up in very different households. The narrator describes Lydia as 'a stout, well-grown girl of fifteen, with a fine complexion and good-humoured countenance.' In its words the young girl is 'a favourite with her mother, whose affection had brought her into public at an early age. She had high animal spirits, and a sort of natural self-consequence' (*P&P*, p. 30). As we learn from Elizabeth's conversation with Lady Catherine de Bourgh in Chapter XXIX (*P&P*, p. 112-113), none of the Bennet daughters were encouraged to learn and perform those accomplishments Miss Bingley thought so indispensible for a woman 'to deserve the word' (*P&P*, p. 26): singing, drawing, dancing and know modern languages. Elizabeth explains to de Bourgh that 'such of us as wished to learn, never wanted the means. We were always encouraged to read, and had all the masters that were necessary. Those who chose to be idle, certainly, might' (*P&P*, p. 112-113). This is clearly Lydia and Kitty's case, since they are portrayed as foolish girls who are only concerned with flirting, as their father points out: 'From all that I can collect by your manner of talking, you must be two of the silliest girls in the country. I have suspected it some time, but I am now convinced' (*P&P*, p. 19). Mr Bennet, however, does not make any effort to help his daughters develop and grow into less silly young women.

Lydia stands out as being an outspoken, incontrollable flirt who laughs indiscriminately. She provokes the main dramatic conflict in the narrative when she elopes with Mr Wickham and carelessly endangers all of her sisters' future. Nevertheless, after 'the patched-up business' her marriage to Wickham was – as Lady de Bourgh so assertively points out to Elizabeth (*P&P*, p. 240) – 'Lydia was Lydia still; untamed, unabashed, wild, noisy, and

fearless' (*P&P*, p. 211). Of course her husband is sent to a regiment in the north, which means she is being subtly cast off her own society. She does not realise there is no coming back and enjoying the grounds of Pemberley with her sister Elizabeth, now its mistress, as often as she wished (*P&P*, p. 261). Nevertheless, this is not as near to what usually happened to a lady who engaged in scandalous behaviour. They would just be overall ostracised, and they would feel their lives were ruined forever. Lydia suffers a type of punishment, but she does play a more relevant part than being a warning against a flirtatious and imprudent behaviour (BILGER, 1998).

Lydia is what Audrey Bilger calls a trickster character: 'she is the polar opposite of an angel character: she makes people uncomfortable; she wilfully violates codes of female behaviour; and above all she laughs' (BILGER, 1998, p. 98). The theorist postulates that Lydia may carry a double voice, that which defies the impositions on women. It could be a breach through which we hear Austen's argument against things imposed on women such as being accomplished, which we have seen not even her heroine is. Lydia defies conduct books – in the figure of Mr Collins – as we have discussed in the analysis of the structure of the narrative. However, at the same time, a certain distance from such opinions is maintained in the fact that Elizabeth criticises her sister's behaviour, though she herself 'dearly loves a laugh' (p. 39). Unlike her sister, she hopes not to be a person whose main objective in life is to laugh. She says: 'I never ridicule what is wise and good. Follies and nonsense, whims and inconsistencies, *do* divert me, I own, and I laugh at them whenever I can' (*P&P*, p. 39, emphasis original). It seems there is a constant play between what it means and what it could mean.

Georgiana Darcy, we learn from Darcy and de Bourgh's conversation, excels at the piano, and is a very accomplished girl. The reader does not get to see Georgiana for herself most of the novel and the first accounts from Mr Wickham point to a proud, selfish young girl, with too much a sense of self-importance, much like Darcy himself is seen in the first third of the novel. Darcy's explanation letter to Elizabeth shows a young girl with 'affectionate heart,' unable to deceive her brother and elope with Wickham (*P&P*, p.137). Like Lydia, she is persuaded to elope with Wickham; unlike Lydia she is much more conscious of the pain and the trouble she would cause her family. Overall, Georgiana Darcy seems to be a shadowy figure that works as a reminder to Mr Darcy that Lydia's situation is not solely the result of her 'inferiority;' it could have happened in his own family. His family's and society's concern for the reputation of women did not prevent his little sister from almost falling into scandalous behaviour. At the same time, 'by refusing to silence

Lydia's laughter, Austen suggests that concern for reputation need not wholly govern a woman's life' (BILGER, 1998, p. 108). Furthermore, the portrayal of Lydia and Georgiana may demonstrate, as Austen indicates through all of her characters, that personality and a person's essential nature determine their actions and behaviour. There must be a sparkle of something within – which Ryle (1966) considers to be the moral – that may be developed if circumstances and environment encourage.

Finally, both Mary Bennet and Mr Collins are yet other examples that there must be something internal which is more important than any social imposition. We have already seen that education and good society have not contributed to turning Mr Collins into a sensible man. Instead, he remains a pompous, awkward man, kept by his wife as much as possible outside of the house tending the shrubbery. Mary, on her turn, 'had neither genius nor taste; and though vanity had given her application, it had given her likewise a pedantic air and conceited manner, which would have injured a higher degree of excellence than she had reached' (*P&P*, p. 16). Among the Bennet girls she is the only one who makes an effort at being accomplished, and the only one who sees any charm in Mr Collins, exactly for his studious manner and composure. They are very much alike, a representation of how education is not enough for recommending a person, be it a man or a woman. There must be something else that comes from reason and observation, thinking and rethinking.

This contrasting of characters reveals that Austen opposes what is external and internal in the composition of a person. At all times, behaviours dictated by social standards are presented as flawed because unnatural or unreal. Elizabeth and Darcy's prejudices against each other; Lady Catherine's sense of superiority or Charlotte Lucas's conforming to external rules; Miss Binley's pretention to pertain to aristocracy all oppose Elizabeth's and Darcy's internal search for self-understanding. Both undress from their pride and prejudice against the other's behaviours, rank, financial conditions, in order to accomplish something that becomes truer to both: their mutual affection.

4.2 *THE LIZZIE BENNET DIARIES:* PORTRAYALS OF WOMEN IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

Whenever any given text is adapted through a process of transposition (SAINT-GELAIS, 2005), one wonders as to the ways its meanings have been re-signified. Regarding *Pride and Prejudice*, the question is what happens to issues such as marriage still so important for a woman's life in the turn of the nineteenth century when its plot is transposed to the turn of the twenty-first century. Also, has it changed how women behave, or are expected to behave? Is social class as relevant to a woman's life? Or, like the analysis in Section 4.1 in this Chapter 4 informs, is integrity, and the composition of a person's character more relevant? Does money still dictate a woman's possibilities? This Section attempts to answer such questions, bearing in mind that an adaptation is to an extent an interpretation both of its source text and its own context (HUTCHEON, 2013). In the case of *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, this investigation proposes that its transposition from the novel aims to reflect upon the conditions of women in the turn of the twenty-first century. Therefore, *Pride and Prejudice* seems to work as a template through which other times and contexts can be discussed, much in the sense that Luciane Müller (2014) points out in the epigraph for this chapter.

4.2.1 Marriage, love ideals, and the denial of sentimentality

In *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, the emphasis on marriage seems to be apparently toned down, at least initially; otherwise as a modern adaptation it would sound anachronistic. That is what actually happens to Mrs Bennet in the series as she is brought to the audience through Lizzie's eyes/focalisation. She sounds anachronistic, because of the strong Southern American accent Lizzie gives her in her costume theatre scenes, and of her fixation on marriage as a solution for her daughters' lives. The first three episodes of the series are dedicated to presenting the main characters of the narrative. Charlotte, Jane and Lydia, besides Lizzie herself, appear on camera and present themselves directly to the audience. However, Mr and Mrs Bennet are only accessible to the audience through Lizzie's portrayal of them. The young women can be seen by themselves, and not only through Lizzie's eyes. The audience cannot access the parents, unless Lizzie discusses or portrays them using

costume theatre. The analysis in the next subheading should point out that the fact that Lizzie's parents are seen through her eyes, limits the understanding of their behaviour. Therefore, it contributes to the construction of the romantic comedy, and later on, to Lizzie's acknowledgment of her own prejudices.

4.2.1.1 Depicting The Bennets

In Episode 1 – *My Name is Lizzie Bennet*, the protagonist introduces herself saying: 'I'm a twenty-four-year-old grad student with a mountain of student loans, living at home and preparing for a career. *But to my mom the only thing that matters is that I'm single!*' (Ep. 1 – The LBD, my emphasis). During Regency England, marriage was the only prospect for young ladies of a certain education (GREEN, 1991). But, in twenty-first-century California-USA, they do have other possibilities in their lives, most commonly studying and following a career. Lizzie's introduction sentence demonstrates that. Still, Mrs Bennet's anachronistic portrayal set by Lizzie works as an anchor that maintains the discussion on marriage as an important topic to be continuously returned to. Moreover, it fuels the romantic comedy layer of the narrative.

Despite the fact that Jane and Lydia appear on camera, in Episode 2 – *My Sisters: Problematic to Practically Perfect*, Lizzie describes them. She does so presenting them in very different ways: Jane is the romantic, delicate one, 'practically perfect in every way,' whereas Lydia is the 'irresponsible substance abuser, who may inadvertently get pregnant at any time.' It is in this episode that Lizzie begins to present the ideas she has constructed of different types of women. The protagonist is more connected to Jane, the eldest Bennet daughter, who is portrayed as the most kind-hearted person Lizzie knows. Lydia, on the other hand, is the party girl on her way to turning twenty-one years old. The youngest of the Bennet daughters is criticised by the protagonist in every opportunity. It should be noted, however, that Lizzie's tone as she says Jane is 'practically perfect in every way' denounces a certain judgment or irony, exactly because Jane is too kind a person.

When it comes to the Bennet parents, their marriage in *The Diaries* seems to be as dysfunctional as their homonymous characters in *Pride and Prejudice*. In Episode 3 – *My Opposingly Supportive Parents*, Lizzie discusses them, informing the viewers that her mother has a more agitated temper, 'she loves a good panic,' while her father is of a calmer disposition, one who enjoys his days 'reading by his bonsai collection.' Emphatically, Lizzie

says: 'How these two ever got together I will never know!' (Ep. 3 – The LBD) Lizzie's interjection functions as an explanation of an implicit idea left by the narrator in the novel, at the end of Chapter 1, when both the Bennet parents are simply described with opposing characteristics:

> 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. (*P&P*, p. 3)

Also, probably due to the fact that they do not appear on camera – their dialogues are only re-enacted through costume theatre (See Section 3.2.2, Chapter 3) –, the audience only sees them through Lizzie's eyes. It differs from the novel, where judgment concerning their marriage is presented by the narrator, even if implicitly, in Chapter 1, before focalisation is set through Lizzie's eyes in Chapter VI. In *The Diaries*, the protagonist's view of her mother is so biased it bears a caricature of the character and, at least on the surface, of marriage too. In Episode 4 – *Bing Lee and His 500 Teenage Prostitutes*, the protagonist re-enacts a conversation she had with her mother about Bing and the people he is bringing to the Gibson weeding:

> [Lizzie to the camera] As I was saying, Bing Lee is on his way to the airport to return with an entire harem of women according to my mother.
> [Mrs. Bennet] *500 women. There are prostitutes, teenagers and probably not so distant cousins.*
> [Lizzie to her mother] And you want me to marry this guy?
> [Mrs. Bennet] Have you not been listening to me? *He's rich, handsome and single!*
> [Lizzie to her mother] And what makes you think there are 500 teenage prostitutes?
> [Mrs. Bennet] I just happened to be driving by his house five or six times, spoken to the neighbors, stolen his mail. Completely normal things.
> [Lizzie to her mother] Right. Of course.
> [Mrs. Bennet] Anyway, you, my dear, are missing the point. Those are now 500 women with a better chance of marrying that man than any of my *hopeless, pathetic, single* daughters. (Episode 4 – The LBD, my emphases)

Because the viewer does not have access to the actual conversation, it is not possible to determine whether Mrs Bennet really talked of such an incongruous number of women. It is very unlikely that she did. Chances are that this is in fact her own view of her mother's anxiety about having her daughters settled in marriage. Therefore, the quantity, types of women, and the adjectives 'hopeless, pathetic, single' might in fact be Lizzie's discourse, not Mrs Bennet's. The young woman's general portrayal of her mother, with a very strong

Southern accent, eccentric/old-fashioned clothes and accessories (See Image 1), as well as what seems to be an exaggeration on Mrs Bennet's view on marriage reveal the protagonist's prejudice towards her mother.

Img. 1 Mrs Bennet by Lizzie – Episode 4

Mrs Bennet's portrayal in such a light is fundamental for creating the illusion that Lizzie is not concerned with love relationships, let alone marriage. Because the videoblog is Lizzie's diary, and thus contains mainly her perspective of events, she can use the caricatural aspect of her mother's behaviour to divert focus from her own inmost private views concerning romantic relationships. As we shall see later on, she is afraid of confronting her own feelings. The way Mrs Bennet is portrayed by Lizzie resembles a reader of the mass-market romances so popular in the 1980s. Lizzie's mockery, one could say, does not target her mother only, but such type of reading as well.

4.2.1.2 Love ideals and sentimentality

Episode 5 – *After the Wedding: The Real Bing Lee* is a rather relevant spot to observe how the discourse concerning love ideals and marriage is constructed in the narrative. On screen, the viewer sees Lizzie dressed with one of Jane's cardigans and a hair accessory, while Jane wears a chequered jacket and holds a book as in Image 2 below.

Img. 2 Jane on the left dressed as Lizzie.
Lizzie on the right dressed as Jane

In the dialogue that ensues, there is a mixture of discourses: Lizzie dresses like Jane to talk as if she were the latter. What happens is that the discourse is actually the protagonist's. In response, while Jane pretends to be Lizzie, it is her own opinion she expresses. Firstly, the sisters seem to talk about each other's visions of romance:

> [Lizzie as Jane] Oh my God. I had the most amazing time. *Every guy ever wanted to dance with me*, but Bing […] stole my heart. We danced together almost all night. *It was like the stormy clouds of loneliness parted and his face was the sun shining happiness into my life.*
> [Jane as herself] I would never say that.
> [Lizzie as herself] You would so say that, 'cause I heard rainbows and puppies [as Jane] *Gosh, isn't life grand? Don't you think we make just the cutest couple?*
> [Jane as Lizzie] He is very handsome, Lizzie…Jane…Jane. But I would like to say something more mocking and bitter. (Episode 5 - The LBD, my emphases)

Lizzie ironises Jane for her romanticism using sentences overloaded with illusory images of love. Jane's reply, as if she were Lizzie, implies Lizzie has a satirical view of the world, or at least of romance. Although they wear costumes and make an effort to perform each other's roles, they end up revealing their own views of the world. In this sense, the costumes chosen to represent each other are symbolic. Jane's costume refers to attributes considered innately feminine. The headband refers to delicacy and a desire to look pretty, while the cardigan reminds of cosiness and comfort, warmth. Lizzie's costume, on the other hand, refers to the masculine. The chequered shirt is not supposed to be beautiful, but ugly. The book refers to study, rationality, and science, which ultimately may represent coldness, or a sceptical view of the world.

The conversation hits its climax when they discuss commitment. Here, it is possible to see that when Lizzie has formed an opinion it is difficult for her to modify it. She maintains the famous strong-willed characterisation of novel Elizabeth. She is blinded by the fact that her mother chose Bing Lee to marry one of her daughters. Such notion completely overcomes the fact that Jane liked him, and that he might actually be a nice person:

> [Lizzie as Jane] Maybe we'll just date for a while, get our sexy times on, that kind of thing.
> [Jane as Lizzie] Maybe. And maybe that will lead to something more pure and wholesome.
> [Lizzie as Jane] It's not like me to speak so hastily of commitment especially with a man that my mother picked out and practically stalked for me and my sisters.
> [Jane as Lizzie] No, but sometimes things just happen. And who knows? Maybe this is just meant to be. (Episode 5 – The LBD)

Jane seems to believe in love at first sight and romance. She fantasises with the possibility of having a relationship with Bing Lee. It is natural for her to express her sentimentality. Lizzie, on the other hand, is more guarded, as she seems to avoid romantic expressions of sentiment. She disguises it in the fact that Mrs Bennet supposedly picked Bing Lee for Jane. Also, it should be noted that while Lizzie downplays her mother's concern with marriage and mocks her sister's romanticism, she actually spends quite a lot of time discussing her sister's romantic life. She avows Jane's possibility of exercising her sexuality. As the narrative unfolds, the audience sees that Lizzie also has romantic desires, but she does not know how to deal with them. This is one of the instances in which she must grow throughout the narrative: balance her rationality and her sentimentality, and understand that these are not mutually exclusive. Ultimately, as the audience relates to her, one can say that her process of growth is shared as a lesson to be learned. It resembles the *tour de force* protagonists from the bildungsroman usually undertake in order to mature.

In this sense, *The Diaries* seem to present a popular culture version of the bildungsroman. In its classic style, 'the subject of these novels is the development of the protagonist's mind and character, in the passage from childhood through varied experiences— and often through a spiritual crisis— into maturity, which usually involves recognition of one's identity and role in the world' (ABRAMS, 1999, p. 193). As this investigation should demonstrate, *The Diaries* present characters who are young adults all trying to figure out their place in the world, their mistakes and their identity. However, instead of an incursion into their psychological aspects, the audience has them exposing themselves on camera. It is not an internal process only, since both other characters and the audience may interfere with such

development. Also, the videoblog is posted on YouTube, so it can be watched and re-watched as many times as one wishes.

4.2.1.3 Lizzie is single and happyish, or is she?

In Episode 9 – *Single and Happyish*, Lizzie discusses once more how her mother is obsessed with marrying her, and the other possibilities in a woman's life. She begins by saying, 'My name is Lizzie Bennet, I am single and that is perfectly ok.' It seems she wants to sound assertive in exclaiming it is 'ok' for her not to be involved in a romantic relationship. However, one might say she lets slip rather implicitly in the end of the episode that things could be easier if she were married. When criticizing her mother's view on her, the protagonist says: 'My pestering and traditionally valued mother has it cast in stone that I am practically an old maid at 24.' Instead of trying to understand her mother's point of view or even ignoring her, Lizzie takes it seriously. She does research in order to prove that she is not an old maid at such an age: 'But I have done my research! The majority of marriages occur significantly after 25 and they tend to be happier and longer. And the children of those marriages tend to live happier and more stable lives. *I have done the research*' (Ep. 9 – The LBD). One might say she is treating the matter rationally, because she collects scientific data. But the exalted tone in which she provides such information denounces how not being in a relationship affects her intimately. The use of the adjective 'happyish' in the title of the episode is yet another indicative.

Furthermore, although Lizzie criticises her mother for her fixation with marriage, she also presents a fixation: her mother. The protagonist's own fixation on her mother fuels the romantic comedy layer. This happens both because romance remains a topic, and because Lizzie's portrayal of Mrs Bennet is ludicrous. However, while such romantic comedy layer may be understood as a way to captivate popular audiences, in the case of *The Diaries*, it presents itself as a possibility of investigating the protagonist's views on the themes she ridicules. Ultimately, it contributes to composing the way women are represented in the series in a deeper level. One could argue that unlike general presentations of romantic comedy (DOBIE, 2003), *The Diaries* allow the 'social reality from which conflict springs' to be discussed (ibid, 2003, p. 252). Of course it does so in the level of the individual, in accordance to the *zeitgeist* of its time: the focus on first-person narratives (DOVEY, 2000).

One such example can be seen in the same episode #9, when Lizzie says: 'As it is no surprise to any of you, my mom has been preparing me for marriage my entire life.' In order to reinforce such idea, she tells a tale of her childhood in which her mother supposedly dressed her as a spinster for Halloween. Charlotte works as a balance and reveals what probably happened:

> [Charlotte]: You weren't a spinster that year. You were a witch.
> [Lizzie]: Nope. Definitely a spinster.
> [Charlotte]: Why would any mom dress her daughter as a spinster?
> [Lizzie]: To traumatize her into dedicating her life to find a husband. Are you not listening? So anyway…
> [Charlotte]: No, no, that's not it. I was there too. You were a witch, and a very loud one at that.
> [Lizzie]: I had an old shawl, a broom, and a warty hag face as a mask.
> [Charlotte]: Yeah. Exactly. A witch. (Episode 9 – The LBD)

It seems Lizzie fantasises the Halloween episode so she is able to prove her point concerning her mother's fixation. Despite being a diary, which implies a first person narration (See Section 2.2, Chapter 2), Charlotte's voice is fundamental to establishing a counter argument to the protagonist's opinions. The friend asks 'why would any mom dress her daughter as a spinster?' The idea of having a daughter dressed up as a spinster does not sound verisimilar, and Charlotte points that out. The way Lizzie displaces her mother's views through mockery works as an attempt to prove the point that 'all life doesn't revolve around men anymore' (Episode 9 – The LBD). Lizzie's voice echoes second-wave feminists' ones. In twenty-first century, a woman's life need not orbit around a man's, so marriage is presented as anachronistic through Lizzie's depiction of her mother. In fact, what is at play here is also a generational conflict between mother and daughter.

In *P&P*, Mrs Bennet's and Lizzie's views of marriage greatly diverge. While the former is concerned with financial security, the latter can only comply with marrying someone for affection. In *The Diaries*, the conflict involves what makes a person happy. After telling the Halloween tale, Lizzie says: 'What [Mrs Bennet] doesn't understand is that what makes me happy and what makes her happy are two very different things' (Episode 9 – The LBD). Again, one could say that *The Diaries* present an explanation for the ways both Mrs Bennet and Elizabeth are characterised in the novel. Or rather, what is implicit through the actions and ideas of the characters in the novel is put into words in *The Diaries*. This is a common trait of adaptations, since endeavouring to adapt any given work means

fundamentally interpreting it. In the case of *The Diaries*, such interpretation comes forward in dialogues as a way of explaining things.

Lizzie is actually repetitive when it comes to asserting a young woman's possibilities. She says: 'I can get a PhD. I can run a company. I can get one of those crappy mortgages and put myself in horrible debilitating debt. I mean, more horrible debilitating debt.' Directing her speech to the camera as though she were talking to her mother, she complements: 'So chill out, mom, cuz[28] I don't need a husband' (Episode 9 – The LBD). So far, the narrative at large, and Episode 9 specifically, is constructed to make the audience believe Lizzie is rather unconcerned with marriage. It is curious, though, the way Episode 9 ends. When Lizzie tells her mother she does not need a husband, Charlotte is quick to come from behind the camera into frame to say: 'But you still live at home.' As a reply, Lizzie exclaims: 'Buzz kill!' and shoves her friend out of frame. The colloquial expression refers to someone or something that ruins or spoils an otherwise enjoyable moment or event. When Charlotte says Lizzie still lives at home, she ruins Lizzie's confidence about not needing a husband. One might argue that it seems to be implicit in Charlotte's idea that had Lizzie been married, chances are she would be in a better financial situation, and not still live with her parents. Surprisingly, such argument seems to be at least acknowledged as a possibility by Lizzie when she implies through the expression 'buzz kill' that Charlotte has a point. Deep inside, it seems the protagonist, just as her mother, sees an idealistic connection between marrying and financial stability, although she generally denies both this connection and the desire to be involved in a romantic relationship. Ultimately, Lizzie herself becomes a caricature of the stereotypical feminist portrayed in postfeminist popular culture – as pointed by McRobbie (2009) and Whelehan (2010).

4.2.1.4 Lizzie judging women's behaviour

Considering that *The Diaries* are Lizzie's, the construction of themes revolves around her perspective of the world. While she lengthily discusses Jane Bennet and Bing Lee's relationship, the audience comes to know how she feels about love, sentimentality, and how she believes a woman should behave when it comes to these feelings. In Episode 11 – *The*

[28] Because it emulates real life vlogging, whose main characteristics are the amateur approach as well as the informal language, the characters' discourses happen in an oral and colloquial register, which will be preserved in the analysis.

Charming Mr Lee, she discusses the fact that Jane is being discreet in showing her growing affection for Bing Lee. She says, 'there is nothing more pathetic than a girl who throws herself at a guy the minute he starts to show the tiniest bit of interest.' It is interesting that the protagonist seems to favour a traditional view of a woman's behaviour: that who waits to be courted by the man. Why women should not demonstrate their feelings is an interesting question to be wondered at. Lizzie's line of thought is reinforced when Lydia is portrayed as an incontrollable flirt. Early on, in Episode 3 – *My Opposingly Suportive Parents*, when Charlotte performs Mr Bennet in costume theatre, one of the lines said is: 'And word around campus is that my youngest, Lydia, is a bit of a slut.' Through Lizzie's eyes, Lydia's right to exercise her own sexuality is out of balance, so she could be called a 'slut.' This postfeminist Lydia who is a party girl, not concerned with the double standard with which society judges the way men and women exercise their sexuality, is condemned by what seems to be a more conservative, feminist Lizzie.

When a swimming tournament – Episode 17 – *Swimming with Scissors* – takes place in the city, she says it is covered with swimmers 'like syrup on a waffle, ants on a picnic, Lydia on a swimmer.' She goes on saying: 'Personally, I don't mind to see a couple of burly bods walk down the street. You wanna put on a little flirt action, subtle, sexy, ladylike.' So, you may exercise your own sexuality, but there is a rule for it. While Lydia's behaviour may seem exaggerated, Lizzie wants to restrain a woman's sexual liberation to a particular pattern. Again, women have not total control over their choices. Lizzie goes on saying: 'What I don't like is Lydia surrounded by single men, single men who are planning to leave town literally within a week. Because when it comes to muscular guys, Lydia is about as subtle as Lydia' (Ep. 17 – The LBD). In the nineteenth century, such judgment on women's propriety dominated their lives and behaviour; in the twenty-first century, after the sexual revolution of the 1960s and all of the feminist movements, a woman is still judged as to how she behaves towards men.

Lizzie seems to reveal a sort of traditional view of relationships, although she avoids the discussion about her own love life. In fact, she plays a curious part when it comes to discourses related to a woman's behaviour. She is that strong-willed, intelligent, assertive young woman that has become the ideal representation of a woman. She faces the struggles concerning academic life and career, just as this ideal woman has had to face while still restrained by role expectations (VOIRET, 2003). She acts in such a way towards the institution of marriage as though she were a more extremist 1970s feminist. Her composition reveals some of the stereotypical elements popular culture seems to have identified with

feminism: the chequered shirt referring to masculinity; avoidance of romance and marriage. At the same time, she still wears the lenses of role expectations coming from a traditional point of view. Given her location in time and her historical context in the early part of the narrative, Lizzie may come forward as even more traditional than novel Elizabeth.

4.2.1.5 Lizzie hides her feelings

Lizzie's judgment of other women's behaviour seems to work as a protection, so she does not have to expose her own issues. In Episode 18 – *Douchebags and a Gentleman*, she shares with the audience she is feeling pressured by Jane. The eldest sister is in a relationship and she wishes Lizzie were too. The protagonist admits having gone to a party at Carter's Bar during swim week because of that, even though she is very cautious in saying it: 'Maybe part of the reason I went out with Lydia last night, small part, minuscule, was not unrelated to that' (Ep. 18 – The LBD). Her choice of words denounces how difficult it is for her to admit she would also like to be in a relationship. Simultaneously, she over-focuses on her sister's love life. In the first quarter of the series, Jane and Bing's relationship and her mother's desperation to get the daughters married seem to be the main topics of discussion. This focus on Jane works in three directions: it composes the romantic comedy layer of the narrative; it also seems to diverge her attention from her own problems, which are mostly related to her academic life and career; and it may serve as an indicative that she too is interested in a romantic relationship, however much she denies.

Despite the protagonist's biased point of view, she is aware of the fact that she lengthily discusses her sister's personal life, and also that her target audience is not interested in topics other than love. She implies that her audience is composed of postfeminist popular culture fans not interested in life dilemmas, only in the romance. In Episode 21 – *The Semester is Over*, she starts to explain how busy she was with the end of the semester and, midway sentence says: 'Well, you really don't care. Although it is kind of ironic when you think about it.' She is talking to the camera, which means the personal pronoun *you* in her sentence refers to the audience. It is ironic since *The Diaries* are a part of her master's project and, as her own diary, she spends a considerable amount of time talking about her sister. Considering summer activities, she complements: 'Because I spend so much time on this videoblog talking about school.' Lizzie is hiding behind her sister's love life discussions and her own judgment of women.

In Episode 22 – *The Unavoidable Invitation*, while she still struggles with the fact that she is too involved in her sister's love life, she tries to argue there is nothing interesting happening in her own life: 'It's not like there's anything in my life to be excited about: my lack of a career, my last year of grad school coming up, my uncertain future…' There's a double entanglement at play: while she acknowledges she is involved in her sister's personal life, and not discussing her own problems, she also acknowledges the existence of the romantic comedy layer as a distraction. She could be discussing her own life, but it seems so problematic, she would rather not. Marriage is obviously not the sole purpose of a woman's life anymore. Nevertheless, passing such threshold does mean there are not any other issues to be discussed concerning women's lives. Lizzie functions as a representative of contemporary women. She seems in conflict to understand this new social context in which freedom of choice gives the illusion of no standard behaviour for women. Meanwhile, she also struggles with the new opportunities that have become available, such as study and career prospects, which may guarantee independence and autonomy. In this sense, popular culture representation of feminist discussions being no longer necessary seems to be questioned. Lizzie is free to study and pursue a career, but that does not mean there are no problems anymore.

Moreover, even if the romantic comedy layer through Jane and Bing's relationship, and Lizzie and Darcy's lack of one is established to deliver the romantic comedy to the public in general, it does not mean other issues are left untouched. Career, finances, academic life, and leaving the parents' home are brought to the fore as well. It is a calculated move on the part of the writers of the series. Margaret Dunlap, one of the writers says: 'One of the things I felt really strongly about was making sure we weren't just telling a story about getting a guy' (DVD1/Bonus track/0:02:41/0:02:50). Kate Rorick, another writer, corroborates: 'The most important part of the story message actually had very little to do with romance. I wanted Lizzie herself to grow and evolve into a modern woman' (DVD1/Bonus track/0:02:51/0:03:00). Of course one cannot take for granted the fact that the writer probably implies it is a middle class white woman she is talking of. So, they deliver the pleasurable, fun story, and find room for debating new issues that have become relevant in a woman's life.

4.2.1.6 Lizzie is afraid to grow

Halfway through the narrative, Lizzie is still struggling with her life in order to become the modern woman desired by Rorick. In the introduction of Episode 50 – *Moving On*, she says: 'My name is Lizzie Bennet, and why is everyone moving on but me?' She, then, makes a list of people around her who have left town – Charlotte, Caroline, Bing, Darcy, Wickham and Jane – and realises she stayed behind. At this point, Ricky Collins has offered Lizzie a job she refused, but which Charlotte accepted; Bing has unexpectedly left town without saying goodbye to Jane; in an attempt at understanding the situation, Jane has accepted a job proposal in Los Angeles, where Bing moved to; Wickham has come and gone. In a melancholic tone, she shares with the audience: 'So, here I am: still in town; still don't have a job; still living with my parents.' So far, it does not seem she has an answer to the question in the introduction of the video. Unlike her parents' generation, Lizzie's one does not have the path already decided. She does not become an adult to marry and have children, while a man works to provide sustainment for the family. She can choose what to do with her life. It seems, however that she is not as assertive as she means to be. Ultimately, she is in doubt and afraid of the choices she will make. As McRoobie (2009) points out, this 'free to make choices' generation is being submitted to another regime: you can choose, but you must choose right.

Lizzie is only able to admit what troubles her when confronted by her sister Jane in Episode 70 – *New Jane*:

> [Jane] *Lizzie what are you going to do when you're done with your masters*? Where are you gonna go?
> [Lizzie] I don't know. It might take some time to figure it out.
> [Jane] I see. You're worried about me being away in the city, but *I'm really worried about you being afraid to live home.*
> [Lizzie] I was just gone for two months.
> [Jane] Visiting Charlotte isn't the same as leaving. When Ricky Collins offered that job to you this summer, why did you say no?
> [Lizzie] Because it was terrible, because I wanted to finish my degree. Because going off to do a job I would hate *in a new scary place would make me miserable*.
> [Jane] Aha! See. *You said scary! Can't a little part of you admit that a little part of the reason you said no was because you were scared?*
> [Lizzie] Fine. *Maybe a very small part was me being nervous about leaving home before I was ready.* […]
> [Jane] I just want you to think about it.
> [Lizzie] New Jane asks tough questions. I miss old Jane. She made craft projects and snickerdoodles, and never asked me to contemplate my life choices. (Episode 70 – The LBD, my emphases)

Around two thirds of the narrative have gone and Lizzie is still dealing with her dilemmas. One could argue she is scared to leave her parents' home because she still does not have a job position, or has not finished her degree. Although struggling, she admits she is simply afraid to leave home; she is scared to face the adult world. This gives her a certain character complexity for, though she is very outspoken and assertive about different subjects, when it comes down to it, she feels afraid of the real world. Such fear may be imposed by this new regime: what if she chooses wrongly? This reinforces the possibility of considering *The Diaries* as being a popular culture version of the bildungsroman.

Therefore, the transmedia project not only connects with a certain niched public, young people, because it resorts to social media to tell a story, but also because it tackles issues that are relevant to this social group. In this sense, even Jane, who is of a more moderate disposition, seems more open to embrace challenges than Lizzie is. Still in Episode 70, she talks of moving on, after having realised her relationship with Bing Lee did not work out. She says:

> [Jane] Life happens. Yes, I'm sad it didn't work out. Yes, I miss him. But being in L.A. has taught me a lot of things. I'm a lot stronger than I thought I was. And I'm really happy that I live there. I'm in a new city. I have a job that I love with people that are really cool, and interesting cool things. I don't need one failed relationship to define me. (Episode 70 - The LBD)

That Jane who was mocked by Lizzie for her romanticism in Episode 5 seems to have learned from her experiences and grown into a strong, more assertive woman. She admits she would be happier if she and Bing were still together, but she has to move on. Romance remains a relevant aspect of her life, but it is not the only one. Because of that, Lizzie says, 'new Jane sounds really kickass,' to which the eldest sister replies: 'New Jane so is! That's because she's having fun in her new life.' As it should be clear by now, other aspects/dilemmas of a young woman's life have as much relevance as the romantic plot in *The Diaries*. In this sense, the video diaries seem to fall out of that group of adaptations from the late 2000 and early 2010 pointed out by Marilyn Francus (2010). By saying this, it is not meant that works focused on the romantic comedy layer[29] are less worthy of attention. They, in fact, may be as much relevant as any other for they allow the discussion of a sentimental

[29] This issue involves different aspects related to popular culture, consumer market, women's studies. It invites long debates about what is considered chick-lit – literature for young women –, and its regulation by a consumer market. Because of that, theorists such as Francus (2010) are suspicious of the popularity and validity of such works.

level that is usually denied. This denial may even bear traces of a sexism that uses the idea of a niched literature genre for young women as an undermining label.

Meanwhile, *The Diaries* also do not belong to the postfeminist popular culture productions as understood by Imelda Whelehan. The theorist points out that women are portrayed ‘as enormously successful at work and simultaneously hopelessly anxious about their intimate relationships’ (WHELEHAM, 2010, p. 156). In this context, other topics focused on are the body, ageing, motherhood and consumerism as self-definition, which are discussed in the level of the individual experiences, not as a social group, are also themes of popular culture texts. That sense that everything has already been conquered by women (MCROBBIE, 2009) is not present in this adaptation. Each of the women struggles with the choices they are making, or should make. Therefore, despite the updating, *The Diaries* seem to be much closer to *Pride and Prejudice* than other adaptations in the sense that it discusses the challenges and dilemmas in the lives of twenty-first-century young women in a social context that still demands women to play certain roles.

4.2.1.7 The romantic hero should also grow

As a modern adaptation of *P&P*, *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* preserves the idea of a happy ending for the protagonist, one that happens in her own terms, which is always the ideal one. At this point in the narrative, Jane has gone to and returned from Los Angeles; Lydia has entered a serious fight with Lizzie, started dating George Wickham and fallen prey to him; Lizzie has almost finished her degree; Charlotte is settled and successful at Collins and Collins. Jane is, then, moving on to New York for a dream job, but her situation with Bing Lee is still unresolved. Episode 92 – *Goodbye Jane* sums up the representation of the ideal young woman in the twenty-first century, as it gives more in depth knowledge of the hero, Bing Lee. When he learns of Jane’s departure, he decides to talk to her, an encounter she was trying to avoid. She says that she ‘couldn’t have [Bing Lee] asking [her] to stay.’ She is clearly choosing her career over the person she likes: ‘This is a really incredible opportunity and there’s no way I’m gonna miss it. How unfair it would be of you to ask that of me. This fresh start is just not enough for me to give up my career.’ As Bing Lee invites himself to go with Jane to New York, she initially declines the possibility; on second thoughts, she accepts, but only in her terms: ‘It wouldn’t be coming with me, ok. You’d have to get your own place, and I’d get mine. […] We’re very different people now. I’m going for my career, my life.’

Ultimately, after struggling with her relationship with Bing Lee and her underpaid job, Jane has her resilience rewarded with a dream job, in a dream city, and a love partner. Most importantly, she has matured to understand what makes her happy. This is a journey both easily relatable to and desirable.

As much as the analysis is focused on women's issues, it is rather relevant to discuss the male characters' processes of growth. In general, adaptations focus on the main romantic pair, Elizabeth and Mr Darcy. In *The Diaries*, Bing Lee gains more relevance than Mr Bingley himself receives in the novel. In *P&P*, Mr Bingley is simply fooled by his sister, Miss Caroline Bingley, and his good friend, Mr Darcy. Once he learns of the real facts concerning Miss Jane Bennet and is encouraged by Mr Darcy, he readdresses his attention to the eldest Bennet. He remains a very asexual, childlike creature. The videoblog character, Bing Lee has an opportunity to share his process of growth. With an open heart, he talks about his struggles concerning academic and career choices, and how much he has grown. He tells Jane he quit med-school:

> I was heading to a lecture one day and I suddenly realized I don't want it, any of it. And then I went to a café and I was staring at a cup of coffee for eight hours trying to remember why I wanted to be a doctor. And I realized it was never really my choice. My family wanted me to be a doctor, and I wanted my family to be happy. But I wasn't happy anymore. I couldn't even remember the last time I was happy, until I remembered you. But I didn't even listen to what I wanted then either. (Episode 92 - The LBD)

Instead of being the strong men who can protect the lady, Bing Lee is the one who needed help. Just as Mr Bingley in the novel, he has let his family and friends conduct his life. After he watches Lizzie's videos, he understands how much he made Jane suffer, and how much his life was led by others. He could contemplate his life and come to understand what choices he wanted to make. Once again, growth seems to be related to individual experiences and choices. He has to learn about himself in order to see he did not want, or need, to follow what his family expected from him. Once he realises that, he feels more confident to choose.

As Jane is surprised with the fact that he quit med-school, he says: 'I was doing some volunteer work with some charities, mostly children's causes and disaster relief.' It is certainly a heart-melting explanation for a kind-hearted person such as Jane Bennet. When asked why he did not tell anyone, he goes on: 'I wasn't ready for anyone to know. My parents thought I was learning to be a doctor. I was really learning about myself.' This is his appeal:

being a sight for the female gaze, but also being able to admit his flaws and failures and learn from them.

Bing Lee embodies what Martine Voiret (2003, p. 232) calls ‘a manhood capable of experiencing what is usually considered the more “receptive” pleasures and attitudes.’ Receptive means more open to reflect upon life experiences, and this is related to feminine attitudes. In popular culture, at least until the 2000s, there were two types of masculinity: a hard one, such as those aggressive action heroes, while being soft was considered a weakness. Voiret points out that heroes such as Bing Lee ‘are appealing not only because they recognize the sexual subjectivity of their female viewers, but also because they present an image of masculinity that transcends the restricting conceptions of manhood presently available’ (2003, p. 232). For Devoney Looser (2001), most of Austen’s adaptations resort to such depiction of men. This reconciliation of the ‘contradictory demands of manhood’ is aimed at establishing ‘more just relationships with women and more complete understandings of themselves and their own emotions’ (LOOSER, 2001, p. 173). Contemporary desires of ideal relationships are imparted in the adaptations.

As it has probably been noticed by now, because marriage is not as prevalent in a woman’s life anymore, it leaves room for other discussions. Dunlap’s and Rorick’s statements on their conscious desire to make it more than a romantic comedy story reveal a sort of statement: the ideal that twenty-first-century young women are strong, assertive and intelligent people capable of learning from their mistakes and grow. Meanwhile, men should also be able to open up and grow. Ultimately, through their learning processes, they are able to decide their lives for themselves. Of course this is a very specific/niched group: middle-class white women. Other relevant issues, such as sharing children and household care, race, egalitarian salaries, abortion, sexual violence and so on are not accommodated in the plot.

4.2.1.8 Lizzie finally opens up

In terms of Lizzie’s feelings, she is so fixated on the idea that Darcy is unpleasant that she is unable to realise he might have feelings for her. Even when her sister Jane and her friend Charlotte attempt at showing her, she remains reluctant. After she shadows at Pemberley Digital, William Darcy’s entertainment company, and she spends more time with him, it is visible through their interactions that there are feelings flourishing in her. Nevertheless, she also denies them. In fact, what happens is a play with the expectations of

the audience. At times, she seems to demonstrate, especially through facial and eye expressions, at others she pretends it is not happening. This situation goes on up until the last episodes of the narrative. In Episode 93 – *Look Who's Back*, Charlotte pressures Lizzie once again to admit there was 'chemistry, heat, tension' between Darcy and Lizzie while she was shadowing at Pemberley Digital. However, overall she is very reticent, while Charlotte reminds her Darcy has already declared his love for her. Lizzie counter argues and the debate follows:

> [Lizzie] It was not a good day for either of us. And a lot has happened since then.
> [Charlotte] Exactly. You both got a chance to know each other.
> [Lizzie] Yes, and his feeling have almost certainly changed.
> [Charlotte] Have yours?
> [Lizzie] You know, sometimes I wish I could just shove you out of frame when you bring up something I don't wanna talk about. (Episode 93 - The LBD)

While Lizzie easily discusses other people's personal problems, she refuses to vent her own frustrations, especially when it comes to sentimentality and love. Just as Charlotte, the audience also knows Lizzie's feelings towards Darcy have changed. Her interactions with him have changed, and through the changes in tone of voice and facial expressions, it is possible to see she has learned to appreciate Darcy. Nevertheless, it is only in Episode 93 that she implicitly admits such transformation. In Episode 97 – *Special Delivery*, Lizzie tells the audience she has received no reply for the voice mail message she left on Darcy's phone. She seems disappointed, but refrains from expressing it. Charlotte comes in and brings two very classic broken-hearted motifs in narratives: ice cream and a cheesy movie. Charlotte does so because, as she says, Lizzie 'needed a distraction.' The protagonist insists she is fine:

> [Lizzie] I don't need a distraction.
> [Charlotte] Oh, yeah? You wanna show the lovely people your Internet browse history?
> [Lizzie] No! Honestly, I don't need to be distracted. I'm spending as much time as possible with Lydia. And I have my final independent study to do. (Episode 97 – The LBD)

When Lizzie discussed Jane's relationship, her own academic issues did not matter much. In Episode 97, she takes time to explain them in order to avoid the Darcy subject. Of course Charlotte works once again as the balance as she says: 'You've talked about everyone else's dramas and heartaches on your videos. Your sisters', your friends'… We come here and practically make confession. What makes this time so different?' Lizzie complies and

admits: ‘Fine. Am I disappointed that I didn’t hear from Darcy? Yes. But I don’t know why I expected to hear from him. I have no reason to expect anything from him. It’s not like he owes me anything. He’s already done so much. And maybe he doesn’t want anything to do with me’ (Ep. 97 – The LBD). After this conversation, Darcy appears at the Bennet house and they talk and understand each other. It is curious that it is only when she is finally able to concede she has feelings for Darcy that he appears for the resolution of her love dilemma. It seems to be a statement on how not to deny one’s sentimentality. Just as for the twenty-first-century woman, career and studies are important, love is also, and it need not be denied.

Finally, this discussion on the transposition of marriage can be summed up as follows: 1) Marriage no longer governs a woman’s life. However, this does not mean that sentimentality, or the desire to be loved, should be repressed. 2) The new goals of a woman’s life, such as studies and career, may posit as much of a struggle as the fear of becoming a spinster. 3) Freedom of choice also takes its toll. Because one can choose it does not mean problems will not arise.

4.2.2 Money, career and social class

In the social context of *Pride and Prejudice*’s Regency England, marriage was slowly on the course of becoming an alliance based on affection. But for some, it still remained a transaction between families (GREEN, 1991). Through such social institution, land and title were either maintained or acquired, so social class and money were of capital importance when sealing an engagement. Section 4.2.1 has discussed that marriage in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* is not as fundamental as it is in the novel, due to the fact that it is a modern adaptation set in the early 2010s. The dynamics of western society has changed considerably since the Industrial Revolution in the eighteenth century. Gradually, the establishment of industries and the need of a consumer market have rearranged the social order. A person’s capability of consumption seems to define their position in society. Money, therefore, has acquired even more importance, having become the standard of a person’s social status, and even their measure of success and happiness.

The following analysis discusses how the theme of money has been transposed from *Pride and Prejudice* to *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, especially concerning its impact in the lives of women in the narrative. In the first episodes of the series, the discussion of money is juxtaposed with that of marriage. The connection between such themes is rather implicit.

Unlike *P&P*, in which money is a direct reason to marry, in the modern adaptation the connection seems to remain implied as an attempt at setting a scenario for the portrayal of Mrs Bennet's anachronistic fixation with marriage which fuels the romantic comedy layer. As the narrative unfolds, money is amply discussed, especially by Lizzie and Charlotte, in its relation to career and professional fulfilment as well as idealistic and realistic views of both career and life. The following analysis aims at pointing out that what is at stake in the clash of Charlotte's and Lizzie's views of life is in fact the situation of the American Dream after the United States mortgage and student loan recession in 2007 and 2008.

Regarding social class, it should be noted that it is relevant to the extent that it generates the conflict in Jane and Bing Lee's relationship in the romantic comedy layer. They pertain to different social classes, and Caroline Lee tries to separate them in order to secure her family's interests. During Bing Lee's birthday party, she arranges a situation in which Darcy sees Jane being kissed by another man, who is drunk. He, then, decides to drag Bing Lee away to Los Angeles. Social class is also a problem in Darcy and Lizzie's relationship. In Episode 60 – *Are You Kidding Me?,* when Darcy is declaring himself, he points out that 'two parts of [him] have been at war,' because he loves her despite her 'odd family, [their] financial troubles.' He goes on saying that 'social classes are a real thing. You can't deny it. People who think otherwise live in a fantasy' (Ep. 60 – The LBD). Women, in the context of *The Diaries* have other concerns besides marrying, so the fact that Lizzie's and Jane's relationships could be hindered by their social class does not mean that they cannot have fulfilled lives, or that they will be homeless, like the Bennets in the novel.

The following investigation will inform that choice plays a very relevant role in women's lives in *The Diaries*, so they have other possibilities beyond any possible constraint imposed by their social class. In the North-American environment, where people are motivated to follow their dreams regardless of their contexts, feeling restricted by social class does not seem fit. Therefore, social class remains an issue only to the extent that it is the reason for conflict in *Pride and Prejudice*. The transposition to the videoblog maintains it as the cause of conflict in the romantic comedy layer, but it does not seem it can contribute to a deeper analysis such as that of sentimentality, money, and choice, as we shall see in the following discussion.

4.2.2.1 Money and Marriage

In her introduction line in Episode 1 – *My Name is Lizzie Bennet*, Lizzie says she is a 'grad-student with a mountain of student loans' while her mother only thinks of marriage. In Episode 4 – *Bing Lee and His 500 Teenage Prostitutes*, Lizzie opposes Mrs Bennet's concern with marrying off her daughters with the fact that 'Jane has to default her student loans again, even though she has a full time job.' Through Lizzie's point of view, the audience sees her mother's concern with marriage as foolish. In her perspective, she and her sister have more serious problems to worry about, such as the costs of their education. This is a direct reference to the crisis established in the college education market of student loans. Along with housing, education represents the ideal of the American Dream (BEST, 2012). In order to achieve such modern American Dreams, middle-class North Americans have acquired long-term mortgage and student loans that, due to the financial crises, have become un-repayable (BEST, 2012). In this context, it seems that the juxtaposition of marriage and money in the narrative of *The Diaries* implies that Mrs Bennet's solution for the family's financial crisis is getting their children married.

Episode 19 – *The Green Bean Gelatin Plan* presents Lizzie going grocery shopping with her mother at 4 a.m. because Mrs Bennet 'doesn't want any of the neighbours to see [them] using coupons.' Discount and sale coupons are a very common market strategy deployed, especially by supermarkets in The United States. The Bennet matriarch is concerned with losing their prestige if the neighbours know they are going through financial problems. This is the episode in which Mrs Bennet makes a green bean gelatin for Jane to take to the Netherfield Mansion. According to the forecast, it should rain, and the mother's plan is for the gelatin to melt over Jane's dress on her way to Bing's house. He would have to help her wash the dress. The idea involves a sexual tension between Jane and Bing. That is avoided by Lizzie, who saves her sister from the embarrassment by eating the gelatin. It is a cheesy plan that fails. Nevertheless, it contributes to keeping the themes of money and marriage juxtaposed, since whenever there is a mention to the Bennet's financial situation, there is also a mention to marriage. It is a subtle foregrounding for Mrs Bennet's old-fashioned desire – through Lizzie's perspective – to see her daughters settled in matrimony. However, it could point to Mrs Bennet's affliction concerning the family's financial situation.

Moreover, according to Lizzie, her parents are discussing acquiring a second mortgage for the house, as well as its falling value. She accidentally eavesdrops them talking about the situation, which means it is not an issue discussed in the family. Lizzie herself does not talk

much of 'personal financial details' in *The Diaries* because she does not want 'to share them on the Internet' and also because 'it's boring.' Nevertheless, the fact is that, as she points out, 'there is a reason [they] all still live at home, and Jane isn't paying back her student loans, but now it seems to be getting worse' (Ep. 19 – The LBD). The reason is the family's financial situation, possibly due to the country's financial crisis.

Suddenly, what was subtly juxtaposed in previous episodes is openly wondered at by Lizzie in Episode 19: 'Is this whole marriage fixation a race to get us out of the house before there isn't a house to get us out of it anymore?' Considering the plot development so far, the protagonist's inquiry provides an explanation for Mrs Bennet's somewhat anachronistic defence of marriage. As old-fashioned as the concept of marriage is, the idea implied is that when you marry, you move from your parents' house and they are no longer responsible for your sustainment. That would mean a relief in the Bennet household expenses, which would make it easier to pay the house mortgage. However, because Mrs Bennet is revealed to the audience through Lizzie's perspective, the impression is that the mother is a foolish, flat character. This is a direct approximation/updating of the representation of Mrs Bennet through Elizabeth's eyes in *Pride and Prejudice*.

4.2.2.2 Money, career dreams, and the American Dream

In *Pride and Prejudice*¸ Elizabeth Bennet and Charlotte Lucas encompass two distinct positions when it comes to marriage. Section 3.2.3 – Chapter 3 informs that Charlotte is very practical and considers that a woman should demonstrate more affection than she actually feels in order to secure a suitor's attention, and therefore a chance to marry. For her, 'happiness in marriage is entirely a matter of chance' (*P&P*, p. 14). Elizabeth, however, can only marry a man she respects and loves. She cannot stand marrying for convenience. When Elizabeth learns of Charlotte and Mr Collins' engagement, she thinks that 'Charlotte's opinion of matrimony was not exactly like her own, but she could not have supposed it possible that when called into action, she would have sacrificed every better feeling to worldly advantage' (*P&P*, p. 87). Charlotte represents tradition, or what is secure/safe, that is, marrying in order to obtain sustainment. Elizabeth, on the other hand, considering herself a 'rational creature,' cannot see how she and Mr Collins could ever be happy in matrimony. In the novel, the protagonist claims to rationalise 'worldly advantage' is not worthy her unhappiness.

In *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries,* the dilemma between friends remains that of sustainment versus happiness, but it is transferred from marriage to the professional aspect of their lives. Unlike other adaptations of Austen's works, the video series provides room for the development of issues other than the romantic conflicts located in the romantic comedy layer of the narrative. Therefore, Lizzie and Charlotte's divergent opinions concerning career paths are discussed throughout the narrative. Episode 16 – *Happiness in the Pursuit of Life* presents to the audience a lengthy dialogue between the two young women. In an idealistic tone, Lizzie tells the audience that Charlotte will 'be a great and talented filmmaking person of some sort fulfilling all her dreams.' When Charlotte enters the room, in a dismissive tone, she exclaims: 'Ah! Your imaginary fantasy land again.' It seems this is a recurrent topic of conversation, especially considering that they are undertaking the same graduate degree. Lizzie is very assertive when she determines her friend's future:

> [Lizzie] I do know what is going to happen. You're going to be famous, and successful, and most of all, happy.
> [Charlotte] That's very sweet, but no, you don't.
> [Lizzie] I know you, and I know how your mind works, and I know how hard you work. Your brain, plus your skills, plus your attitude, plus your annoyingly perfect skin equals 100% success.
> [Charlotte] I hate to burst your bubble, Lizzie. But success is mostly luck. Luck, hard work, and more luck. I've seen it.
> [Lizzie] When did you become such a Debbie Downer?
> [Charlotte] No matter how prepared you are, what sort of person you are, you can't predict happiness. Too many variables. (Episode 16 - The LBD)

For Lizzie, Charlotte has all that it takes to become a successful and happy person. It depends on herself only. For Charlotte, on the other hand, success does not depend entirely on her, because there are many elements involved that extrapolate her control. While one can consider Charlotte simply a realistic person, Lizzie sees her as a pessimist. That is why the protagonist calls her a 'Debbie Downer,' a Saturday Night Live character played by Rachel Dratch who would always bring bad news and negative feelings to the gathering, an attitude which brought the mood down. It should also be mentioned that Charlotte claims to have empirical knowledge of such unpredictability of happiness as she says, 'I've seen it,' whereas Lizzie's opinion seems to be based on her own perspective of life.

Moreover, it may also be noted that the title of Episode 16 – *Happiness in the Pursuit of Life* seems to contain an element from one of the most quoted sentences from the North-American 'Declaration of Independence': 'We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights,

that among these are Life, Liberty, and the *pursuit of Happiness*' (DAVID et al, 2017, p. 77, my emphasis). Pursuing happiness constitutes the imagery of the American way of life. Such mention could be a hint at a discussion on the current situation of the American Dream. Lizzie is inclined to believe that Charlotte should be successful no matter what happens, simply because she has college education and talent. She establishes a direct connection between following one's dreams and being happy. Charlotte, on the other hand, seems more affected by the reality surrounding her.

In Episode 21 – *The Semester is Over!,* the two friends are discussing job prospects, and their current financial situation comes to the fore. According to Charlotte, getting a job 'might mean [they] could move out of [their] parents' houses.' Even though Lizzie agrees, the question is what type of job each of them would accept. When Charlotte says Lizzie is picky, Lizzie replies: 'Hey, I'm not saying my job is to be saving the world or anything. But, you know, I'd like to at least not make the planet or the culture worse' (Ep. 21 – The LBD). Even though the protagonist tries to convince her friend she is not that idealistic, she asserts she would not take any job even if it meant stabilising her financial situation:

> [Charlotte] […] you'd turn them down?
> [Lizzie] Yeah, I would.
> [Charlotte] Even if taking the job meant you could save the house and you could give away huge amounts of your crazy money to charity?
> [Lizzie] It's so easy to do something for the money and say that you're gonna do good later, and then never get around to doing any good. Instead of getting rich so I can save the world, I'd like to find someone who's already rich who can pay me to save it for them. So that's my plan!
> [Charlotte] I thought you said you didn't need to save the world.
> [Lizzie] Well, I don't. I would totally settle for changing the culture. (Episode 21 – The LBD)

Ultimately, it is clear Lizzie is a dreamer, although for her that is how reality works out. She is convinced she can change culture through what she has studied in mass media communication. In fact, changing the world, or making some sort of impact at least, is a dream shared by the majority of young people when they leave college. So much so that in the North-American context where the narrative is set, famous and successful people from different fields give speeches in graduation ceremonies in order to inspire students to follow their dreams. They are usually people who started from scratch and achieved success, or who spent many years doing something they hated until they summoned the courage they needed to fight for their dreams. It's a reinforcement of the American Dream through which people are all equals and have the same rights and opportunities. Regardless of how controversial

such perspective might be, the fact is that Lizzie's own speech seems to be permeated by such imagery.

4.2.2.3 The generational clash between Lizzie and Mrs Bennet

The aforementioned debate over career choices is intensified by Ricky Collins' presence from Episodes 36 to 43. He is just as tedious as Mr Collins from *P&P*, and just as anachronistic as Mrs Bennet, especially due to his verbose 4-syllable-word discourse. The character is constructed to embody unpleasantness even when he is trying to compliment, for he does not seem to have any social skills. For the sake of the analysis, the focus will remain on Episodes 38, 39, 40 and 42. In Episode 38 – *Tale of Two Gents*, Jane and Lizzie compare Ricky Collins and George Wickham. While Jane and Lizzie discuss them, the latter refers to Collins' career: 'He's gotten some rich woman to give him lots and lots of money.' Jane considers that 'all things being the same, money is nice to have.' As a product of her environment, Lizzie does not refuse money either, although she is very critical of his use of it: 'I'm not disparaging money. I'm disparaging his intent to use it to make bad reality TV' (Ep. 38 – The LBD). In Lizzie's view, whereas the former is boring and in that career for the wrong reasons, the latter is charming and is following his passion. This is again juxtaposed with their family's financial problems, as the sister mentions their 'dad's mortgage meeting' and their 'mom going to the bank.' Finally, Lizzie is tense about her family situation as she exclaims: 'Sometimes it feels like too much.' It does not seem coincidental that Collins's practicality, Wickham's passion, the family situation and Lizzie's reaction are brought together in one episode. Actually, the mood is being prepared for the next episode, #39, when Ricky Collins offers Lizzie a job. It is important to build the grounds so that Lizzie's refusal of said proposal provokes an impact.

In Episode 39 – *The Insistent Proposal*, the financial security Mr Collins proposes to provide Elizabeth, in exchange for a mistress to his house in the novel, is transformed into a job proposal at the company Collins & Collins. As usual, Ricky Collins is very self-absorbed and loquacious, an idea enhanced by the editing of the video. When he explains to Lizzie the reasons for seeking a partner, the sequence is cut right after he says each of the following words: 'firstly,' 'secondly,' 'thirdly.' The audience has access only to the last argument, after he says 'finally.' Such editing strategy implies he spent a considerable time talking, which contributes to Lizzie's growing irritability as she declines the proposal and shoves him out of

the room. Unlike the novel where Elizabeth takes more time to explain her reasons for not accepting Mr Collins, here she is very direct. In a sense, she realises his self-absorption and thus his incapability of listening to her. As for the audience, they already know Lizzie's opinion of Ricky from previous episodes, both in personal and professional terms, as well as her perspective on career goals.

Just like the novel, Lizzie has to face her mother's reaction at her refusal. Mrs Bennet tries to dissuade her daughter into accepting the proposal. This is what the audience learns from Lizzie, since her mother remains unaware of the videos. So, Lizzie uses costume theatre once more in order to portray what Mrs Bennet might have said if she were talking to the audience:

> Oh! Hello there, everyone! I just wanted to step in for a moment and apologize for my middle daughter, Elizabeth. Her lack of manners, her poor judgment, her personal habits. I'd like to apologize for everything about her, but mostly for tuning down a very lucrative proposal from young Mr. Collins. But, never mind, since she is incapable of speaking rationally, I'll be speaking for her from now on. And for my husband too. He does not understand the gravity of the situation at all. Men! (Episode 40 – The LBD)

The generational clash, just as in the discussion of marriage, is brought to the fore. According to Lizzie's portrayal, her mother does not understand her at all. At the same time, although presented through parody in a costume theatre scene, this is the only moment Mrs Bennet has a chance to talk directly to the audience. If one sees beyond Lizzie's mocking/parody, it is possible to recognise the matriarch's burden. As well as her homonymous character in the novel, it falls to her lot to resolve the family's problems. Mr Bennet 'does not understand the gravity of the situation.' Furthermore, when she exclaims 'Men!,' she implies this reticent behaviour is a common trait of men in general. So, if they are not going to do anything, someone else must. One could even say that her desperation, as exaggerated as Lizzie's portrayal can be, springs from the fact that she is ultimately alone in resolving family issues.

Lizzie's counter argument against her mother's insistence on her accepting Ricky's offer is that she is an adult capable of deciding for herself. At this point, the mother is implacable: 'Well, if you're such a grownup, perhaps you should be living on your own. Of course, for that, you'd need some sort of income. Had any offers of employment lately?' Among this generational conflict questions of what it means to be an adult are at stake. For Mrs Bennet, being an adult means being able to provide for one's own sustainment. It is her

generation's practical view of life. On the contrary, it seems that for Lizzie, being an adult concerns more abstract, psychological aspects, or perhaps simply the fact that she has achieved legal age. Younger generations tend to be more idealistic about happiness, profession and relationship goals.

4.2.2.4 The Fallen American Dream

Even though Lizzie and Charlotte are the same age, and thus come from the same generation, their conceptions of how to pursue happiness in life diverge. They are both passionate for their field of study, but when called into action, their responses are very different. As the analysis of Episodes 16 and 21 has pointed out, Charlotte is more pragmatic towards life, while Lizzie embodies an idealism which makes her refuse Mr Collins job offer. The clash between idealism and realism reaches its peak in Episode 42 – *Friends Forever*. For the protagonist, her friend 'has lost her mind.' Charlotte tries to rationalise as to why she needs to take the job:

> [Charlotte] *It's not that simple.*
> [Lizzie] Of course, it's simple. You tell Ricky you're not taking the offer.
> [Charlotte] I can't.
> [Lizzie] Yes, you can. I'll call him for you.
> [Charlotte] No. I'm taking the offer. I want to take the offer. *I need to take the offer.*
> [Lizzie] *You don't need to do anything.*
> [Charlotte] *Yes, I do, Lizzie. Like you, my family is in debt. Like you, I'm in debt. Just more debilitating than yours.*
> [Lizzie] No. you're not.
> [Charlotte] We live in an apartment. We used to live in a house. My younger sister is about to start college. There is no house to sell.
> [Lizzie] What about school? Your advanced degree?
> [Charlotte] Didn't you say our degrees doomed us to a life of unemployment?
> [Lizzie] That was a joke.
> [Charlotte] And Ricky Collins is offering me one. It's an amazing and lucrative opportunity. Those don't come around every day. (Episode 42 – The LBD, my emphases)

It is not simple for Charlotte; she cannot just blindly follow her dreams. She has debts to pay. And, as much as Lizzie also has hers to pay, she cannot sacrifice personal fulfilment for them. It calls attention how overtly passionate Lizzie is in her arguments to convince Charlotte to desist of Mr Collins' job offer. It might be due to the fact that unlike Elizabeth in the novel, she is able to be more straightforward in the twenty-first century. Nevertheless, in contrast with Elizabeth from the novel, she does not seem as rational, especially if one

considers each of the contexts. In the novel, Charlotte's decision to marry Mr Collins is for life. As she abides to tradition, she changes her entire future, since divorce, for instance, was not yet well accepted for a woman. In Elizabeth's view, her friend is doomed to unhappiness for life. On the contrary, in *The Diaries*, Charlotte's choice is not unchangeable. Should she feel unhappy or miserable as Lizzie predicts, it is possible for her to change. Nevertheless, the protagonist reacts as though her friend's life was destroyed.

As Lizzie tries to convince Charlotte to give up the job offer, she mentions the fact that should Charlotte leave to work at Collins and Collins, she will not be able to finish her advanced degree. It is yet another hint at the American Dream. For Lizzie, finishing school is more relevant than taking the job. People obtain college and advanced degrees so they can get better jobs and better salaries. However, the thing is that Ricky Collins' offer is 'an amazing and lucrative opportunity.' Considering the crisis environment and the uncertain future, Charlotte feels safer by taking the job, than by believing in a dream. Of course, as the adaptation maintains the happy ending, both are happy with their choices. Charlotte grows in the company, learns how to become fulfilled and, with Collins departure to open a branch in Canada, she becomes the CEO of Collins & Collins. Lizzie, for her part, figures out what to do after she finishes college. She is going to use the project for a start-up business she created based on her videoblog to start her own company. Jane has also encountered her happiness with a job opportunity in New York. Lydia Bennet, however, is the one who does not have a happy ending, romantically or otherwise, as the following section should point out.

4.2.3 Lydia Bennet's case and the portrayal of women

Considering that Elizabeth Bennet has become an iconic female protagonist, who has been the basis for numerous other characters (see Section 1.4, Chapter 1), one would expect her to deserve a section of her own in this analysis. The fact is that *The Diaries* do not modify the heroine's journey; it is only updated from Regency England to twenty-first-century California-USA. However, Lydia Bennet's journey is greatly transformed, especially due to her interaction with George Wickham. In *The Diaries*, she remains the youngest daughter. She is an extravagant and outspoken young woman. Since it is the 21st century, she goes to college just like the other girls her age, but she is reckless, and does not seem to think about her future. Instead, she seems to focus all of her energy on social activities such as parties and gatherings with friends at the mall. She personifies Lizzie's antithesis. Through the analysis of

the youngest Bennet's journey in *The Diaries*, one may identify elements of both the interpretation of the novel, but mostly elements that configure the context of production.

Like Jane, Lydia appears early on in Episode 1 of the series, so as Lizzie says, 'people can come to their own conclusion.' When she appears in the Episode, she comes to talk about the new neighbour, Bing Lee, who has just arrived in the neighbourhood. The girl says he is 'rich, hot and single,' and exclaims 'Jackpot, right?!' 'Jackpot' is a colloquial word that refers to the prize won in a lottery, for instance. Lydia means that dating Bing Lee is like winning the lottery. Lizzie's facial expression denotes her disapproval towards her younger sister's behaviour. As it is possible to see along the narrative, Lydia portrays herself in a rather noisy way with profuse gesturing.

In Episode 3 – *My Opposingly Supportive Parents,* Charlotte plays Mr Bennet's part in an imaginary conversation with Bing Lee. She says: 'Word around campus is that my youngest, Lydia, is a bit of a slut.' Lydia listens to it and demands an apology. The dialogue is supposed to be created by Lizzie; hence it is she who considers Lydia a slut. Lizzie spends the greatest part of the narrative criticising Lydia's behaviour. For her, the youngest sister makes the wrong choices, dresses vulgarly and behaves inappropriately in public places. Also, Lizzie considers her parents lenient with her, while Jane, for her loving disposition, is incapable of seeing people's flaws. Meanwhile, what happens is that the protagonist focuses solely on her sister's flaws, although she argues it is out of sisterly care.

In Episode 14 – *I Really Suck at Videogames*, Lizzie discusses the fact that Jane might be making the wrong decision in dating Bing Lee, but she, then, focuses on Lydia. She says: 'There's still a Bennet sister with a longer track record of bad decision making.' She refers to the fact that Lydia was drunk and dancing vulgarly with a young man. Just as novel Lydia, the youngest sister does not seem to care much for other people's opinions: '[Lydia] Ben and I were just having a little fun. Is that so wrong? / [Lizzie] If by Ben you mean David. /[Lydia] Whatever.' (Episode 14 – The LBD). This is an inversion of what is common sense men's behaviour: dating a girl and not remembering her name the next day. Here it is Lydia, a girl, who forgets the young man's name. She is fully enjoying the freedom to exercise her own sexuality, to make her own decisions, to have fun at a party. What happens is that she seems to be lacking balance in what she does. In Episode 15 – *Lizzie Bennet is in Denial*, Charlotte makes a remark on what happened at the bar: '[…] we had to drag a drunk Lydia away before she ended up in jail.' There is a sense of judgment in Charlotte's choice of words and tone of voice. This is one of the few situations in which Lizzie's and Charlotte's opinions coalesce.

4.2.3.1 A deeper Lydia

The difference from the novel to *The Diaries* is that in the first Lydia remains the same character. There is no development or change: 'Lydia was Lydia still; untamed, unabashed, wild, noisy, and fearless' (*P&P*, p. 211). In *The Diaries*, if the audience goes past the initial portrayal of the girl, as well as her sister's focus on the flaws, it is possible to see a young girl who is unguided by her parents and misunderstood by her sisters. Through her facial expressions and the ways she looks at the camera and at Lizzie, it is possible to have glimpses of what is underneath such party girl masquerade. In fact, as the youngest daughter, she wants to fit in, to be given attention and love. One relevant example is in her need to be part of her sister's videos. She enters the room without knocking; otherwise Lizzie would not let her in. She also wants to help in the videos. In Episode 20 – *Enjoy the Adorbs*, the audience learns she studied improvisation techniques in order to film the episode. She shows interest in her sister's world. However, such interest, because of her extravagant unbalanced behaviour, is misunderstood as desire for online exposure and fame.

Episode 23 – *One Sister Behind* marks an important moment in the increasing depth of Lydia's character. When Lizzie discusses the fact that Jane and Bing's relationship is becoming serious, she exclaims: 'Oh my God! I'm gonna lose Jane.' Lydia barges in and the following dialogue takes place:

> [Lydia] What up, sis? Hey, are you ok? I heard yelling and general Lizzie's freaking out over something ridiculous noises.
> [Lizzie] Just contemplating the loss of my beloved sister Jane.
> [Lydia, excited] Well, you'll always still have me, right?
> [Lizzie, ironically] Yay! I got to keep the boy crazy, completely irresponsible substance abuser.
> [Lydia, in a disappointed, sad tone] Yeah…anyway, just wanted to see to see how you're doing after last night. (Episode 23 – The LBD)

Lizzie is unable to see beyond Lydia's screaming, laughing and profuse gesturing, while Lydia shows her sadness for her sister's incomprehension to the audience as she looks at the camera. The girl is hurt, as possibly anyone would if your sister defined you as 'boy crazy, irresponsible substance abuser.' It seems Lydia does not get demonstrations of love from Lizzie. In the novel, on the contrary, the reader does not get to know Lydia more deeply, possibly because she is mostly seen through Elizabeth's eyes. As for *The Diaries*, things become more complex when Lydia does not confront her sister for her words. Instead, she quickly changes subjects so Lizzie does not notice anything. However, once more before the

end of the episode, Lizzie displays her frankness, or rather her inability to choose words. As Lydia returns a favourite necklace apparently lost during Bing Lee's party, the protagonist says to her: 'What have you done with my baby sister?' Lydia's reply is 'I love you, sis!'

4.2.3.2 Lack of communication

What happens in *The Diaries* is that Lizzie and Lydia do not truly talk to each other. They cannot communicate well, and things are either unsaid or badly said. In fact, lack of communication is something that happens throughout the narrative in the relationships between Jane and Bing, as well as Lizzie and Darcy. However, the one which stands up is certainly that between Lizzie and Lydia. That is because, in a sense, each of them embodies some stereotypical traits used to represent women in popular culture. It has been said before in this analysis (see Section 4.2.1.3, this Chapter) that Lizzie could be related to the image of feminism popularised by popular culture. She is strong-willed, outspoken, unworried about appearance, beauty and fashion, someone who does not let her guard down when it comes to men. All such traits reinforced by her theatre costume: a greyish chequered shirt. Lydia, on the other hand, is always concerned about fashion and beauty, drinks and goes to parties, and enjoys her sexuality regardless of a possible double standard in society. One could say Lizzie embodies some traits of the image of a feminist, while Lydia embodies some of those related to post-feminism[30].

Moreover, despite Lydia's attempts at demonstrating her feelings, the fact is that they cannot communicate successfully. Both Lydia's and Lizzie's views are clouded by their stereotypical conceptions of one another. Such situation culminates in Episode 73 – *2 + 1* when Lizzie gives her younger sister her birthday present. It is a book titled *Where Did I Park My Car? – A party girl's guide to becoming a successful adult.* Lydia seems to pretend she understands the gift is a joke, and laughs loudly. As Lizzie says it is not a joke gift, Lydia is clearly disappointed. The protagonist tries to explain herself, but the situation only deteriorates. On the one hand, Lizzie wants to help her sister become an adult through self-help books. It looks like she considers Lydia a *tabula rasa*. She does not have any knowledge and therefore should be taught on how to become an adult. Once more, Lydia seems to

[30] In Lydia's case, it should be noted that, unlike most representations of women in postfeminist popular culture (See Tasker and Negra, 2007; McRobbie, 2009; Wheleham, 2010), she is unconcerned about studies and following a career, or having a plan for the future. In fact, she is exercising her freedom of choice to such an extent that she chooses not to choose.

disguise what she actually thinks, and says that 'being grownup is totes squaresville.' This means that being an adult is totally unfashionable, or conventional. However, the misunderstanding deepens when Lizzie uses Darcy's vocabulary to describe her sister:

> [Lizzie] There's plenty of upsides of being a mature, responsible adult. Maybe it would be good for you not to be so energetic all the time.
> [Lydia] Energetic?
> [Lizzie] Yeah! I think that's a good word for you. Energetic!
> [Lydia] Why? Because Darcy used it when he was talking about how terrible me and mom are?
> [Lizzie] No, no, not in the same way. No…I…
> [Lydia] And so you must also think that I am an embarrassment to everyone, and clearly never think before I speak. (Episode 73 – The LBD)

Lizzie tries to argue as to why it is important to become an adult, and how Lydia should tone down her extravagant behaviour. Inadvertently, she uses a word that reminds them of how the Bennet family was judged by Caroline and Darcy. They are the ones who see Lydia and Mrs Bennet as embarrassing. The youngest Bennet is offended by what she sees as Lizzie 'taking their side over [hers].' The more Lizzie tries to explain herself, the angrier Lydia gets:

> [Lizzie] […] *Sometimes people form hasty impressions and while they might not be completely accurate, it can be useful to understand how people came to those conclusions so that you can change the way people see you*. If you want to.
> [Lydia] *So you want me to change?*
> [Lizzie] Everybody has to change, Lydia. It's part of growing up. It's not always a bad thing.
> [Lydia] Right…right. I'm sure you also gave dad a book on how to better manage our finances. Did mom get one on not being too involved in her daughters' love lives? […] What about Jane? Any words of wisdom for our beloved older sister? No, nothing. *Just me, then*. (Episode 73 – The LBD, my emphases)

While Lizzie is concerned with the impression people have of Lydia, the youngest Bennet feels as though she were a problem to the family. She is the only one who cannot be herself, who has to change so as to fit a desired pattern. Lizzie, for her part, is concerned with said pattern and how the impression people have of Lydia may interfere with her succeeding in life. As Lydia leaves the room, Lizzie directs herself to the camera and says, among other things: 'We live in a very judgmental world […]. I don't want Lydia's reputation to close doors for her in the future, and she needs to be aware of that. She's not a kid anymore. I meant well. That counts for something' (Ep. 72 – The LBD). Although it is not explicit in Lizzie's words, the bottom line is that she is concerned with society's double standard when judging a

man's and a woman's behaviour. The protagonist's fear resonates a more conservative perspective on women's behaviour. Lydia cannot be a party girl, and be successful and respectable at the same time.

4.2.3.3 Lydia's fall

After Episode 73, Lizzie and Lydia's relationship is broken by various arguments. Lydia remains offended by Lizzie's birthday present and expects her to apologise, while Lizzie maintains her position: she is looking after her youngest sister. It is the end of the year, and Lydia convinces her parents to let her go spend New Year in Las Vegas. She is, in fact, provoking Lizzie: 'Don't even bother watching my videos while I'm gone. You think I'm too much to handle now? You just wait!' Lizzie replies with a less than cordial tone: 'What makes you think I would even want to?' (Ep. 74 – The LBD) Lydia says she is going where people can really appreciate her. That is the trap. In an updating of Lydia's elopement in the novel, it is in Las Vegas that she encounters George Wickham and falls prey to him.

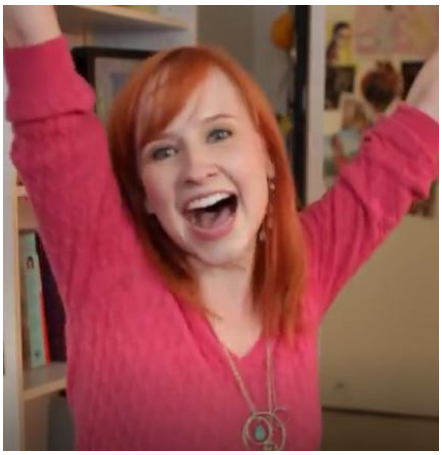
Whenever Lydia and Lizzie are apart in the series, the youngest Bennet films her own videos, *The Lydia Bennet* (see description in Section 2.2.3, Chapter 2). This happens when Lizzie is at Netherfield with Jane; shadowing at Collins and Collins with Charlotte Lu; and shadowing at Pemberley Digital, Darcy's company. The last separation comprises the period in which the sisters are fighting, and Lydia starts dating George Wickham. Now, while Lydia watches Lizzie's videos and is aware of what happens in them (such as Darcy's use of the word 'energetic'), the protagonist ignores her younger sister's videos. Especially after the fight in Episode 73, Lizzie is self-absorbed at Pemberley Digital. This is a narrative strategy to prevent Lizzie from knowing that George Wickham was manipulating Lydia, and interfering with it. In possession of such knowledge, she could have warned her sister about his character. However, she only comes to know about their involvement when she learns about the sex tape George Wickham is going to upload to the Internet. It has a recording of Lydia and George's intimacy. He organizes a countdown to gain money out of it.

In *Pride and Prejudice*, Lydia is fooled into believing that Mr Wickham is actually going to marry her, so she readily agrees with the elopement. As we know, he only marries her because Mr Darcy pays his debts and also her dowry. Novel Lydia, as it has been mentioned elsewhere in this dissertation, remains unchanged. She exults in the fact that she married before her older sisters. She is seen as a woman who does not receive a severe

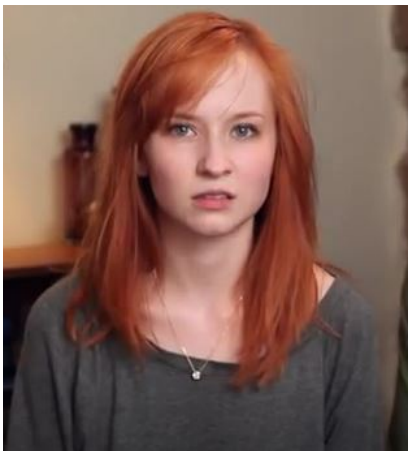
punishment for acts. Her reputation is not completely destroyed by her imprudent behaviour with Mr Wickham, despite being sent to the North away from her family and social context. Just like novel Lydia, web Lydia is fooled by George Wickham. However, unlike novel Lydia, she is deeply hurt by the man. He makes her agree with recording their intimacy as proof of her love for him. She is unaware of the impending online exposure of a sex tape 'with YouTube star Lydia Bennet.' She learns about it through Lizzie, in Episode 85 – *Consequences*, and she is shocked at such revelation.

It is relevant to observe that George Wickham takes advantage of Lydia's Internet fame to promote his videos. While the videoblog discusses women behaviour in contemporary society, it also tackles issues related to the Internet. The over exposure of the private life into the public arena which started with factual TV in the 1990s (DOVEY, 2000) has been brought to another level since the spread of the Internet. Virtually anyone can post a video online, and it seems society is still in its first steps to understand the cost of such exposure. In Lydia's and Lizzie's case, all of their family dramas are presented on the web, without any type of control over who accesses it. Novel Lydia exposes herself in public places because her behaviour is untamed. Web Lydia, on the other hand, not only has her energetic behaviour exposed, but her frailties upon which Wickham preys. In a certain sense, one could argue that Lydia's fall works as a warning to audiences as to what happens when you do not properly manage the ways you expose yourself online.

In Episode 87 – *An Understanding*, a very different Lydia appears on camera (See Images 3 and 4). Before the sex tape episode, she wears colourful clothes and accessories; her hair is tidy and she wears more makeup. In this episode, her hair is untidy, there is less makeup and she wears a grey blouse. The exterior appearance reveals how she feels inside. She says: 'None of this would've happened if I hadn't been acting like a stupid horrid slut again, right?' Instead of getting angry with George for what he has done to her, she blames herself, because she let him film them in bed. She tells Lizzie: 'How freaking pathetic is that? I went after your ex. I said terrible things about you. Just tell me that I didn't get what I had coming? I thought I was *for once* good enough for somebody' (The LBD – Episode 87, my emphasis). Her judgment of herself is permeated by Lizzie's judgment, and what she considers is the audience's as well. She means Lizzie was right to consider her a slut (Episode 3). Although this is not a psychoanalytical analysis, one could say deep inside she lacks confidence because she does not feel appreciated by others, her family included.



Img. 3 Lydia in Episode 69 – *Summer Friends*



Img. 4 Lydia in Episode 87 – *An Understanding*

The bottom line is that web Lydia's journey follows a completely different route than that of novel Lydia. Observing such moments when adaptations reflect and diverge from their source texts may contribute to understanding their contexts of production, or rather what the vision of their own time shared through the production is. In adaptations of Jane Austen's works this is particularly interesting to observe because of its feminocentrism. Devoney Looser (2001, p. 159) informs that 'when the adaptations modulate characters differently or when scenes are added or changed […] we can see precisely how the adaptations contribute to a "mainstreaming" of feminism.' Through Lydia's case, one might see different perspectives on women's behaviour at play. The fact that she suffers to an extent that makes her change her behaviour may be understood as a type of punishment, one that novel Lydia did not go through. It seems that one of the reasons she is punished for is her misuse of the freedom women have acquired due to feminist struggles of the 1970s and 1980s. The fact that she is placed in opposition to Lizzie – the bookish, serious, career-focused young woman who wears chequered shirts – avows such interpretation. Nevertheless, this is not the sole reason why Lydia is punished.

4.2.3.4 Judgment, guilt and growth

At a first glance, postfeminist Lydia is punished for her misuse of freedom, and of the Internet. Nevertheless, it seems Lizzie is somehow responsible for her sister's suffering as well. Initially, she is unaware of Lydia's involvement with George due to the fight they had in Episode 73 – *2 + 1*. It culminates a long list of smaller events in which both of them seemed

to be blinded by their own views of one another. Lizzie failed to see her sister beyond the extravagant behaviour she judged to be superfluous and vulgar. Lydia, for her part, conscious of her sister's judgment, also criticises Lizzie for the way she dresses, for studying too much, and for being single. When the sex tape incident happens, Lizzie realises she did not pay enough attention to her sister. In a conversation with Darcy, she says: 'I could've prevented this. […] I could've told Lydia exactly the kind of guy George Wickham is, but instead I've been petty. I haven't even spoken to her since Christmas' (The LBD – Episode 84). Again, when talking to Jane, the protagonist says, 'It was my job to protect Lydia. Messed that up. […] If I had just watched her videos, or talked to her' (Episode 86 – The LBD). Lizzie feels responsible for Lydia's suffering. In a very exalted tone, and demonstrating acute anxiety, Lizzie unbosoms herself to the audience:

> I went back and watched all of Lydia's videos. I don't know that girl. It's like my sister is a person I've never met. Then I thought: "How could I not have seen her when she was standing right there in front of me?" Sometimes I feel so clever, and rational, and appropriately analytical about the world around me. I'm a grad student. It's what I do, what I'm supposed to be skilled at doing: communicating and relating, and acknowledging that people do not fit into neat little boxes, or wrapped up and tied in string. (Episode 87 – The LBD)

Lizzie strips away her pride and prejudice and recognises how wrongly she has acted towards her sister. She feels she has failed exactly where she was supposed to be good at: communicating. Biased by the ways she thought a woman should behave, she could not understand why Lydia was acting the way she did. Ultimately, it seems that all Lydia wanted was to feel important and loved by her family. As she felt misunderstood by her family, she sought comfort in George Wickham, who used her. If, on the one hand, Lydia blames herself for her own behaviour, the other characters see her as a victim of George Wickham. It should be noted that this has a much higher level of emotional involvement than when Lizzie realises her prejudices against William Darcy. Lydia's case epitomises what could be seen as the grand theme of the narrative around which the others already discussed orbit: relationships between women and their process of growth.

Pride and Prejudice may be discussed in relation to moral, according to philosopher Gilbert Ryle (1966), as each character demonstrates certain degrees of pride, prejudice and vanity, for instance. *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* focuses on different types of women, their struggles to understand each other, and their processes of growth in learning to do that. Each of the Bennet sisters holds a different set of characteristics: Lydia represents a more liberal

type of young woman, unconcerned with society's double standards when it comes to gender; Lizzie is a more strong-willed woman, an idealist, but is concerned with reputation; and Jane is the romantic, even naïve type. All of them suffer for their lack of balance concerning their views of the world, and of other women. In order to grow they must balance their characteristics, and learn to listen and respect one another. If one considers the period of production of *The Diaries*, the early 2010s, one could say the narrative allows a discussion on the different, and more often than not, divergent discourses about women circulating in popular culture, as well as academic spaces. Are we facing a period of confusion when it comes to discussing women's rights? Are we listening to each other, or are we generating more conflict? Feminist or Postfeminist? Liberal or Marxist? And also, race, immigrants. Have we achieved balance? If not, could we achieve it anytime in the near future?

4.3 SUMMING UP CHAPTER 4

This chapter contains an analysis of *Pride and Prejudice* and *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* regarding their discussions on themes. The attempt was to map relevant elements present in both narratives that help to understand the representation of women. In the case of *P&P* – as Gilbert and Gubar (2000, p. 136) point out about all of Austen's novels – 'the female powerlessness that underlies monetary pressure to marry, the injustice of inheritance laws, the ignorance of women denied formal education' is put to examination. Through the voices of secondary characters such as Mrs Bennet, Lydia Bennet and Charlotte Lucas, we see the ambivalence that existed concerning women's roles in society. While Charlotte conforms, Mrs Bennet and Lydia are rebellious in their own ways. Elizabeth, on the other hand, is the carrier of integrity and good sense. And, when she fails to present proper judgment of people and circumstances, she represents the necessity of evaluating or reflecting upon one's actions and opinions, recognising mistakes, going beyond first impressions to see reality. In this sense, Ryle, again, observes Austen's technique regarding themes. According to him, 'she pin-points the exact quality of character in which she is interested, and the exact degree of that quality.' She does that 'by matching it against the same quality in different degrees, against simulations of that quality, against deficiencies of it and against qualities which, though different, are brothers or cousins of that selected quality' (RYLE, 1966, p. 288). In doing so,

the author presents types of characters, and the ideal ones, thus allowing for the analysis of subjectivity.

Furthermore, although she criticises aspects related to money, social class and marriage, she does not advocate for the dismantling of the British traditional institutions. As Vivien Jones (2012, p. 285) points out, 'her realism is tempered by romance: an essentially conservative form. Happy-ever-after endings, which conveniently combine material comfort with emotional satisfaction, are her heroine's reward for their moral integrity and for refusing to marry merely for mercenary convenience.' More than impelling women to react to social constraints as a group, she is concerned about each woman's behaviour inside those structures. Finally, while it is possible to argue that Jane Austen does criticise some elements of the British Regency society, her ingenuity lies exactly in the fact that she does so not in pamphletarian manners. Instead, she carefully deploys her 'fine brush' in her 'bit of ivory two inches wide' so that her work could be palatable for her contemporary society, while she could express her opinions on it. I would argue that this is why both popular culture and academic researchers are each day more drawn to the universe of *all things Austen.*

As well as *Pride and Prejudice*, *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* represent to a certain extent social aspects from the context in which it was created. Among them, this investigation has discussed representations of women; denial of sentimentality; the impact of individual choice in a person's life; over exposure online; the fallen American Dream and the struggles the middle class has gone through; and the reconfiguration of the romantic hero. These are important issues to be discussed concerning women and their position in society. Each of the women in the Bennet family emulates a different perspective, which may remind the reader of Angela McRobbie's discussion on feminism and post-feminism. Drawing from Judith Butler's book Antigone's Claim (2000), she claims there is a 'double entanglement' taking place in the contemporary society, which is facing not feminism – which 'already passed away' –, but post-feminism. She says 'this comprises the co-existence of neo-conservative values in relation to gender, sexuality and family life' and, at the same time, 'processes of liberalization in regard to choice and diversity in domestic, sexual and kinship relations' (2009, p. 12). So, while Mrs Bennet still believes marriage is her daughters' only and best opportunity in life; Jane focuses on her career but lets herself get involved in a love relationship; Lydia is the sexual liberated girl who 'enjoys herself in bar, pubs and restaurants'; Charlotte is pragmatic and rational; and Lizzie is the idealistic book worm who spends most of her time reading, writing and studying.

Strong-willed and assertive just as Elizabeth, Lizzie has a formed opinion of everybody surrounding her. These perspectives seem to be framed by the postfeminist portrayal of a feminist. That is, she tries to suppress her romantic feelings, be rational about life. She is represented as the type of feminist who would scold any display of a woman's body as an objectification. She reprehends her sister for drinking and having fun, and for her exaggerated sexual liberation. Meanwhile, she seems to be focused on career success refusing at all costs her mother's mentioning of her finding a husband. She refuses to explore her own sentimentality, while she is fully engaged in Jane's love life. This representation of the protagonist as a stereotypical feminist usually portrayed by popular culture invites some comments. The lead character is generally that with whom the audience should identify. It seems *The Diaries* questions popular culture's portrayal of feminists when presenting their own protagonist as such. It is true, however, that she should reappraise some of her conceptions, especially regarding Charlotte and Lydia.

As the analysis has pointed out, Charlotte is more pragmatic, and cannot refuse a well-paid job when her family is in serious debt. Lizzie must learn to moderate her behaviour, and learn to respect her friend's needs. Not everybody is as idealistic as herself. Nonetheless, the most relevant point of conflict between women is brought by the situation between Lizzie and her little sister, Lydia. The youngest Bennet represents some of the characteristics imparted to women in popular culture as pointed out by McRobbie (2009) and Whelehan (2010). She enjoys her sexuality; is concerned with appearance and fashion; and is a consumerist. She works as Lizzie's antithesis in the novel. The fact that her reputation is compromised by her involvement with George Wickham seems to infer a sort of punishment for her extravagant behaviour.

On the surface, it seems Lydia is punished for enjoying her sexuality, when a deeper analysis informs that the lack of communication at the Bennet household seems to play a more important role in her traumatic experience. In this sense, Lizzie also plays a part when she cannot see her sister beyond her exterior behaviour. They cannot communicate well, and this lack of connection at home impels Lydia to look for comfort elsewhere. Being actually more fragile than she lets people see, she falls prey to Wickham. While they are concerned about exposing their private lives online, they forget to observe their intimate relationships in their own household. *The Diaries*, then, problematize the overexposure online, which is a characteristic of postmodern society (DOVEY, 2000). As Lizzie says, 'talking to the Internet is not the same as talking to people' (Ep. 96 – The LBD).

Finally, in the postmodern society – where post-feminism has risen, women have the possibility of individual choice, which for McRobbie (2009, p. 19) 'is surely, within lifestyle culture, a modality of constraint. The individual is compelled to be the kind of subject who can make the right choices.' This is the type of pressure that the Bennet girls, as well as Charlotte, suffer: having to make a choice in career, studies or in a relationship, and having to make the right one. All of them go through ups and downs because of their choices and, after learning from improper decisions, they take what it seems is the right direction and everything ends well in the narrative, just like it does in the original: Jane and Bing Lee move to New York, she will focus on her career and they will work out their relationship; Lydia is in the process of psychological recovering after Wickham's sex type and Lizzie finally learns that her pre-judgments of people were wrong and that she must know a person before forming a conception of them. Also, she engages in a romantic relationship with Darcy, but chooses not to work for him at his company and create her own one instead.

Both the original protagonist, Elizabeth Bennet, and the modern version, Lizzie Bennet, as well as other female characters, emulate women's dilemmas, which started from gaining space and voice in society, even if it is to marry for love and not convenience; and being respected in the business market, to being able to be feminine and express sentimentality, without being considered weak or not representative of feminism. Many theorists have asked 'Why Austen?' 'Why now?' For some, Janeites – Austen's fans – search for a stable, structured world, in what seems to be a chaotic reality (MARGOLIS, 2003); or they are trying to make sense of this chaotic world through their reading of Austen (MULLER, 2014). Other theorists, like Camile Paglia, see neoconservative bells tolling. This analysis argues that women are trying to find balance amidst so many choices, possibilities, ways of thinking and constraints. The advances in technology in the last thirty of forty years have catapulted the quantity of information circulating, and a sense of empowerment, of possibility of choosing or doing anything has generated some extreme positions. Trying to find a balance, as Elizabeth Bennet did in marrying, but on her own terms, seems to be what keeps Austen still so relevant.

CONCLUSION

The project for the execution of this dissertation was submitted to the Languages and Literature Post-Graduation Program at UFRGS in 2013, exactly 200 hundred years after *Pride and Prejudice* was first published. This was a busy year for the Austen universe as a number of events across the globe celebrated the bicentenary of Austen's 'darling child.' Jane Austen Societies in England, The United States, Brazil, Italy and the Netherlands organised conferences that gathered both scholars and enthusiasts of *all things Austen*. Publishing houses released new editions of her novels, and academic researchers gathered scientific efforts around *P&P* and published companions such as *The Cambridge Companion to Pride and Prejudice,* which is lengthily explored by this dissertation. *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, the object of this investigation, had its final episode posted on YouTube in March of the same year. In this sense, the British author has remained both popular culture and academic researchers' darling child.

This ubiquity of her figure and her work has happened due to the fact that her works in general, and *Pride and Prejudice* in particular, have become templates for all types of adaptations. This has generated a virtuous circle in which new adaptations generate new fandom, and both generate new academic investigations in a tireless movement around her oeuvre. Therefore, this universe of *all things Austen* has conversed with a great variety of fields. Researchers from Literature, Adaptation Studies, Philosophy, Historiography, Women's Studies, Postcolonial Studies, Popular Culture, Fan Cultures, New Media, and others have put pen to paper in order to theorise about her. It is safe to say that it has become an overwhelming environment for research.

This particular investigation comprised the analysis of the transposition of the portrayals of women from Jane Austen's second novel to the videoblog *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*. In order to do so, it was necessary to understand some of the ways popular culture has appropriated her works. It was observed that publishing houses dedicated to mass-market romance in the 1980s used both *Pride and Prejudice* and Emily Brönte's *The Wuthering Heights* heroines' and heroes' portrayals as templates for their productions (LOOSER, 2001). This established a greater focus on the romantic comedy layers of said novels. Academic researchers usually frown upon such appropriations, for they privilege the romantic entanglements over the social conflicts that underlie them. If, on the one hand, this is a

reduction of interpretation, on the other hand, it seems to have accommodated a desire for sentimentality (TODD, 2013). This is especially true if one considers that the same decade witnessed feminism debates at their pick. It was certainly a period of change and instability, so it is not surprising that an urge for romance, and the sense of comfort that comes with it, should rise.

The fact that heritage drama gained more popularity around the same period is also of importance (TROOST, 2007). Once again, Austen's Regency England plots were appropriated in the same hope of establishing comfort in an unstable economic period, especially in England and in The USA. The bucolic views, the great mansions, beautiful costumes, and the focus on the romantic relationships were used to impart a sense of unit in the nation (VOIGTS-VIRCHOW, 2007). Meanwhile, the focus on women came from different fields. In the academic environment, studies on women's rights, literature by women, and women's position in society had also reached their pick. Furthermore, according to Jon Dovey (2000), the 1990s witnessed a turn in discourses in various media from an objective and rational to a more subjective, emotional perspective. While the former is usually related to the masculine, the latter is associated with the feminine. As one may surmise, there are a number of factors which direct society's focus to women in the turn of the twenty-first century.

The contribution of this dissertation to the already long list of reasons for Jane Austen's popularity at this time is that she crafted her novels at the turn of the nineteenth century, a time of as many changes as the turn of the twenty-first century. This investigation departs from Jon Dovey's analysis that informs that the *zeitgeist* of both times is represented by different portrayals of subjectivity. Now, Austen has been acclaimed for her accurate depiction of Regency England society. The investigation of *Pride and Prejudice* conducted in this research has informed that Austen's work is focused on character. Throughout the narrative, different degrees of pride, prejudice and integrity are discussed as the subjectivity of her characters is developed (RYLE, 1966). She was well aware she could not modify the established institutions of such a traditional society as that of England. We cannot say she even wanted that. Nonetheless, she could discuss character, she could have people evolve, and learn. That is the journey Elizabeth Bennet and Mr Darcy go through. We are not to know how aware of her artistry Austen was (BOOTH, 1952), but this investigation claims that she was able to portray the *zeitgeist* of her time through a female perspective, in her representations of women. And, that is why her novels resonate with our contemporary times.

The investigation uses Jürgen Habermas's analysis of society in the turn of the nineteenth century in order to understand the *zeitgeist* of the time. According to the German theorist, such period witnessed the establishment of a public sphere both in Europe and in The United States. It sprung from the gradual consolidation of a free-market environment in economic terms, and the development of rational thought through the Enlightenment movement. These changes required the recognition of individuality and subjectivity. As for our contemporary times, Dovey (2000) argues that the public realm has been invaded by private expressions of subjectivity. This has been particularly intensified by developments in portable technologies that have allowed regular people to record aspects of their mundane lives and display them online.

It was observed that the subjectivity under construction during Regency England is presented in *Pride and Prejudice* through two different strategies. Firstly, in the way the narrative is constructed. It has been observed that it is composed of an extra- and heterodiegetic narrator. This generally means that the narrating instance is aware of the narrated events, and has a sense of authority over that which it narrates. However, in this case, the narrator is not as omnipotent, because focalisation happens through Elizabeth Bennet's perspective. So, the narrator does not know much more than Elizabeth herself, except for the other characters' perceptions which it also has access to. Instead of an external narration, the reader is acquainted with characters' thoughts and perceptions, and this allows the emergence of their subjectivity.

The way the narrating instance hovers from viewpoint to viewpoint creates a complex thread of perceptions. It is important that it does not remain solely with Elizabeth, for her point of view is biased by her prejudices. When the narrator has access to Mr Darcy's thoughts, for instance, the reader is allowed to know that he is struggling with his feelings for her. The way focalisation changes in the narrative is responsible for the suspense which delights the reader: Is Mr Darcy going to open his heart to Elizabeth? If he does so, how will she react? What will happen next? How will they amend their differences? These wonderings keep the romantic layer of the narrative interesting to the reader. At the same time, it allows for the development of character construction, which is the second aspect through which subjectivity is perceived.

Considering that point of view is revealed through Elizabeth and other characters, their qualities, strengths and weaknesses come to the fore. Philosopher Gilbert Ryle (1966) argues the British author dealt with morals. By presenting contrasting degrees of pride, vanity, conceit, Austen aims at establishing what should be a person's behaviour, or conduct, which

is not entirely determined by social class, land ownership, titles and money. In this sense, Mr and Mrs Gardiner, who come from the trading class, have better behaviour than Mrs Catherine de Bourgh, who owns land, title, and thus pertains to the aristocracy. Mary Bennet is the only one of the sisters who dedicates herself to being accomplished. Instead of increasing her chances at finding a husband, this studiousness makes her more pedantic. Along with Mr Collins, she is an example that education is not enough to recommend a person. There should be something in the composition of their character that comes from reason and observation, from the re-evaluation of one's own thoughts and actions. This is where Elizabeth and Mr Darcy gain relevance. They stand out because their character has something that allows, or impels, them to reconsider previous positions. Ultimately, subjectivity rises from this interconnected web of character compositions that is revealed through focalisation.

This dissertation argues that *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* is informed by the *zeitgeist* of its time as well. In cultural terms, it is aligned with postmodernism's crave for intertextuality, remediation, recreation, pastiche, parody, and all things related to adaptation and appropriation (BROOKER, 2007). It appropriates Jane Austen's *P&P,* updating its plot. It does so by a process of transposition from one media to another, presenting it to a new audience (SANDERS, 2006). It takes the conception of appropriation to a different level, since it transposes *P&P* to a videoblog on YouTube. Traditionally, such Internet channel is not perceived as a site for presenting narratives, at least not by big entertainment companies. The Internet had been used by the entertainment industry for the presentation of accessorial information that would add to an already existing storyworld (JENKINS, 2006; RYAN, 2014, 2017). *The Diaries*, however, use YouTube as its channel for the canonical narrative of its storyworld.

It should be noted that the Internet is the site for grassroots production and gathering (JENKINS, 2006). Amateur, regular people have created their own videoblogs online since the mid-2000s. They comprise short videos discussing mundane issues or the vlogger's perceptions on politics, and other situations that attract their interest (BURGESS, GREEN, 2009). This is the culmination of a movement started in the 1990s as we have discussed through Dovey's analysis (2000). Any regular person with access to the Internet can post their life online through videos, photos, texts, comments. The private is no longer private in the sense of secret, unknown to people in general. Instead, our private lives are exposed online, whether willingly through our social media, or not, as websites collect data from our searches and browsing online. *The Diaries* follow this trend by presenting Lizzie Bennet as a vlogger.

She creates a videoblog of her life as a project for her master's degree. This means that her privacy is at the audience's disposal.

The trick is, the fact that her life is published online for anyone to watch does not mean she and other characters are actually revealing their subjectivity. The communication issues that arise between Lizzie and Lydia are the foremost example of what Lizzie says: 'talking to the Internet is not the same as talking to people.' They have to go past the over-exposition online in order to re-evaluate their behaviour and actions. What happens in the storyworld is in fact the creation of a narrative of her life, not necessarily her life. It reflects our contemporary times, the rise in the quantity of depressed teenagers attributed to Instagram, for instance. They see other people's posts portraying an illusion of a perfect life that opposes their real life. In vicious circle, they are impelled to create their version of their perfect life.

Regarding narrative construction, the fact that Lizzie is the intradiegetic narrator of her own story results, at a first glance, in a reduction in the complexity of character representation through focalisation, as discussed above. One of the solutions for that is establishing Charlotte Lu as the person responsible for shooting, editing and posting the videos. As Fulton et al (2005) inform, this plays a very relevant role regarding what is presented to the audience. This dissertation argues that Charlotte Lu's point of view is as important as Lizzie's, and it contributes to establishing the balance in point of view. Also, because she edits, she is responsible for both the auditive and the visual tracks of the videos and, therefore, it could be said that she performs the task of the filmic narrator (VERSTRATEN, 2009). Unlike feature films, where audiences are unaware of the process of editing, in *The Diaries*, it is amply discussed inside the storyworld of the narrative.

Ultimately, through their compositional elements, both *Pride and Prejudice* and *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* allow the *zeitgeist* of their times to come forward. For both discussions on subjectivity and the composition of character are brought to the fore in the ways their narrative elements are woven. In doing so, the relationship between the private and the public spheres gains relevance. Now, this dissertation has claimed that these works are also relevant when it comes to discussing the portrayals of women. Among the many changes undercurrent in both periods, a very significant one is that related to women's position in society. Around the time Austen crafted *P&P*, women were still submitted to the male figures in their lives. Women would only work if there was no other way of sustainment, which usually happened in lower classes. Women circulated in public places as long as they were accompanied by older relatives, a husband or a brother. Their conversations were restricted to the domestic

realm. And they did not attend universities. Yet, this is also the period in which women such as Mary Wollstonecraft began to gain more visibility. The notion that women were also rational creatures and therefore could think and make their own decisions was in its first steps. Moreover, marriages based on affection were replacing those based on familial convenience (GREEN, 1991).

The portrayal of women in *P&P* reveals that money, marriage and social class were the driving forces in a woman's life. Despite Mrs Bennet's foolish rendering through Elizabeth's eyes, her concern for her daughters' future is legitimate. If her husband is unconcerned about the fact that their daughters will be destitute as soon as he passes away, she has to do something. The same holds true to Charlotte Lucas. At her age, she is already a burden to her family, so marrying Mr Collins is her solution. As the narrator informs, marriage 'was the only honourable provision for well-educated young women of small fortune, and however uncertain of giving happiness, must be their pleasantest preservative from want' (*P&P*, p. 85). The situation is put, and does not seem to be changeable in the foreseeable future. What Elizabeth Bennet does is to exercise her right to at least choose a husband.

Beyond the fairy tale of a poor girl who conquers, even if unwillingly, the heart of a rich gentleman, there is a woman trying to make a decision on her own. The fact that Elizabeth refuses both Mr Collins and Mr Darcy the first time indicates so. She is going to marry for the right reasons, or at least for the reasons she considers right. In this sense, Darcy's fortune, which means security, is not enough to overcome her dislike for him. She is not going to forget her principles because money would certainly be welcomed. In addition to that, one could argue that even Charlotte chooses as she might. Despite the fact that she conforms to tradition, and marries Mr Collins being aware that he is 'neither sensible nor agreeable,' she accomplishes what she desired, for 'marriage had always been her object' (*P&P*, p. 85).

As for the other women, Lydia Bennet was also relevant for this investigation. Drawing from Audrey Bilger's concept of the trickster character, this dissertation has discussed the fact that Lydia embodies the subversive voice which says that a woman's life does not need to be regulated by reputation at all times. It is true that her scandalous behaviour with George Wickham was only successfully fixed because Darcy interfered. Also, both are sent to the north, away from their social contexts. Nevertheless, she is not overtly punished; her character is not tainted by her behaviour. She remains the same extravagant, untamed girl from the beginning of the narrative. Her journey in the novel is not a lesson to be

learned by female readers. It is not one that would be seen as an example in a conduct book for girls such as the *Sermons* by Fordyce. Ultimately, this dissertation corroborates Audrey Bilger's idea that Austen used some of her secondary characters to inform subversive behaviour, which would not be well taken had Elizabeth, the protagonist, portrayed them.

When it comes to the portrayal of women in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, the analysis in Chapter 4 hopefully demonstrated how complicated things are. Popular culture is usually criticised for its commercial dimension, which at times may render productions shallower, for they are aimed at larger audiences. This study drew from Angela McRobbie (2009) and Imelda Whelehan (2010) – and also from Yvonne Tasker and Diane Negra (2007) – the discussions on the portrayals of women presented in productions from the 1990s and early 2000s. It is consensus for these theorists that postfeminist popular culture considers feminism and its agenda as having already passed. Women are usually depicted as independent because they are successful at work. And, even if not entirely successful, they are able to sustain themselves, enjoy their sexuality, and exercise their freedom of choice. The theorists posit, however, that choosing has also become a type of regime, as women are constrained to make the right choices. They are also limited by beauty standards, anti-ageing and a tiring consumption wheel. Ultimately, postfeminist popular productions acknowledge feminism, but do not endeavour in deeper discussions. It corroborates the understanding of romantic comedies which dwell in the romantic entanglements conflicts but avoid overt debates about their origins.

This dissertation argues that *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* does not pertain to the aforementioned group of productions. Instead, it takes all of these different portrayals of women and problematizes them. To begin with, the protagonist, Lizzie, is represented as the stereotypical feminist usually ridiculed by popular culture. She wears chequered shirts, dislikes parties in general, criticises Lydia's sexual behaviour. The audience is supposed to identify with the protagonist, so we claim that the series warrants the feminist behaviour. This may be corroborated by the fact that Lydia is the character which seems to incorporate most of the typical characteristics of post-feminism in popular culture: she exercises her sexuality regardless of the possible double standard in society; she is a consumerist; she is concerned with fashion and style; she drinks and parties unapologetically. What happens is that, unlike novel Lydia, who ends the novel barely tainted, web Lydia seems to be punished by her behaviour.

The change in the character after George Wickham exposes his and Lydia's intimacy online is visible. She is depressed, avoids seeing people, and worst, feels it is completely her

fault. She believes she had it coming. Nonetheless, this analysis is not about who is right or wrong. The claim is that all of the women are trying to find balance. They are all impelled to choose, but they are supposed to make the right choices. This is true in the fact that Lizzie feels as guilt as Lydia for what happened. The protagonist realises that their lack of communication limited their perspective of one another, and it left Lydia vulnerable to Wickham. There is an urgent need for balance in behaviour, in what to share or not online, in point of view. Ultimately, the women in *The Diaries* represent the confusion of such changing times as Dovey (2000) proposes.

Regarding romance, or popular culture's crave for romantic comedies, it should be pointed out that the protagonist echoes those voices that consider it foolish. She spends the greatest part of the narrative struggling between denying her own sentimentality and discussing her sister Jane's relationship with Bing Lee. While finding a husband is no longer the ultimate goal in a woman's life, it does not mean love is old-fashioned, or no longer desired by women and men. Perhaps we should also try and find balance here. Finally, it is worthy pointing out, despite the fact that this dissertation is focused on women, that men in *The Diaries* are also seen as characters who need to evolve. In this sense, Bing Lee's journey of trying to find himself indicates how men have come to be represented. They are also subjects who need to learn and grow (VOIRET, 2003).

Moreover, while *Pride and Prejudice* is centred on the relationship between Elizabeth and Mr Darcy, *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* is centred on Lizzie's relationships with other women. Besides Lizzie and Lydia's journey to understanding each other, Lizzie and Charlotte's relationship is also relevant for they both have to open up to understand each other. This is because Charlotte in *The Diaries* plays a more relevant role than her homonymous character in the novel. *The Diaries* is about women, about learning, and growing, and trying to figure out how to circulate in times such as ours.

On a final note, it is important to inform the reader that there might be other nuances to the analysis conducted here if the branches of the transmedia project are taken into account. Point of view may be discussed through the characters' social media, such as Facebook, Tweeter, LinkedIn, Tumblr, and so on. An analysis on bildungsroman can also be conducted through the analysis of *The Epic Adventures of Lydia Bennet*. The discussion thus conducted on the portrayal of women can be further developed through the analysis of the viewers' comments on YouTube. Fan production can be investigated in the booklets and subtitling both made by Brazilian viewers. This is an overwhelming environment. Jenkins (2006) and Ryan (2017) have pointed out that it is virtually impossible to encompass the storyworld of a

transmedia project. That is the feeling as I write these final pages. There is a sense of frustration, for so much more could have been analysed and said, but there is solace in the fact that these universes are made with that intent, to overwhelm us.

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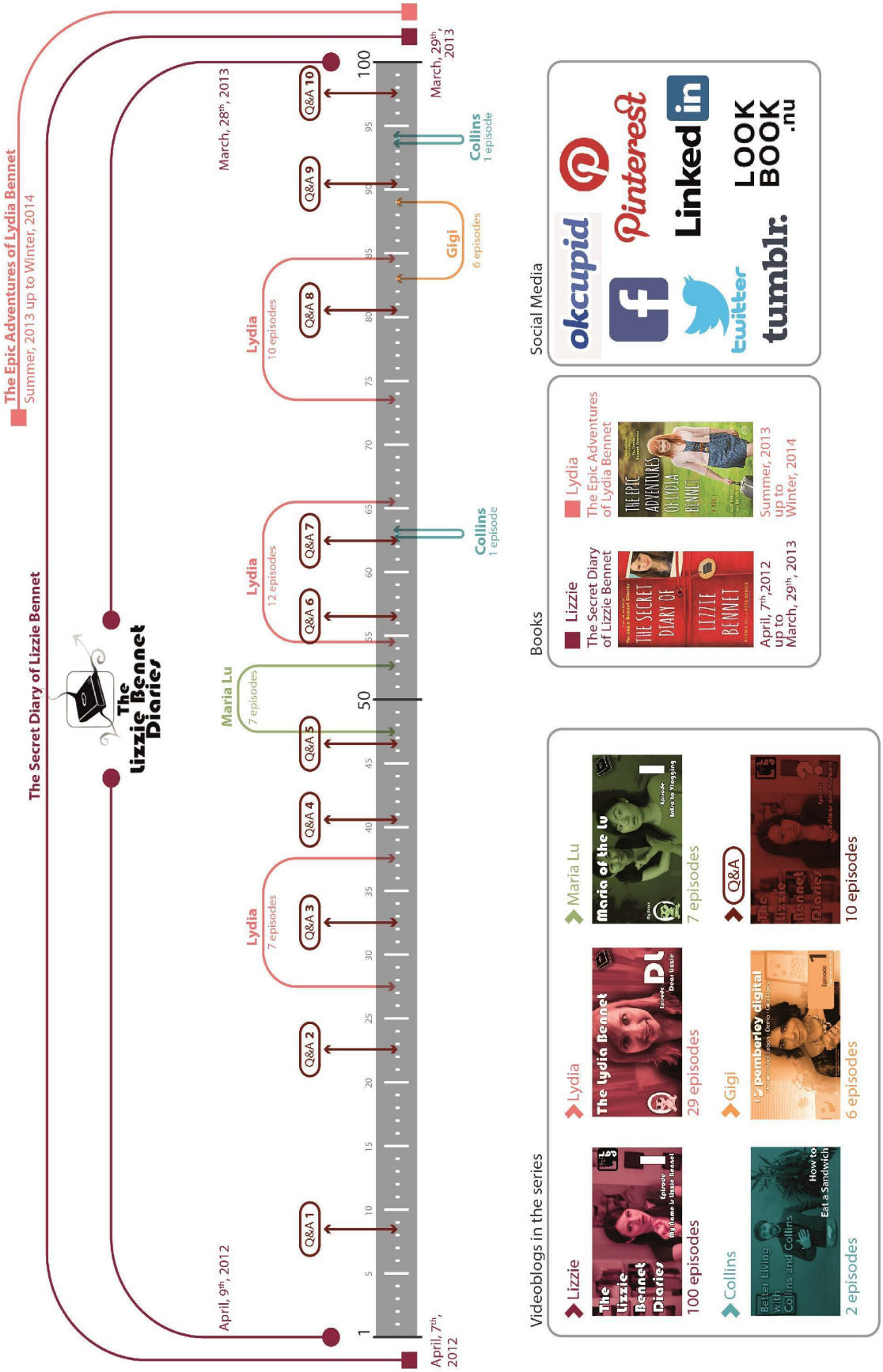
APPENDIX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Summer, 2013 up to Winter, 2014
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April, 9th, 2012
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Q&A 1
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Videoblogs in the series
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100 episodes
Collins
2 episodes
Lydia
29 episodes
Gigi
6 episodes
Maria Lu
7 episodes
Q&A
10 episodes
Books
Lizzie
The Secret Diary of Lizzie Bennet
April, 7th,2012 up to March, 29th, 2013
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