

**LUANA HASTENTEUFEL VOGEL**

**LIQUIFYING PRIDE AND PREJUDICE: MORALS, COMMUNITY AND LOVE  
IN AUSTEN AND IN THE WEB SERIES *THE LIZZIE BENNET DIARIES***

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*You may not be able to alter reality, but you can alter your attitude towards it, and this, paradoxically, alters reality.*

Margaret Atwood, 1983 University of Toronto Commencement  
Speech

## RESUMO

Esta dissertação examina a web-série estadunidense *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, criada em 2012 por Bernie Su e Hank Green, focando na forma como os temas de moralidade, comunidade e amor são retratados, em comparação com o romance *Orgulho e Preconceito*, de Jane Austen (1813), em que a série se baseia. A premissa da pesquisa é que uma obra de arte reflete os valores do período e contexto em que é produzida. Esta adaptação reimagina a história de Austen em um tempo e lugar diferentes, contada por mídias distintas. *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* transpõe as rígidas e enraizadas tradições da Inglaterra rural do século 19 para o contexto em constante mudança da Califórnia do século XXI. Para lidar com essas realidades diferentes, utilizei os conceitos de Zygmunt Bauman de Modernidade Sólida e Modernidade Líquida. Esta dissertação está estruturada em duas seções. A primeira contextualiza as épocas, os autores e os trabalhos, aborda a questão da adaptação e apresenta a filosofia de Bauman. A segunda apresenta a minha análise dos pontos temáticos escolhidos, considerando a forma como as personagens se movimentam socialmente, como a família, a comunidade e os relacionamentos amorosos são construídos nesses mundos diferentes, e quais as consequências enfrentadas pelas personagens que não se comportam de acordo com as regras sociais de seu tempo. Ao término do trabalho, espero que esta pesquisa sirva como contribuição para os estudos sobre Jane Austen e para o nosso entendimento sobre as mudanças nos valores e comportamentos sociais que ocorrem com o passar do tempo.

**Palavras-chave:** Literaturas de língua inglesa. *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*. *Orgulho e Preconceito*. Jane Austen. Zygmunt Bauman. Modernidade líquida e modernidade sólida.

## ABSTRACT

This thesis analyses the web series *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, created in 2012 in the U.S. by Bernie Su and Hank Green, focusing on the way the themes of morals, community and love are addressed, in comparison to Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, the novel in which the web series is based. The premise of the research is that a work of art reflects the values from the period and the context in which it is produced. This adaptation reimagines Austen's story in a different time and place, told through different media. *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* transposes the strict and cemented traditions of 19<sup>th</sup>-century Rural England into the constantly changing context of 21<sup>st</sup>-century California. To deal with these different realities, I resort to Zygmunt Bauman's concepts of Solid Modernity and Liquid Modernity. The behaviour is structured in two sections. The first contextualizes the epochs, the authors, the works, addresses the issue of adaptation, and presents Bauman's philosophy. The second presents my analysis of the chosen thematic lines, considering the way the characters navigate their society, how family, community and love relationships are built in these different worlds, and what consequences are posed to characters who do not behave according to the expected social rules from their time. At the end of the work, I hope that this research may contribute to the studies about Jane Austen and in our understanding of the changes in values and social behaviour that happen through time.

**Keywords:** Literatures in English. *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*. *Pride and Prejudice*. Jane Austen. Zygmunt Bauman. Liquid modernity and solid modernity.

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## INTRODUCTION

Cliché as it may seem, *Pride and Prejudice* is one of the main reasons why I decided to study literature. My first encounter with this novel happened, as with many people, through the movie adaptation from 2005. At the time, I was spellbound with the story and devoured all the versions of it I could find. Although they had basically the same plot, the feelings they evoked were all different to me. While the movie made me fall for Mr. Darcy and root for the main couple, the book made me focus on how the people in the story behave differently from our reality in order to belong in their society, and how hypocrisy seems to be embedded in that world as much as it is now.

Several years later I discovered the adaptation that inspired this thesis. Browsing YouTube, one of the recommended videos was the beginning of the web series that I came to be fascinated by: *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*. The title made me click on the link and soon I was hooked. I watched all the 100 episodes that same evening, and have rewatched them many times ever since. What was, at first, another adaptation of the story I knew and loved, quickly proved to be much more intriguing to me. For a long time, I wondered what special features this adaptation had that made me so fascinated. The appeal of the web series starts with its title, which already reveals several of the main changes the adaptation proposes to the source material. Anyone who is familiar with *Pride and Prejudice* is bound to recognize its protagonist's name on the title. Here, however, the character is introduced by her nickname, not as Miss Bennet, as in the novel, which makes her seem a more approachable character to her 21<sup>st</sup>-century audience, one that any of the viewers could feel as an acquaintance or a friend. That is how she presents herself: a friendly, outgoing young woman who wants to befriend her future viewers.

Besides Lizzie's name, the title also suggests that the content is going to be personal, since it consists of a diary. To the viewers that are familiarized with the novel, this may seem strange at first, since the readers are presented to the story through different sets of eyes. In fact, the narrator of *Pride and Prejudice* seems to be an entity of its own, being the source of the irony and criticism that fills the novel. But if the story is a diary, then, it must be told through Lizzie's eyes herself, making it a more intimate version. Instead of focusing on abstract concepts such as pride and prejudice, we experience Lizzie's pride and her prejudice towards other characters.

The choice of having the show completely online, and even more, on YouTube – which is a platform that, to that point, had never been used for series – also suggests its contemporaneity. Even before clicking on the videos, we can expect that they are not going to try to replicate the 19<sup>th</sup>-century Rural England to YouTube vlogs. It is also curious to associate such a public platform to a diary. On the web, where there are no secrets, the creator of the vlogs chooses to trust her most inner thoughts. This format also allows for the story to seem more dynamic. Instead of being published in three volumes, as the book was at the time of its release, each video had its uploading on a different date, which made the interaction between the vlogger and her audience possible. Lizzie can discuss situations that were misinterpreted – at least in her point of view – in the comments, create suspense by ending on specific cliff-hangers – something that Austen herself did with the publication of the books in three volumes – and then withhold the information her viewers wished to know, adapting the topic of her videos according to what her audience wishes. In addition to the adaptation in the format and support of the story, which already requires an abundance of changes, its setting also changes dramatically.

Reimagining a story that is so intrinsically connected to the values and morals of its society such as *Pride and Prejudice* – it is, after all, considered a novel of manners – to a completely different one is no easy task. That is why when we think of the most famous adaptations of the work to the screen – the miniseries from 1995, the movie from 2005 and even *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* from 2016 –, they are set in the past, in a world where most values remain the same as the ones in the original story. That is not to say that we cannot find examples of modern retellings of the novel, since there are plenty of them – some better known examples are *Bridget Jones's Diary* (2001) and *Bride and Prejudice* (2004) – though they are loosely based on the novel; however, these examples seem to focus much more on the romantic aspects of the plot and leave aside the satire that comes along with the criticism to a society heavily influenced by morals.

That is the point at which *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* sets itself apart from other modern adaptations of the novel: it still features the romantic plot, but it also sheds light onto the problems faced in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It manages to update themes that, at first glance, could seem completely different from the reality in which we live today. The characters still have to deal with their own prejudice and recognize the pride within them, they form bonds to newcomers, maintain troubled relations to their family, and are susceptible to societal judgement when acting in dissonance to what is expected of them. It is curious to think of how

different the context of production of these two works is. While the novel was written by a single person, who lived in rural England in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and wrote about the world she lived in, the web series seems like an enterprise. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, nothing is so distant that cannot be accessed through the click of a button. There are many people involved to make the web series: creators, producers, actors and writers who are responsible for the final product(s). They are from distinct backgrounds, genders and ethnicities, and are able to see the world through much wider lenses. This difference in production translates to the story.

The changes of time and place of both stories reveal how much society has reshaped itself in the last two centuries. The views we now have of some of the major themes of the plot have dramatically changed. We no longer live in a world where problems have limited resolutions; instead, we live in the age of uncertainty. With such a shift in paradigm, some of the basic aspects of human life have changed.

In this thesis, I focus on three main elements that were crucial for the 19<sup>th</sup> century England where *Pride and Prejudice* is set, and how they translate to the 21<sup>st</sup> century adaptation of *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*. Looking at the ways morality, community and love – examples of the core themes of the story – are presented in the works, I wish to assess which of these values – if any – that were so relevant two centuries ago have retained their significance in our current times. As to those themes that might have lost their significance in this *new* reality, the question that arises is why this happened and what elements of the story had to be changed in order to include this shift in society. I also wish to investigate what new themes are brought forth with the adaptation that are relevant to today's world and might not have been important in the world of Jane Austen.

The use of the verb *liquifying* in the title of this thesis is based on Zygmunt Bauman's concepts of Solid and Liquid Modernity that are used in this work. The solid ground that cemented Elizabeth Bennet to a strict set of rules and values has been liquified to an ever-changing form that Lizzie Bennet<sup>1</sup> has to learn to navigate. There are no rules anymore that can ensure you that the path you have chosen is the right one. Instead, we have a sea full of possibilities and one is never certain of what they may encounter ahead: a waveless tide or troubled water.

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<sup>1</sup> To avoid confusion, I refer to the protagonist in Austen's novel as "Elizabeth Bennet", whereas the name "Lizzie Bennet" refers to the protagonist in the web series.

In the chapters that follow, I discuss the topics raised in this introduction further. In order to do that, the thesis is organized in two chapters. In the first, I briefly present the context of production from *Pride and Prejudice* and the main themes covered in the novel, mainly using the work of Deirdre Le Faye (2002) as theoretical support. I do not present a summary of the plot, since I imagine its story is well-known within the academy. I also examine the innovations Jane Austen provided to the popularization and depth of the novel and how her works could be considered a new type of novel, based on the studies by Juliet McMaster (1997) and Kathryn Sutherland (2004). Later, I present a brief summary of the plot of *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, focusing mostly on the themes that are developed on the second chapter. Since the *LBD*<sup>2</sup> is an adapted work, I explain the view this thesis presents on adaptation that adopts the theories of Linda Hutcheon and Siobhan O'Flynn (2013), and Julie Sanders (2016). The spin offs that arose from the main web series are also presented and quickly summarized so that the reader is better familiarized with the lore of the *LBD*. Because this adaptation is not limited to the screen, I present the definition of the concept of transmedia storytelling presented by Henry Jenkins (2006) that is used in this work, which is essential to understand the format the web series is constructed. As the final part of this chapter, I explain and reflect on the theory of Solid and Liquid societies developed by Zygmunt Bauman.

In the second chapter, I explore the central themes of the stories through the lenses of Bauman's theory. At first, I look at the importance of morality for the 19<sup>th</sup> century of Jane Austen and how fragmented it has become in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. After that, I debate on the importance of relationships in both worlds, more specifically, how communities, families and love are dealt with in the stories. Finally, I examine the substantially enlarged role side characters have in the adaptation, especially the roles of Mr. Collins, Caroline Bingley and Lydia Bennet, who have transcended their primary role and have received the spotlight in this version of the story, and speculate about the reasons as to why these characters have assumed such relevance in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

With this study, I hope to further enlarge the already extensive studies developed about Jane Austen and her works. I also wish to contribute to our understanding of how social and cultural values change over time and that, despite living in completely different realities, we are able to recognize that the problems that surround human beings remain the same regardless of the passing of time.

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<sup>2</sup> Whenever the acronym *LBD* is used, it stands for the web series *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*.

## 1 ONE STORY IN TWO TIMES

When working with stories that have such different backgrounds, it was necessary to investigate the context in which they were produced. In this first section, which I have divided into three parts, I comment on my findings. Starting with *Pride and Prejudice*, I first contextualize the importance of the novel in literature, and describe the key elements of living at the time of the production of the work. I also comment on the importance that Jane Austen had in making the novel the modern literature format and how much she added to said format. In the next subsection, I explain how essential elements from the plot of the second work explored in this thesis, *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, were adapted from the novel in order to better represent the context of its production. I discuss the approach to adaptation that is going to be used in this study and present the spin-offs that were created from the web series and how important they are for the full reading of the story. Later, I suggest the reasons behind the creation of this adaptation told through transmedia and how much this format helps conveying some elements of the narrative that would, otherwise, be difficult or impossible to be presented. Finally, I examine how the elements of each of the works' societies previously presented represent the drastic change in human values and relations through Zygmunt Bauman's philosophy of Solid and Liquid Modernity.

### 1.1 *Pride and Prejudice*: A Classic from 19<sup>th</sup> Century Rural England

It seems like such a recognizable story needs no introduction. *Pride and Prejudice* is part of our culture: be it through the book or countless adaptations, this title is already engraved in our collective memory. However, for the sake of the unknown reader, who might have come across this work and is unfamiliar with the story, in this section I present the iconic work as well as its contextualization. I start with the chosen subtitle for this section, which encompasses two main attributes of what *Pride and Prejudice* represents in the mind of most readers.

More than anything else, this story is a classic. Be it through Calvino's (1999) fourteen definitions of what makes a work a classic or through Bloom's work on *The Western Canon* (1995), which culminated in an extensive list of what he considers to be the classics of the

western world – in which *Pride and Prejudice* is included –, few people would dare disagree with the title due to the importance, relevance and influence *Pride and Prejudice* has had in literature across all types of media. Despite having been written over two centuries ago, the book is a constant source of debate in the literary scene. One quick Google search shows the quantity of magazines, journals and books that never cease exploring the story in new ways. As Calvino states, “the classics are books which exercise a particular influence, both when they imprint themselves on our imagination as unforgettable, and when they hide in the layers of memory disguised as the individual’s or the collective unconscious” (CALVINO, 1999, p. 4). Based on this definition, it is hard to disagree with this title to the story. Two centuries have not been able to erase it from the mind of the readers, and its influence in pop culture and literature is unquestionable, since it is made clear through the numerous stories heavily inspired by it.

Set in a distant past, more than two hundred years ago, its relevance does not seem to have faded. Even though its universal themes remain updated, *Pride and Prejudice* is, by all means, a truly 19<sup>th</sup> century rural England novel, which justifies the choice of this term for this subsection. The story embodies what it meant to live in the countryside of England during the Regency era. In fact, it depicts and criticizes the society in which the characters live and interact. This thesis looks at some of the main aspects presented in the book such as morals, community, family and love and how they were handled in the society of the time. Published in 1813, the story is probably set in the years 1811-1812, when Austen revised the manuscript she had written 15 years prior. The place: Hertfordshire, one of the counties of England, where the scenery was still mostly rural, with hills, valleys and plenty of woods.<sup>3</sup> At the time, the monarchy was in a turbulent state. Being run by the Prince Regent of Wales, because his father had been considered inept to continue ruling, the period became known as the Regency Era.

Extremely different from his father, who was an affectionate man, liked living in the countryside and did not fancy a particularly lavish lifestyle, the Prince Regent was in his adolescence considered “witty and intelligent”, but later on, became “irresponsible and deceitful, gluttonous and drunken” (LE FAYE, 2002, p. 44). He had an unofficial marriage to a Catholic commoner and later, a miserable marriage to his cousin who was “a tactless chatterbox, and eccentric and improper in her behaviour” (LE FAYE, 2002, p. 44). Although,

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<sup>3</sup> Unless explicitly expressed, the information for the context of the novel and the author come from the reading of *Jane Austen the World of her Novels* by Deirdre Le Faye (2002).

at first, public view sided with Princess Caroline, once her lack of manners became known, she could no longer be excused. In fact, Jane Austen wrote to her friend Martha Lloyd, who was the elder sister of her brother James' wife, saying that, although she would always choose to support the Princess, since she was a woman and she despised the Prince, she could not justify her behaviour and had to forgo the Princess.

If in England times were turbulent, outside of the homeland businesses thrived. Colonization across Europe was at its peak. Although England had lost America from its extensive list of colonies to Independence, there were many places that were not so lucky and were still in the hands of the British Empire – which only grew larger –, such as the West Indies, Australia, Canada, and many parts of Africa. While the English colonies remained mostly under British control and were not a main source of concern to the English, war was constant in the continent. Almost half of Jane Austen's life happened in the midst of war and she was not completely disengaged from it, having multiple conversations with her sister Cassandra about the ongoing news of the war and having two of her brothers who were a part of the Royal Navy. During the years of the novel, England was fighting the Napoleonic Wars, and, although there was no imminent threat of invasion, and so, the people could live fairly normal lives, it was not until the abdication of Napoleon, in 1814, after the battle of Waterloo, that the war officially came to an end.

Inside England, the scenery was rapidly changing; however, it remained much less populated than it is nowadays. With a population of about ten million people, most of whom still lived in the countryside, life was extremely different from the capital. Agriculture was the main source of income, unlike London, where manufactures and trade were developing. The villages, one of which is the setting for the novel, remained connected to the country through smaller provincial cities, and were “to a large extent isolated and self-sufficient” (LE FAYE, 2002, p. 54). Because of the precarious situation of the roads, traveling to the countryside was complicated, so it was within the villages that people would sell their products, mingle with the community and try to find a partner for themselves or their children.

In such a remote time and place for us, Brazilian readers of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it is no wonder that many of the concerns that the characters had are unfamiliar to us; however, they represented the real problems people had to consider at the time. One of the main sources of concern in the novel is the lack of sons in the Bennet family. At the time, property could only be owned by men, so, if a family had no male descent, whatever was owned would go to the

closest male relative once the owner had passed. Since, in the novel, Mr. and Mrs. Bennet never managed to have a son, they knew their property would be entailed to the closest male relative they had, and that was Mr. Collins, a distant cousin of Mr. Bennet. Although this fact is well known within the family, it is still met with disapproving eyes. Mrs. Bennet laments this every time she is reminded of the fact that her children will not inherit the estate of the family “in favour of a man whom nobody cared anything about” (AUSTEN, 1993, p. 55). However, she does not have the means of changing the rules she does not agree with, and has no option but to accept this cruel fate of their family’s property.

The well-known pursuit from Mrs. Bennet to find husbands for her daughters does not seem so aberrant if you take into consideration the immediacy that the girls were in. In the case of Mr. Bennet’s passing, they could be removed from the estate without any further notice, since it would go to this unknown gentleman, and be left with no place to go. Marriage, in that sense, meant financial stability, “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” (AUSTEN, 1993, p. 105).

More important than nowadays, as Watkins (1990) states, marriage was treated as a matter of the whole family, since one advantageous union could mean the financial security of all the members of the family. Once a couple was married, sisters and brothers-in-law became real sisters and brothers and they were tied for ever. Not only financially, marriage also defined your place in society, which was asserted according to what family you were merged with. Therefore, from one advantageous marriage, the life of the entire family could be changed overnight. Because of this importance, young men and women were expected to respect their families’ wishes on who they chose to share their lives with, and most parents tried choosing a financially stable suitor. It was not considered rude to be concerned about money first; this, of course, happened more often with the gentry, who had wealth to protect; yet, more than ever before children challenged their parents on their choice for a partner. Spread by the rise of the culture of the novel, it was not uncommon for children to choose a partner based on love and compatibility of tempers. In fact, many parents actually encouraged their sons and daughters to consider the type of person they were marrying and not only the property they would acquire.

Since women had very few options of employment – and the ones they had rarely were sufficiently well paid in order to maintain their living – they remained in the hopes of marrying

someone so that they could have financial stability and a house to take care of. And, although love started to become a part in the pursuit of a partner, that would still obey some guidelines. Marrying outside of one's rank was extremely rare since "a stable continuity of wealth was more likely when money married money" (WATKINS, 1990, p. 24). Therefore, it would be almost impossible for workers to marry landed gentry or the other way around.

Just as important as private matters such as marriages were, communal life was of the essence. Because of the remote conditions of the towns in rural England, families relied on their neighbors for help when needed, and entertainment throughout the year. In the novel, all the families of Hertfordshire seem to know one another and get along rather well. They have dinners together and meet at the monthly assemblies, are the source of gossip and glee, and are the first to know about any disgrace or delight that may fall upon them. Because of their intimate connection, being welcomed into the group did not always prove to be an easy task. If someone wanted to be accepted by the group, they had to behave according to what was expected of them, and more than anything, they should try to fit in.

In the novel, when the newcomers first arrive, they meet the community through one of the monthly assemblies. The difference in how they approach the people at the ball translates into how they are perceived by the group. If at first Darcy is seen favorably due to his fortune and good looks, when he fails to make his acquaintance with the people from the county – he does not dance with any of the ladies who are available, nor does he try to talk to anyone other than the people from his party – he is deemed much inferior to his friend. Mr. Bingley tries to include himself in the community: he introduces himself to the main people in the room, dances with different young ladies and is upset because of the end of the assembly. It is no wonder then that his lesser fortune that came through less impressive means – his family had acquired their fortune through trade and not through land ownership, which was a more prestigious way of owning fortune – was met with such high regards. It was a consensus in the group: while Mr. Bingley could be accepted in the group, the same could not be said of his friend. Later in the story, the same resolution is made with the militia that arrives in town, especially Mr. Wickham, who is more relevant to the narrative. Even though we later discover his lack of morals and his wild expenditures, which result in multiple debts to the community, he is accepted with open arms. Wickham manages to sense how favorable the members feel towards Bingley and, therefore, does not say anything hostile about him. When he notices that is not the case for Darcy, he does not refrain himself from telling – and we later learn, inventing

– despicable actions Darcy allegedly took against him. Nobody questions his affirmations because he has been accepted as a member of the community, and, as a member, he is deemed unlikely to make false affirmations.

Besides geographical proximity, communities were formed according to the social ranks people had. In 19<sup>th</sup>-century England, society was organized into two basic ranks: those who owned land, and those who wished to own it. As in every developed society, those ranks had their own subdivisions. At the top were the royal family and the nobility, that is, those who could sit in the House of Lords. The knights came next because their title had not been earned hereditarily, but through some special reason. Soon after were the landed gentry who had varying degrees of wealth and elegance. The richest group formed the Upper Ten Thousand whose members went into Parliament and were titled. The lesser landed proprietors were the leaders in their vicinities – they had some acres of land and could live abundantly from the earnings of their land. Right below them, were the middle class of landed gentry who went into professional classes such as clerics, lawyers and doctors. Other professionals such as merchants, farmers and tradesmen were looked down upon the upper classes, and they could only hope to be successful enough to be able to acquire an estate and thus, enter the world of the landed gentry, yet always know that such feature would be close to impossible.

Mr. Bingley and his family derive from a tradesman, whose class was usually considered vulgar, uneducated and badly dressed. Even though his origins are not the most favorable, his bright personality and cheerful countenance made this fact irrelevant and, since lower-class origins could be forgotten within one generation or two of acquiring education and wealth, his unfortunate background was never a source of scandal to the neighboring families. Although we tend to think of Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth as being from completely different ranks – since that is how they are remembered, especially through Lady Catherine's memorable line in which she states Elizabeth is “a young woman of inferior birth” (AUSTEN, 1993, p. 296) –, McMaster (1997) argues that is not how Elizabeth sees their disparity. For her, both of them are gentlemen's children, and so, equal. At the same time that she is aware of the imbalance they possess within their rank, she emphasizes the fact that both belong to the country gentry.

Having an estate, however, did not buy you the respect of the landed gentry immediately. In order to be accepted and considered a part of the group, one had to follow strict rules of behaviour. Only “by obeying the code of ‘Manners’ expected of a gentleman, or

gentlewoman, with all the grace of courtesy and good humour which this implies, no one need fear social embarrassment”, argues Ross (2006, p. 9). In fact, these manners were a way of asserting your place within the community. The willingness by which the Bingleys accept those rules and perform them with excellency – alongside their wealth – are what grant their reverence in Hertfordshire. The same could be said of Elizabeth and Jane: by obeying the social rules, they are seen as exceptions in the Bennet family, since her sisters do not seem to be able to comprehend them. Even though all the sisters have the same rank, fortune and similar beauty – although Jane is considered to be above all of them in that area – they are not worthy of the same treatment from people of higher rank. In the end, the sisters who understand the rules are the ones who secure their future, proving what Ross affirms that “a thorough understanding of the proper codes of conduct is the only rational recipe for happiness” (ROSS, 2006, p. 13).

Morality was the rule by which people had to abide. Behaving morally was above all necessities, and a task required even more of young women. School’s most important task was to make their student behave morally. Never mind literacy; religion and morality were the first priorities of schools. Reading was profitable because then, students would be able to read the Bible and thus, follow the moral path. Besides the Bible, conduct books still had their relevance at the time. Written by men, with the target audience of young single women, those books tried to teach women what they were expected to do in order to be considered virtuous and agreeable women. Ranging from what clothes to wear to what attributes they should look for in a future partner, those books laid their premises on the teachings of the Bible, since, for the writers, who were mostly clergymen, to be a good woman, or better, to be a good person, one had to be a good Christian.

Clergy life was also based on different principles than we may expect nowadays. Instead of men deciding to join the church because of the feeling they had that they should follow this vocation, clerical life was just another suitable profession for young educated men. Although there was no fixed salary for clergymen, if they were granted a parish that was large enough, they were able to live similarly to the landed gentry.

As presented above, the rural English scenery of the nineteenth century was a mostly agreeable place to live. Peaceful, green and untouched by pollution, it was presented almost as an idyllic place to live. Surrounded by nature and a close-knit community, the place where *Pride and Prejudice* is set presented few problems that 21<sup>st</sup> century readers might consider

important, especially if compared to the uncertainty of living in today's world. Yet the questions that afflicted those people remain remarkably similar to the ones that we still have to face.

### **1.1.1 A new type of novel**

When talking about *Pride and Prejudice*, to many people, the immediate signifier that is associated to the title might not be the novel, but one of the many versions created based on the book. And, although all the adaptations add to the mental construct that we have of the story, they are all derived from a genre that was on the rise in the nineteenth century and that suffered many changes from its original format: the novel. Although it was not Jane Austen who invented the novel, her contributions to shaping the form to what we now know are unquestionable. In fact, as Elaine Bender (2022) points out, she was among the few writers of the time who embraced the term *novel* to designate her story, unlike most of her peers who claimed their books were based on 'true histories' or simply a collection of letters edited by the author. Not only did she adopt the term for her books, but she also defended the act of reading and writing novels in her stories. There, the pretentious characters who dislike novels are openly mocked while the protagonists whose side we are supposed to take reflect her liking for the format.

An enthusiastic reader of novels herself, Austen chose to leave out many tropes of the novels she read in her stories,

Bourgh's anger at Elizabeth Bennet; no digressive embedded narratives (except for Colonel Brandon's tale of the two Elizas and Mrs Smith's personal history); no picturesque travels to foreign parts (merely Elizabeth Bennet's tour to Derbyshire and Anne Elliot's journeys to Lyme and Bath); no extravagantly worded speeches of passion from the heroines (unless we count Marianne Dashwood's); no violent suicides (apart from Dr. Grant's overeating); no revelations about birth (except Harriet Smith's); no sudden reversals of fortune (except for hapless Edward Ferrars and fortunate Frank Churchill). (BANDER, 2022, p. 154).

Denying the tropes that made the stories seem fictional, Jane Austen made her readers feel her stories were like real life. Instead of presenting overly complicated adventures, improbable incidents and extravagant plots, Austen preoccupied herself with presenting a verisimilar world, where improbability is not contemplated. With the intention of delighting

her readers with stories in which they could see themselves, Austen scaled down the grand fictional conventions to plots circulating around 3 or 4 families in which readers could, through witty dialogue, reflect, alongside with the characters, upon themselves and their own lives. That is one of the reasons as to why her stories are not considered plot driven. The actions presented are not grand adventures or complicated schemes, but real-life events such as when the next ball would be, or what the characters would bring for their next picnic, and how the weather was going to be for their next gathering.

In a text entitled *Jane Austen and the Invention of the Serious Modern Novel*, Kathryn Sutherland (2004) argues that Austen is one of the writers who popularized the novel. During her lifetime, literature became subject to increased marketing and consumption, which was only amplified by the increasingly different ways people could affordably access books, be it through circulating libraries – which worked similarly to a rental company, in which people could pay a subscription and, in return, could borrow as many books as they would like for a period of time –, reading clubs, printing books on pages of magazines or even the choice of separating books into volumes, which, being available in circulating libraries, would allow more than one person to read a novel at the same time. Because of this popularization, the novel became the main literary form available to the English nineteenth-century readers, since “in its internal organization and its textual effectiveness, the novel became at this time the genre which best engages with both public and private norms by domesticating the political and politicizing the domestic” (SUTHERLAND, 2004, p. 247), thus becoming the genre that was able to reproduce the complexity of social reality.

Besides popularizing this genre, Austen also introduced several techniques to the novel that have become the main components of such format. One of her main additions to it is the way she portrays conversations between characters. In them, she reproduces something close to what real conversations could be like, instead of presenting long monologues as her peers did. They are “conversations that stumble, where characters speak across each other, where characters begin to mimic one another, as we do in conversation” (SUTHERLAND, 2015). Knowing fully well that her characters were flawed human beings, their communication could not be perfect. It would have to portray something closer to what real morality was: flawed.

Not only through these conversations did Austen bring the novel closer to her readers, but also through the depiction of real human dilemmas. Praised by copying nature as it was, Austen’s narratives illustrate the “inwardness of the heroine, whose complex life of the mind

replaces the less probable adventures in the body of her conventional counterpart” (SUTHERLAND, 2004, p. 254), that is, her stories give depth to characters and it is their subjectivity that interests readers. Perfecting her craft from novel to novel, Austen became known for depicting reflective heroines, whose inner dialogues are made available to readers by the narrowing lenses of the narrator. Instead of following great adventures that take place in the outside world, readers are invited to delve into the mind of the protagonist and go on her journey of self-discovery and growth, while being encouraged to learn a little about themselves in the process. Doody (1997) further argues that Austen likes to subvert her readers’ expectations, presenting the abnormal as normal, “the criminal as the proper, the shameful as the excellent”, thus targeting social assumptions. Her characters are united through irregular unions, and not always do wicked characters suffer wicked punishments, much like what happens in real life, which is not always just and fair.

Austen’s additions to the novel are plentiful and have reshaped the way we think about them. Of course, she is not alone in popularizing this genre, but her relevance in what it means to be a novelist cannot be overlooked. Her ability to captivate readers and make them identify themselves in so far-removed places and plots continues to be unquestioned to this day.

## **1.2 *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*: A 21<sup>st</sup> Century Adaptation**

In the midst of so many adaptations of *Pride and Prejudice*, there is one that we could set apart for its originality and for standing as a work for itself. The web series *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, created by Bernie Su and Hank Green in 2012, presented a new way of adapting such an iconic work and propelled a new type of storytelling format through different media. Given that the term *adaptation* is so widely used and may be understood through different theories, it is first necessary to explain the view of *adaptation* that is going to be used in this work. As stated in Linda Hutcheon (2013)’s work, adaptation has become an essential part of our culture. Even though it is not a new phenomenon, it has become increasingly more predominant in society, permeating all media. Despite its increasing relevance, adaptation is too often regarded as inferior than the *original* material, and is commonly evaluated according to its fidelity to the source material. It is Hutcheon’s view – and mine – that “there are many and varied motives behind adaptation and few involve faithfulness” (HUTCHEON, 2013, p.

XV), and that is why adaptation should be examined as “deliberate, announced, and extended revisitations of prior works” (HUTCHEON, 2013, p. XVI). In fact, many critics argue against that simplistic view of adaptation as a way of transferring a story from one medium to another, with the sole intent of reproducing the source story as closely as possible. This is clear from the wide array of possibilities we see in adaptations nowadays, which blurs the lines of what is *new* and what is adapted.

If the critics are right and adaptation is such an inferior form of literature, one must wonder why it is so prevalent in our culture. As Hutcheon argues, “repetition with variation” seems to be the key to understanding its appeal. We want to be told the same stories but in new and exciting ways. The rise of new media is one of the reasons why we seem to be constantly presented new adaptations of familiar material. Besides that, producing a product based on what is canonically known, such as a Jane Austen novel, is bound to be economically profitable, which gives companies an extra push towards investing in adapting well received works.

That is why Sanders’ definition of the term helps us shed some light on what adaptation is considered on this work. As she states:

Adaptation can be a transpositional practice, casting a specific genre into another generic mode, an act of re-vision in itself. It can parallel editorial practice in some respects, indulging in the exercise of trimming and pruning; yet it can also be an amplificatory procedure engaged in addition, expansion, accretion, and interpolation [...] Adaptation is frequently involved in offering commentary on a source text. This is achieved most often by offering a revised point of view from the ‘original’, adding hypothetical motivation, or voicing the silenced and marginalized. Yet adaptation can also constitute a simpler attempt to make texts ‘relevant’ or easily comprehensible to new audiences and readerships via the processes of proximation and updating (SANDERS, 2006, p. 22-23).

It is in this description of adaptation that *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* seems to fit the definition of an adapted product from *Pride and Prejudice*. It takes the source text and revises it, bringing the themes to a new time and place, changing the perspective of the characters and making the problems faced more relevant to the current audience. It gives voice to many side characters in the main videos but also through spin offs, which allows viewers to empathize and understand their motivations, while they take Lizzie’s opinions with a grain of salt. It brings the problems of the Regency period, which is so removed from viewers’ reality, to what

they know, showing that times may change, but the essence of relationships, family and love stay the same.

The idea of adapting a classic novel such as *Pride and Prejudice* is not new. In fact, it seems that this is a good way of guaranteeing loyal viewers or readers, since whoever falls in love with the story is most likely to consume any product connected to it. *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* does not attempt to hide its connection to the source material, since its title gives us the name of one of the most known protagonists in English literature, drawing the attention to whoever is perusing the web for some *Pride and Prejudice* content.

Mostly based around a videoblog posted on YouTube, the world of *the LBD* is vast. Because of its huge success, the original videos were expanded and many spin offs and extra material were created. While the spin offs were made to present the side characters' views and actions that were not known by Lizzie, the main videos are the ones that dive into the source story and where Lizzie tells her life.

The premise of the story is simple: Lizzie Bennet is a 24-year-old mass communication grad-student who decides to document her life in a vlog format. In it, she talks about her life, sharing the stage with her two sisters, Jane and Lydia, her best friend Charlotte, and later, the other people in her life, such as Mr. Collins, Caroline, Bing Lee, Fitz, and Darcy. The videos have a wide range of topics, with some of them being about her university life and the worries the future brings her, some about what happened in her week, and some about the relationship she develops with the new people who arrive in her neighborhood. Taking 100 episodes, the show ran for almost a year, being updated twice a week.

The story starts with some newcomers arriving in the city and Lizzie's mom obsessing over marrying one of her daughters to the new man who is on his way of becoming a doctor. To understand her mother's fixation over marriage, the viewers are presented with a version of Lizzie's mother through costume theater. This is a recurrent bit that happens in the vlogs, where Lizzie dresses up as some character and acts according to how she believes they do. This is often exaggerated and differ from what other characters think. Regardless of that, this segment is, most times, the only way the audience can have access to the people Lizzie often talks about. The reasoning as to why her mother so desperately wishes Lizzie and her sister Jane to marry is never fully explained, since Mrs. Bennet does not appear in the videos, but Lizzie conjectures that her mother is simply old fashioned and wishes her daughters to have

an easier life than the one she had and, in her mind, marriage would be the simplest way of achieving that.

The Bennets are introduced to the newcomers in a wedding and, as Jane and Bing Lee seemed interested towards each other, they become a part of Lizzie's daily life. Lizzie spares no details in telling us about how little she cares for the rich med student Bing Lee, who seems to be smitten by her sister, and his snobbish friend Darcy, who could only stand leaning towards a wall during the whole reception, without bothering to talk to anyone. While we see Jane's feelings for Bing Lee develop slowly through the videos, Lizzie's dislike for Darcy is instant.

As the story progresses, the viewers are presented to Lizzie's often prejudiced judgment. She sees the world a certain way and is sure that is how things are. The viewers are not blind to this prejudice, since there are many comments on the videos about how wrong Lizzie may be. This becomes even more obvious when she interacts with other characters in her vlogs and they disagree with her perception. Lizzie's *blind spot* becomes the excuse to some videos in which she does not appear, or is not the main character. When that happens, her sisters or Charlotte argue that Lizzie is not telling the full story and that the viewers have the right to know what truly has happened, and they take on the task of retelling events the way they seem fit. Through other characters' views, Darcy does not seem to be such a snob as Lizzie paints him to be. In fact, he is shown to be interested in Lizzie's life and genuinely trying to get closer to her, despite coming across out of touch. His attempts, however, prove to be unsuccessful, since she cannot help but despise him.

Eventually, Darcy and Bing Lee go back to the city and the Bennet sisters are left without a proper explanation to the sudden change of air, just a tweet informing of their departure. While Jane is inconsolable, Lizzie is furious and insists on Jane going after Bing Lee for some explanation. The eldest Bennet sister decides to go to Los Angeles not to chase a man, but to accept a job offer she received.

While Jane moves, Lizzie is offered a job at a digital communication company, Collins and Collins, by her former elementary school classmate, Rick Collins. Even though Lizzie knows how advantageous such offer is for her – she is a graduate student who still lives at home with her parents and has no job aligned for when she finishes her graduate course – she decides to decline it, against her mother's wishes. For Lizzie, working at that company would be a way of *selling out*, since she would have to work creating content that she does not see

any value in. For her, it is better to remain unemployed than losing the principles she holds dear. Charlotte, however, does not agree with Lizzie in that point, and decides to take the offer. They have a serious argument on screen, where Lizzie cannot understand the reason for Charlotte accepting the offer, and part ways.

If that were not enough, Lizzie still has to say goodbye to yet another character, George Whickham, the swimmer who appeared in town during the summer for the swimming competitions that happens every year. After an encounter at the local bar, where he proved to be a gentleman, through Lizzie's perspective, they start to hang out, and their interest for each other is clear. Despite their extremely different beliefs, Lizzie seems to think that they are similar. When she discovers the previous history that George and Darcy had, in which George affirms that Darcy denied giving him the money to go to college, going against his father's wishes, Lizzie is certain that George must be a good person, since they both despise the same man. Even though Lizzie seems to be thinking that she and George may start a relationship soon, he reveals that he is leaving town for some competition, and disappears from her life.

Being left almost completely alone, she only has Lydia to keep her company, but, since Lizzie does not see the way she behaves with good eyes, many arguments arise. Eventually, Lizzie decides to reconcile with Charlotte and visit her in her new job. From there, Lizzie makes a plan for her final semester at university: instead of taking classes, she is going to study different mass media companies, the first being Collins and Collins.

For the next few episodes, we follow Lizzie settling in at the company, until she is surprised by the visit of Darcy. With the excuse of supervising the work that is being done by Charlotte at the company – since his aunt is one of its prime investors – he appears to be wherever Lizzie is. In one of the most expected videos of the show, he barges into the room where Lizzie is recording and confesses his love for her, while highlighting how beneath him she actually is and how improper her family and connections are. Appalled by this revelation, Lizzie does not measure her words and dismisses his feelings while accusing him of having mistreated George and being the cause of the abrupt separation of her sister and Bing Lee – which she had learned from Fitz, Darcy's friend, who was also supervising the company. He is also shocked since he expected she would reciprocate his feelings, since he was in such an advantageous position, especially compared to her. When he realizes that is not the case, Darcy leaves the company, but not without giving Lizzie a letter first, in which he explains his view on the accusations he suffered. Lizzie, however, does not share the letter in the videos – one

has to read her diary, which was later published, to know its content. Although Lizzie clearly did not expect Darcy's feelings, Charlotte, Jane and Lydia do not seem surprised by this revelation. In fact, in previous episodes, they had made suggestions —vehemently dismissed by Lizzie — of his feelings towards the protagonist.

After these revelations, Lizzie goes back home and searches for a new company to shadow for her graduate course. Through the recommendation of her professor Dr. Gardner, she travels to Pemberley Digital where she intends to stay for a few weeks. Before going to Pemberley, Lizzie and Lydia get involved in a serious argument. As a birthday gift, Lizzie gives her sister a book intitled *Where did I park my car? A party girl's guide to becoming a successful adult*, which she does not take well. Lydia sees the gift as an insult and decides to run to Las Vegas to spend her New Year's — since both her sisters had already *abandoned* her.

At Lizzie's arrival, she discovers that the company is Darcy's when she is introduced to Gigi, Darcy's sister. During her stay, Lizzie is enchanted by the company and starts seeing Darcy differently. With Gigi's interventions, they are required to spend a lot of time together, and Lizzie seems to reevaluate her previous judgments. As episodes go by, we can see how much Lizzie enjoys her life at Pemberley Digital and how she is thrilled to have a friend in Gigi and to be getting closer to Darcy. This life, however, is interrupted by a phone call — or several — from her family where she learns the harsh consequences of her sister's decisions.

In Vegas, Lydia started a romantic relationship with Wickham — which is further developed in her videos. Since Lizzie had not been watching them, she is not aware of that and is caught by surprise with the revelation that a sex tape was about to be released to the public. At first, she imagines that Lydia knows this and has consented to the video; however, once she talks to her sister, she discovers that is the furthest thing from the truth. In fact, Lydia was under the impression that Wickham actually loved her and is aghast by this announcement.

With Lizzie back home, and Lydia refusing to talk to her, Jane decides to leave her job to be with her family. The Bennets are back together and desperate to find a way to stop the video from ever being released. It is then that Lizzie reveals what she already knew about George, that his character is not as respectable as she had been led to believe. He had already tried to deceive another young girl, Gigi, and had failed to do so since Darcy discovered their relationship before it was too late — that was one of the contents in the letter he had written to Lizzie back in Collins and Collins.

Lizzie cannot help but feel that Lydia's demise is her fault. If she had bothered to watch her sister's videos, she would have known the fragile state Lydia was and how desperate for love she was; she would have known that George was saying all the things she wished to hear and would have been able to alert her to his true character. Since she was too concerned with her own life, she feels that she did her sister wrong and that it is her responsibility to fix the problem she helped creating. Lizzie addresses her audience, asking them not to open the video once it is released and, overnight, the website is taken off air.

Relieved by the removal of the video, even though she still does not know how this happened, Lizzie focuses solely on helping Lydia recover from the shock of being deceived. In the meantime, an old acquaintance makes his way back to town. Bing Lee appears at the Bennets' house to speak to Jane. He admits that he only ended things with Jane because of external pressures and that he had now decided that he did not care for what other people thought of their relationship, since he had never stopped loving her. Jane, however, states that they cannot go back and resume the relationship from where they had stopped, since they had become different people and she did not know whether her feelings were the same. Once she receives a job offer to go to New York, she quickly accepts it, and Bing Lee asks if he could go along with her, since he had decided not to continue his medical career. They agree to go to New York together, but on the understanding that they would start the relationship from scratch.

Once again, Jane leaves the family and Lizzie is left wondering about her future. She reminisces about her life at Pemberley Digital and wonders what would have happened if she had stayed there, especially after discovering that the person who removed the website from ever going up is Darcy. She realizes that her one-sided view of things caused her many problems and wonders if it is too late to change her mind about a certain someone. In a moment of weakness, Lizzie calls Darcy and leaves a message asking him to call her back.

In the next few episodes, Lizzie is left to wonder if the possibility of her relationship with Darcy is lost forever, since he does not return her phone call. It is on her birthday – and Charlotte's – that he appears at her house and they reveal their feelings for each other. After that, Darcy invites her to go and work for Pemberly Digital, which she politely declines, deciding that it would be better for her to create a company of her own and not to be known as the "boss's girlfriend". With the end of her graduate course, Lizzie decides that she should also end her videos – 100 episodes seemed to be a good number to stop. She says goodbye to

the audience who followed her eventful year and who had seen her and her sisters grow and change through the hard times they had gone through, thus ending the series of videos.

As a familiar reader of *Pride and Prejudice* may notice, the plot continues to be remarkably similar to the source material – despite its different setting, it continues to be an adaptation of the story. Taking the central themes and events from the novel, and reimagining them in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* presents a new version of the same problems that people have been dealing with for two centuries. Besides some interesting decisions in the adaptation – such as changing the elopement from Lydia to the possibility of uploading a sex tape of the couple –, the decision of expanding the story beyond Lizzie’s plot also adds to the complexity of the narrative. Instead of having only one perspective shown – one that, as the title of the original story suggests, is prejudicial – we are presented with many characters whose voices and perspectives are also valued. Viewers have an array of options and have the role of deciding for themselves who is most biased and whose account on facts can be trusted the most. Since *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* does not consist only of the main videos uploaded by Lizzie, the next section presents the many spin offs that branched out of the videos and their addition to the main plot.

### **1.2.1 The many spin-offs of the *LBD* world**

As shown previously, the main material for *LBD* are the videoblogs; however, that is not the only medium used to tell the story. Even though one could follow only the main plotline through the videos, one would get many more details of the story when following the side plots. Therefore, this section briefly presents what they entail.

Besides the main videos, which were in the format of Lizzie’s blog, there are ten Q&A videos. Each of them was released after ten episodes of the main series. In them, Lizzie interacts with her viewers, often accompanied by other characters from the main plot. The videos add an interesting dimension to the story, where Lizzie is confronted with viewers’ questions about her judgmental point of view. They also reveal sides of her character and life that we may not see in the videoblogs. Besides that, there are many intertextual nods in the videos, where viewers, who probably are familiar with *Pride and Prejudice* and its innumerable

adaptations, ask questions about those adaptations. In one of the videos (Questions and Answers #2 (ft. Charlotte Lu)), one of the comments is “another universally acknowledged truth is that a zombie in possession of brains must be in want of more brains”, hinting to the movie *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* (2016); or when Lizzie states that if she lived in Victorian England, she would walk around with “a lot of muddy dresses” (Questions and Answers #6), a reference to the book.

Whenever something is happening to an important character that is meaningful to the main plot, but Lizzie has no way of knowing it, the creators of the show devised a way for the viewers to follow their story. Therefore, when Lizzie travels away from Lydia, the younger sister records her videos; when she is having arguments with Charlotte, we get a glimpse of her life through her sister Maria’s videos; when she goes back home after spending some time in Pemberley Digital and is out of touch with Darcy, we discover his efforts of helping her through Gigi’s videos. If the viewers choose to follow the main plot only, they will be limited to knowing only what Lizzie chooses to tell, and are likely to be caught unawares of plot twists, such as she does. If they, however, choose to follow all the videos in the order they were posted, they will know things before Lizzie does.

Another important spin off is Lydia’s videoblog. Because of the response of the viewers, Lydia’s character became more prominent in *LBD* than in *Pride and Prejudice*. Whenever the main story made it impossible for Lydia to be present in the videos, she would record her own and post them. In them, we can see a different side of Lydia. In the first few posts, she is staying with her cousin Mary, while away from her sisters and it is clear how much she misses them and feels alone, contrasting with Lizzie’s videos, where there are almost no mentions to Lydia. Once they are reunited, Lydia’s posts stop, since then she can participate in Lizzie’s videos, stating that it is too much work making videos all by herself. The second part of her videos start when Lizzie travels to Collins and Collins and Lydia stays at home. There, we can see her interacting with her cousin Mary, who tries to make Lydia study for her midterms. Little by little, we can see how much she feels alone, since everyone else is having their own adventures besides her. The last part of the videos shows her trip to Las Vegas, where she finds Wickham and starts a relationship with him. From that moment on, Wickham frequently appears on the videos and we can see how manipulative he is in order to make Lydia fall for him and how abusive he becomes.

The videos help create Lydia's multidimensional personality: we can see her party side, but also how she feels insecure, alone and left out. We understand her reasons for being with Wickham and feel empathy for the consequences of this relationship. More than that, we can see different perspectives of the same story. Later on, a book entitled *The Epic Adventures of Lydia Bennet: A novel* (2015) was also written from Lydia's perspective, this time, narrating the events that take place after the main story. There are also videos from Maria Lu's perspective, who is Charlotte's sister. This character only appears in these videos; however, she is mentioned in the main vlogs. In them, she presents what was happening to Charlotte when she and Lizzie were not talking. Maria proves to be an essential character to the reconciliation of the two friends, since she is the one who forces Charlotte to watch Lizzie's videos where she explains how much she misses her best friend. Another short series of videos is one mainly centered around Gigi Darcy. In them, she tests a new app that is being developed by Pemberley Digital, called *Domino*. Although the idea is not that interesting for the viewers, through them we can discover the efforts being taken by Darcy into trying to track down Wickham due to the sex tape he threatens to release.

The fictitious company of Collins and Collins that appears on the show also has their own videos. They are often mentioned by Lizzie in a mocking way. Intitled *Better Living with Collins and Collins*, the videos have an educational goal, where we see instructions into doing different things, such as "how to eat a sandwich" and "how to accept an award". The videos contribute to reinforce the viewer's impressions of Mr. Collins of being too formal and to further emphasize his admiration for Mrs. de Bourgh, the main investor of his company, since there, even though he is recording videos for the internet, he continues to be pompous and to praise everything Mrs. de Bourgh says to him.

All the characters also have their own social media accounts, which are often mentioned in the vlogs. Their posts help reveal interesting events that were only cited in the videos and present the interaction between characters other than Lizzie, or even present clues to plots that will unfold later on the story. One of these examples is Gigi's twitter account, where she posts a song she has been listening to that she identifies with and the lyrics are about moving past an abusive relationship. This is one of the first posts she has on her Twitter account, and we only learn much later about the relationship that the song represents for her, which is hers and Wickham's. The posts also show the characters' reaction over the events that are shown in the videos, such as when Lizzie and Darcy finally get together and Gigi and

Fitz are perplexed over the news. We can read their interaction over the video that was posted and infer that it was a surprise for them as well.

Besides videos, there are also books that were written in order to expand the universe of *LBD*. They are *The Secret Diary of Lizzie Bennet: A novel* which recounts the story in the videos, but adds new information to the reader – such as the complete letter Darcy wrote to Lizzie, and, as previously mentioned, *The Epic Adventures of Lydia Bennet: A novel*. As it was mentioned, the story is not limited to a single plotline. Each viewer is able to delve into the narrative as much as they wish; however, for a fuller experience, one that goes further the real restraints that Lizzie has and we as viewers do not, it is interesting to follow all the branches the *LBD* presents.

### **1.2.2 Transmedia storytelling and its many possibilities**

One of the main reasons as to why the *LBD* series became so popular is its ability to connect to its 21<sup>st</sup> century audience. It is not only the plot of the story that was adapted from *Pride and Prejudice*, but also the way in which it is told. The decision of using an innovative media at the time, such as YouTube, made the videos more easily viral and accessible to different audiences. We must remember that, in 2012, the year the videos were first released, YouTube was not commonly used to create series. In fact, the *LBD* was the first web series to ever win an Emmy Awards. The successful use of this media is curious and deserves further analysis, especially because it allowed different forms of engagement and repercussion. In this section, I look at the media used in the *LBD* story and how they were successful in connecting to their audience.

In a society that is surrounded by so much information, in so many different formats, the decision to adapt the work to more than one format seems suitable in order to attract more viewers. In *LBD*, many *new* types of media, products from the digital world, were used to create an intricate narrative and show different dimensions of the same story. The story is expanded, explained and deepened through the multiple possibilities viewers have of entering this world. The production even counted with a transmedia producer, Jay Bushman, who was in charge of expanding the lore of *LBD* across media.

That is why we can consider it an example of transmedia storytelling. As Jenkins explains,

A transmedia story unfolds across multiple media platforms, with each new text making a distinctive and valuable contribution to the whole. In the ideal form of transmedia storytelling, each medium does what it does best – so that a story might be introduced in a film, expanded through television, novels, and comics; its world might be explored through game play or experienced as an amusement park attraction. Each franchise needs to be self-contained so you don't need to have seen the film to enjoy the game and vice-versa. Any given product is a point of entry into the franchise as a whole. [...] Offering new levels of insight and experience refreshes the franchise and sustains consumer loyalty (JENKINS, 2006, p. 95-96).

In some level, this is what seems to happen in *LBD*: there is the main story, told through the videos posted on YouTube, but there is also the extra material produced to complement the show, such as the social media posts, the books and the other videos that, even though use the same medium are in different genres and bring new aspects to the series as a whole.

The major purpose of those products seems to be to complement the main storyline; however, they can be read on their own – whether that is something one would do to some of these works is a different story –; therefore, they fulfill their mediatic purpose by themselves, being “self-contained”. Each of the works also makes a “distinctive and valuable contribution to the whole” and offers new experiences to the viewers. There are so many puns and inside jokes that viewers can only understand them if they are fully updated to all the content that was produced.

Suppose you find a random video on YouTube entitled “How to Eat a Sandwich” and decide to watch it. At first, you would probably not find the connection between the video and *LBD*. You would learn the ways one might eat a sandwich and could end your contact with the material there already. The material would, in itself, accomplish what it was designed to do: be an instructional video. However, if you decide to read the comments on the video, you will find hundreds of posts making references to *LBD*. If you are familiarized with *Pride and Prejudice*, it is not impossible that you would make a connection between the *Mr. Collins* and his *Mrs. de Borough* mentioned on the comments to the ones in the novel, so, they could act as a way of entering the series world, completely unrelated to the main videos.

Something similar would happen with the tweets from the show. Even though it seems unlikely that anyone would only read the tweets from the characters, they conform to what is expected from this medium. If anyone were to read them without any understanding from the videos, they would find normal tweets among what seems to be friends having conversations or sharing their thoughts about specific events. However, once you know the background story, the posts acquire new meaning and you can find hidden gems in them.

The same could be said about all the other social media the characters have. They perform the role a social media account is expected to have. For the unknown reader, they would, most likely, not discover that those pages were created with the intent of expanding a videoblog. Since they present information one would expect to find on Flickr, Pinterest, Tumblr, and many others, they appear to be a personal account much more than a piece of the *LBD* puzzle.

The books are another type of media that is used in the *LBD* storyline. These are more likely to catch an unknown reader's attention. Although the show is advertised on the cover of the books, it is not implausible to imagine someone learning about the vlogs through the books. In fact, they have been called "standalone" novels and they mention the possible "new readers" who might read the books and thus learn about the series. Regardless of how you may discover the story, chances are that, if you liked what you found, you would try to learn more about this franchise. Therefore, what Jenkins (2006) suggests, that any of the products might present readers/viewers to the whole franchise, seems to be true.

Telling such a classic story in a transmedia format sends a message to its viewers: although the original story may be set in a distant past, where the novel was the main format of storytelling, its adaptation is able to connect to modern viewers by using a multitude of instruments, such as we use in our everyday lives, to tell an expanded version of how *Pride and Prejudice* might be in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **1.3 Bauman's Theory of Solid and Liquid Societies**

Every work of art is a product of its time. They embody the society in which they were produced, their values, customs, morals and lifestyles. Consequently, adapting a work also means that the core system of beliefs will reflect the society in which it is produced. When

such reality is similar, that does not require much changing on the work; however, that is not the case for the stories being analyzed in this thesis.

Produced in two extremely different periods, *Pride and Prejudice* portrays a 19<sup>th</sup>-century rural British society, whose values, morals and beliefs are nothing like the society of 21<sup>st</sup>-century cosmopolitan America, where *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* takes place. Besides geographical and temporal changes, the essence of these societies is different, and when such essence is crucial for the themes of the story, it is worth taking a look at what makes these realities so contrasting. For this section, we are going to discuss the differences in the ethics of these two realities, both when it comes to the importance of society and to the relevance of individuality and relationships. In order to do that, we use Bauman's theories of Solid and Liquid societies that he developed throughout his life.

First, it seems relevant to present the author that is so important to this work. Zygmunt Bauman is a sociologist who is most known for coining and disseminating the concept of *solid and liquid modernity*, first introduced in 2000 and later expanded in books devoted to analyzing different aspects of modernity, such as *Liquid Love* (2003), *Liquid Life* (2005), *Liquid Fear* (2006), *Liquid Times* (2006) and *Liquid Evil* (2016). During his life (1925-2017), he focused his studies on social changes in contemporary society, and how they affected individuals and communities, especially the poor. Although he heavily criticizes the paths society has taken in the latest years, he also presents the advancements that have been made, reminding people that each generation has its positive and negative elements and, therefore, it is impossible to say that one is better than the others.

In his essay entitled *Alone Again: Ethics After Certainty* (1994), Zygmunt Bauman goes back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century to illustrate how well-defined life was back then. Morality was seen as something very different from what we may consider nowadays. The author argues that the general consensus was that if men were not regulated and made to fear a higher power, they would not act morally. That meant that all the impulses, that is, all the unregulated instincts, one might feel would go against morality. The idea then was that, in order to have a moral society, those feelings should be put aside and men should be taught how to behave in an analytical way. If our impulses did not lead us anywhere profitable, it was necessary that we learned to control them because without the “voice of reason” (BAUMAN, 1994, p. 4) we would be doomed.

It was through this belief that life was separated into reason and emotion. With the latter, life was unpredictable, anything could happen and many things could get out of hand. When following the former, the world would become much more predictable and orderly. For every problem, there was one correct solution. Following this dichotomy meant that men should be taught not to follow their emotions and impulses if they wished to live in an orderly moral world. Therefore, it was necessary to create a system of laws, rules and norms which should be abided by the moral people. Only by following them, one would be certain of behaving correctly according to societal expectations. Morality was something clear cut: if you followed the norms and respected the prohibitions imposed upon your conduct, you would be a moral person; however, if you decided to abandon societal pressure and act according to your wishes and impulses, you would be proving your lack of morals.

That belief meant that emotions were antagonistic to morals, so it is no surprise that the whole system of living tried to eradicate this common enemy. With that conviction, society saw the rise of bureaucracy and business, both instruments created to eradicate emotions and instrumentalize rationality, and their influence in everyday life. For this thesis, it would be profitable to have a closer look on the rise of bureaucracy.

Bauman argues how bureaucracy introduced the idea of *procedural rationality* into the lives of the people. That is the idea that everyone's actions should be impersonal, in other words, they should be ruled by a set of procedures that are unchangeable. It is of no importance whether or not one agrees with the rules; they follow them simply because that is the proper way of behaving. No feelings are required in this way of thinking, only a firm loyalty to the institution that has instated those beliefs, and the fellow members who also follow them.

Because of this blind acceptance of what is imposed, if members of this community do their part, that is, follow the rules without questioning, they cannot be blamed for the effects the actions they take generate. Suppose your community has decided that ladies ought not to be property owners, and that any land that might be left to them should be passed to the closest male relative. This decision could be then transformed into law and, in this reality, the man would not be morally corrupt if he received the land and removed the ladies from *his* property. It would not be necessary for him to worry about the situation the ladies would be left in: if he followed the social norms, he was morally correct. Engraving this belief in the minds of the people was the perfect rationalization to excuse the way one acted, disregarding any contrary feelings that otherwise might arise.

A world based on such norms is fixed, without changes, solid. It is predictable, because rationality is the norm; in it, it is easy to distinguish right from wrong, good from evil, moral from amoral, since the solid shape is well defined. In a solid society, communal life is what gives structure to the lives of the people. An action taken by one individual may have a positive or negative impact on the whole community. Their rights or wrongs are merely a reflection on how well they were guided in the path of morally accepted behaviour. When a child acts outside of the expectations, they show the negligence of the parents, who must suffer the consequences of not guiding them correctly. The same happens with the successes achieved. It is not the individual alone who enjoys their fortune, but the whole group.

Living in such a world comes with its fortunes and misfortunes: on one hand, there is a sense of belonging and the certainty that the path taken is the correct one – since it is the only one seen as acceptable –; on the other hand, there is a lack of freedom of choice and one has their own life set out from the start if they wish to follow the morality they have been taught.

In recent years, life has suffered a big change, and the once solid and certain world has liquified and become fluid and ever changing. Whatever was certain is now doubtful. Instead of a single right answer, we are faced **with** an array of choices without knowing which one would suit us best. Resorting to the definition of fluids, Bauman (2000) asserts that what defines fluids is their ever-changing form, never fitting anything and their preparedness to adapt according to necessity. If their solid counterparts were constant and stable, they are adaptable and mobile. For the former, time is meaningless, since they are not affected by it: days, months and even years may go by and nothing will be able to change their format; for the latter, time is everything: in the passing of seconds they will flow, filling spaces only for a moment later to occupy different space and to take on a different form.

This new reality is what Bauman considers a liquid society: the one in which we are living. In a liquid society, everything may disappear without notice: jobs that were once seen as careers for life can be replaced in the blink of an eye; skills that people spent a lifetime acquiring become obsolete with the evolution of technology; money that was saved in the course of a life loses its value overnight. One wonders why they should prepare for the future if nobody knows what to expect from it. As Bauman states, “at the moment young men and women enter the game of life, none can tell what the rules of the game will be like in the

future. Their only certainty is that the rules will change many times over before the game is finished" (BAUMAN, 1994, p. 12).

This change on the perception of time brings consequences. Long-term plans become unwise, since it is impossible to prepare for an unknown future; and avoiding commitments becomes the way people choose to act in order to be free – one can only accept certain opportunities if they are not tied down to anything. Things are created with the intention of lasting a short period of time: problems and their solutions, products, celebrities, and even feelings. Bauman exemplifies the difference in how both societies live by making an analogy to a traveler. In a solid world, men act as if they were in a pilgrimage: in it, every step they take is calculated and takes them closer to their ultimate goal. They know that each step matters and that the path must be followed in a specific order if they wish to achieve what they set out to do. In our liquid reality, however, that is not possible. It is impossible to plan ahead because one cannot certainly predict if the path they first planned out will be available. Instead, we must act as tourists, never cementing ourselves anywhere, being always prepared to move forward when necessary. There is no final destination, so there is no need to follow a plan. If we lose interest somewhere, or if someplace else looks promising, there is nothing holding us back. A place – and people – is only meaningful based on the satisfactions it brings.

The tourist way of thinking means that creating meaningful connections to other people becomes harder. Even though we still have the necessity of living in society, we are alone: "separately side by side" (BAUMAN, 1994, p. 18). We depend on other people to live in such a world, yet there has never been such indifference to strangers. Bauman affirms that it is the realization that we no longer share a common fate that makes us indifferent towards each other.

Our lives have become privatized, that is, we may share the same space but not our thoughts and feelings. Happiness and grievances are a matter that only affect the individual, and the *other* is seen as a burden and not worthy of our time. Communities are no longer a source of security and acceptance, but a disturbance. Doing something for the well-being of others prevents us from enjoying ourselves.

Paradoxically, we seek for attention, yet we wish to pass unnoticed. At the same time that building bonds with (real) people has become harder – no one seems to have the time – or interest – to talk to their neighbors or a stranger on the bus – we cannot help but demand attention on our social pages. It is no wonder that so many different social networks are available for us to share our hobbies and desires to the world: we are eager for validation, for

being seen and for forming ties to other people, all of this while wishing to not have to compromise and put our own interests in second place.

The need for communities has become less important and our habits exemplify that. Our most important modern past time, consuming, is enjoyed as a solo experience. Stores and shopping centers may be filled with people, but they remain alone; the others are only an interference to our distraction. Privacy, it seems, has also gone down the drain. If, in a solid world, our lives were divided into the public and private spheres, with the former being reserved to men and work and the latter to the home and, mostly, women, now these two spheres have merged and it is hard to tell them apart. We have brought strangers into our houses through the internet, our jobs are not reserved to the outside anymore, and we share our most inner thoughts through tweets while refraining such proximity to the people closest to us. At the same time, the outside world has become frigid and cold.

Bauman argues that the disappearance of privacy also means a weakening of human bonds, since “[secrecy] is also a powerful tool of *togetherness*” (BAUMAN, 2010, p. 40). It is through the confinement of secrets to only a select few that friendships are created and maintained. It sets the important people in one’s lives apart from the ‘outsiders’. Apart from our privacy that has gone down the drain, even love and evil have been liquified. The fine lines between what is good and bad are increasingly more blurred; one has a harder time identifying evil. It has assumed the appearance of love. We have gotten so used to misfortunes that this is what we expect. As Donskis states, “Good news is no news. Bad news is *the* news by definition” (BAUMAN, DONSKIS, 2016, p.12-13). And instead of love representing the ultimate union between two worlds merging, relationships are only entered on the basis of what each individual may gain with its beginning and last for the amount of time that both parties involved are able to obtain enough satisfaction from each other that does not make them wish to end their involvement. The belief that love may last forever and that two people become one through the life they share is over. *Separately side by side*, that has become the rule of our time.

Despite Western society going through so many changes in such a short period of time, suffering transformations so deep that have been able to liquify what was once rock solid, in the end, the people who form these societies continue, in their essence to be the same. They continue to be human beings, with the same fears, wishes and hopes, who see the world differently, but not necessarily better or worse. Although societies may change and human

behavior may follow along that trajectory, the core of human nature seems to remain the same and, therefore, the importance of relationships, development and building a sense of self continue to be extremely relevant in both realities.

## 2 TRANSFORMING SOLID INTO LIQUID

In any sort of adaptation, the creators are going to have to face some difficult challenges, especially when the work that is going to be adapted is such an iconic one like *Pride and Prejudice*. The adaptors must choose what central theme(s) they wish to maintain and which are going to be further explored or that are not going to be dealt with in the new work. As Sanders points out, adaptations are a way of incrementing literature by “adding, supplementing, improvising, innovating” (SANDERS, 2016, p. 15). In that sense, they always bring something new for the base text. In *LBD*, the producers seemed to be concerned about how the themes of such a removed period could be portrayed and resonate with an audience from the 21<sup>st</sup> century, whose whole way of thinking and behaving is different from the ones from the characters in the novel. In order to do that, the solid world of Jane Austen and her characters needed to be liquified and treated as such.

In this chapter, I discuss how these societies react with the same themes that are presented in the works. At first, I discuss morality and how deciding to abide to the moral rules of the time impacts the characters; later, I present the different views each period has over relationships, more specifically, their community, family and love, and how relevant (or not) they are in characters’ everyday life; finally, I examine the role side characters are able to develop in the adaptation and how important they are to expand the world of the work.

### 2.1 Morals in an A-Moral World

With the title presenting the moral faults that would guide the story, *Pride and Prejudice* tells the story of morally flawed people and their path to either learning and evolving and thus, being rewarded for their transformation, or remaining the same and having to suffer the consequences of such stagnation. Both the novel and the web series represent not only the faults of being proud and the problems that evaluating people based on first impressions may bring, but also the consequences of omission and of not following the rules posed by society.

Morality, in a solid society, used to emerge from the community one was inserted, argues Bauman (1994). It laid its basis on law and order: following the law meant being moral; disregarding it was an act of immorality. Stating that “what people are or appear to be depends,

wholly or in part, on the kind of world we live in" (BAUMAN, 1994, p. 2), the community had the role of guiding individuals and making sure they behaved in a moral way, which, at the time, meant following the voice of the group one is inserted in and not acting according to one's wishes. That means that different groups could have a different view towards the proper way one should act. Since one of the requirements to be moral was to be guided in such direction – people are not born morally apt – when a member of the community succeeded on their moral path, its praise went to the ones who were able to guide them correctly; however, when one did not follow this path, it shone a bad light in those whose role had not been fulfilled correctly.

There is no better example of the lack of guidance and how it affected the life of a young woman, and by extent the whole family, than the story of Lydia. Being let *run wild* in the Bennets' residency, she was often considered silly and ignorant by her father, and spoiled by her mother. Although she behaved in an improper manner, she was not reprimanded by her parents who either condoned her behaviour, as her mother did, stating that she had been just like Lydia when she was younger, or are not bothered to interfere in the way she acts, as her father did. Leaving it for his daughters' choice, the Bennets never forced their children to learn the basic skills required from young women of their rank to know. They did not even have a governess, which was of primary necessity in a house with five young women whose main goal in life was to find a suitable partner. His loose approach to raising his daughters can be noticed through the way some of them act.

Without finding guidance in her family, Lydia feels free to act rather freely in the company of men, since that was her primary concern. Even though she was the youngest sister, she had already been out, that is, she had already been presented to society, which meant that she was eligible to finding a husband. That fact shocks Lady Catherine when she is made aware of it, since it was uncommon for the younger sisters to be out before the older ones were married. Nonetheless, Lydia was the sister who was most interested in finding a partner, and, without being reprimanded because of her lack of propriety when being in the company of men, her unfortunate future could be expected.

While the general consensus was that virtue is "not in those places of public entertainment, now so fondly frequented by so many women", just like Lydia loved doing, but in the "shade" being "most secure from the blights of calumny, and the heats of temptation" and women were reminded that "the love of promiscuous amusement [...] ensnares multitudes

on (their) sex” and that “a sweet timidity” was the nature of their sex (FORDYCE, 1809, p. 45-47), Lydia’s actions go completely against what was expected of her. She loved public places and was not shy of being the center of attentions, defying the recommendations made in the conduct books that were so popular.

As a sign of what is to come, Elizabeth does not agree with her parents who are permissive towards Lydia’s desire to go to Brighton with Mrs. Forster with the intent of being in the company of soldiers. From Lydia’s rhetoric and behaviour, it seemed clear that she could not behave according to what was expected of her without any supervision of her family. Elizabeth even tries advising her father not to allow such trip, but he, in yet another act of neglect, states that “Lydia will never be easy until she has exposed herself in some public place or other, and we can never expect her to do it with so little expense or inconvenience to her family as under the present circumstances” (AUSTEN, 1993, p. 195). By allowing her to go to Brighton, Mr. Bennet seems to retreat from his role of an authoritative figure and simply accepts that his daughter is beyond saving.

Her lack of regard for her and her family’s reputation is evident, that is why she is not presented considering the consequences of eloping with Wickham. At a time when respectable single women could not, by any means, be left alone with a man that was not related to them, Lydia runs away with one and does not see any problem with it. Her escape with him is a clear example that was considered immoral in the solid society: instead of following reason, as people were taught to do, she lets her own feelings and impulses take control of her, going against what was considered moral. When she is found to be living with Wickham, she is not concerned at all about getting married since “she was sure they should be married some time or other, and it did not much signify when” (AUSTEN, 1993, p. 268); therefore, she did not mind continuing to live in an immoral situation.

Being the voice of what it meant to behave morally according to the customs of the time, Mary Bennet is the one who highlights how serious Lydia’s action had been stating that “loss of virtue in a female is irretrievable; that one false step involves her in endless ruin; that her reputation is no less brittle than it is beautiful; and that she cannot be too much guarded in her behaviour towards the undeserving of the other sex” (AUSTEN, 1993, p. 240). Although her words may sound harsh, it was generally known and accepted that women in middle and upper classes were not supposed to have sexual contact before marriage. In fact, if “carnal desires were not supposed to be over-indulged” since “excessive passion in marriage was evil”

(HIBBERT, 1987, p. 400), it is no wonder that Mary is so alarmist of Lydia's future. Yet her prediction does not prove to be true, in the end.

Because of Lydia's lack of judgment, her future could have been much worse than the one she gets. In the end, she gets married to a man who the readers know that cannot be trusted, who often has problems with debts and who only married her because of the money he received. There is no love on his part towards her, and Elizabeth even states that is not surprising coming from him. Even though her future is, most likely, not happy, with the narrator revealing, at the end of the novel, that "his affection for her soon sunk into indifference; hers lasted a little longer; and in spite of her youth and her manners, she retained all the claims to reputation which her marriage had given her" (AUSTEN, 1993, p. 324), at least she was not cast aside by society and punished for breaking the moral code of the time. Instead of being able to live in society, she could have been left by Wickham and then, treated similarly to the way a *fallen woman*<sup>4</sup> was.

Nevertheless, her path after breaking the moral contract is not of repentance. In fact, she gloats of her decision, puts herself above her sisters, and cannot see the problem in the way her marriage was conducted. Instead of being ashamed of the path she had chosen, she advises her sisters on how to find a husband, to which Elizabeth responds that "(she does) not particularly like (her) way of getting husbands" (AUSTEN, 1993, p. 263). From her behaviour, it is possible to notice that Lydia does not find her actions to be reproachable: she does not find any problems in the way she acted and so, she does not care for the anguish she caused her family and for the bad reputation she has acquired. Because she sees nothing wrong from her actions, she does not have a reason to show any repentance. Lydia remains until the end a child who has not learnt, or not accepted, the morals of her time. Her ending is both happy, since at least she did not have to face reclusion from society, but also sad, because she is cast aside from her society with her family, having been delegated to live in the north of the country, extremely distant from her sisters and parents.

At the other extreme, there is Jane. Presenting no moral flaws of her own, she is often admired for her candid temper and her ability to always find positive traits in the people she encounters. Often reprimanded by Elizabeth because "(she) never see(s) a fault in anybody. All the world are good and agreeable in (her) eyes" and that "(she) never heard (her) speak ill

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<sup>4</sup> Any woman who lost her purity before marriage could be ostracized by society and be deemed lost forever from redemption. Those women were considered fallen angels, since they proved not to behave according to the role they were given divinely. (MITCHELL, 1981).

of a human being in (her) life”, Jane is the model of virtue. She could be considered the opposite of the title, since she is modest to an extreme, since, as Elizabeth states “compliments always take (her) by surprise”, and she tries not to misjudge people, stating that she “would not wish to be hasty in censoring anyone” (AUSTEN, 1993, p. 15), and finding qualities and good intentions even in the worst situations.

When Mr. Bingley and his party leave Netherfield and Jane receives a letter from Caroline explaining their reasons for going back to town – in which she explains how eager she is for Miss Darcy to become her future sister – she is devastated. She feels deceived by Bingley, since she believed he loved her as much as she did him; however, with him leaving, she has no other choice but to conclude herself to have been wrong. Even though Elizabeth does not agree with that assessment and, instead, blames Caroline for trying to separate the couple, Jane refuses that conjecture, since she cannot believe Caroline would plot such a scheme. Something similar happens later on, when Jane and Elizabeth talk about Wickham and Lydia’s elopement. While Elizabeth is certain that Wickham had no good intention in running away with her, and that he might not even have wanted to marry her, Jane refuses to believe someone could be so wicked, and hopes all the accusations against Wickham are false. Although in both examples she is proven wrong, since Caroline did try to separate her from Bingley and Wickham turned out to have had so much debt, her refusal to look at the worse side of each person is not always mistaken.

Unlike the rest of the townspeople, Jane withholds from speaking ill of Mr. Darcy. While everyone else remarks how proud and disagreeable he is, Jane finds excuses for his behaviour, first, by doubting that Darcy could have said such bad things about her sister as everyone seems to believe possible, and next, by trusting Caroline’s assurance that Darcy only behaved that way when he was next to people he did not know. She puts herself apart from the community, refusing to make the same judgment of him as they all did and deciding to give him the benefit of the doubt. In the end, we learn that Jane had been right in refraining from having preconceptions of Darcy.

Her attitude towards people is praised by everyone who meets her, showing how positive it was to have such position. Her ending seems to be a reward for her moral righteousness, since she attains full happiness by marrying a man she loves and who, at the same time, can provide a good life for her and her family. On yet another demonstration of her exemplary mindset, her first thought when she exclaims her happiness of getting married to

Bingley is to consider how much joy she would bring for her family, not herself. As she demonstrates countless times, her primary concern is always about the people who surround her, and, more specifically, her family, before her own.

If Lydia is a primary example on indecency, and Jane of moral righteousness, a great mixture of going against what was considered correct and following social rules is the protagonist of the story, Elizabeth Bennet. She defies authorities, by talking back to people above her rank such as Lady Catherine and Mr. Darcy; she speaks her mind at a time unmarried women did not have such liberties; she is not stopped from following what she believes to be the appropriate response to certain situations, even though that would not be the most genteel response. Despite all of these attitudes that go against the common sense of the time, Elizabeth is also restricted by the prejudices that surround her community, forming judgment of people alongside her neighbours and friends, without even caring to see the other side of the picture. Elizabeth is a heroine that has fascinated people since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, that is, since when she was created, because of her contradictions and her ability to learn, evolve, and set herself free from the restraints her society imposed to her thinking.

From the start of the story, readers learn the duality Elizabeth would represent throughout the narrative. Being held on a pedestal by her father, who sees her for her wit and quickness, attributes he admires, at first, we expect to find a character whose decisions and assessments are going to be well founded and that we can rely on. However, although in some of her assessments she is correct, she proves to be wrong in the most important ones.

Agreeing with her community, Elizabeth does not have a positive first impression of Darcy. Having overheard his remarks about her to his friend, in which he states that Elizabeth was “tolerable, but not handsome enough to tempt (him)” (AUSTEN, 1993, p. 13), Elizabeth gets mortified by his comment and admits to having her pride hurt by him. Because of his statement, she cannot forgive his pride as easily as Charlotte does, who justifies it by saying that his wealth and rank could excuse it. Darcy himself does not see pride as a fault, stating that if there is some superiority, then pride is acceptable.

Elizabeth continues to cement her unfavourable view of Darcy through the narrative, completely oblivious to the fact that she might be wrong in her assessment. That is, she is certain of being correct because she is not alone in misjudging him. Unaware of the extent of her prejudice, Elizabeth can only recognize that fault in Darcy. In an interesting moment in the narrative, during the ball held at Netherfield, Elizabeth and Darcy are dancing and having

a conversation. In it, Elizabeth censors him of being too judgmental, something the readers can notice that applies to her as well, stating that “it is particularly incumbent on those who never change their opinion, to be secure of judging properly at first” (AUSTEN, 1993, p. 82). It is not until after receiving his letter and being able to see a different perspective of him that she starts changing her impressions of him. And, on meeting him in his house, she is able to recognize how wrong she had been.

Her recognition of lack of proper judgment goes even further when she realizes the wrong judgment she had had of Wickham. At first, she finds him amiable and respectable, and even seems interested in a possible romantic relationship. One of the reasons why she likes him almost instantly is because he, like her, found Darcy disagreeable. Her willingness to accept his side of their story as the only possibility perhaps shows the moment in which her character is in the worst light. She believes strong accusations of Darcy’s character from a man she had just met and whose background she knew nothing about. His eagerness to speak ill of a man who, from his report, had been almost like a brother to him, should have been indication enough that she should not have trusted him so blindly. Yet, that is not what happens. Even when he makes some indefensible choices – some that she would not have easily forgotten from anyone else – Elizabeth manages to excuse his behaviour. That is the case when he stops demonstrating interest in Elizabeth, since she does not have a lot of money for her dowry, and starts his advancements to his next target, Miss King, who had become the mistress of her grandfather’s fortune. She argues that was something expected of men of little fortune and it could not be held against him.

By the end of the narrative, Elizabeth, unlike her sister Lydia, learns her lesson and moves past her moral flaws. She accepts the reservations Darcy held about her family’s improprieties, something that she had refused before, and acknowledges she had been mistaken on judging Wickham and Darcy. Elizabeth grows and evolves as a character. She admits that her “manners must have been in fault” and that “(her) spirits might often lead (her) wrong” (AUSTEN, 1993, p. 310) and, from her lesson, she is deserving of her happy ending. She, alongside Darcy, are able to move past the moral faults they started the story with and thus, become deserving of each other and of the happiness they acquire. It seems that, in *Pride and Prejudice*, one of the conditions to achieve a happy ending is to become a more moral person. As we have seen, Jane already acted according to the morals her solid society preached, Elizabeth learns from her mistakes and is humbled by them, while Lydia does not recognize her faults and, in fact, continues to believe her actions were not immoral.

Transposing the story to the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the idea of morality has greatly changed. Instead of it being something certain, which resides with the whole community one is inserted, “ours is an era in which morality rests with the individual, alone again with his or her choices, and no longer able to depend on old certainties” (BAUMAN, 1994, p. viii). Now, more than ever before, there are no answers to what it means to be moral. Instead of having to follow the rules of society and thus, being exempt from having to make any decision regarding your morality, we must choose what is morally correct and face the consequences of our decisions. Even though the basis of morality is different, the idea the characters of the adaptation have of morality remain similar to the ones from *Pride and Prejudice*. Their future happiness also seems to depend on their ability to evolve and learn from their mistakes. However, differently from the novel, all the characters achieve some sort of happiness since all of them, to an extent, change their behaviour.

The one whose trajectory changes the most is Lydia. Being the youngest of the Bennet sisters, she is often rejected and criticized by her sister Lizzie, and is used to being considered annoying, inappropriate and a big flirt. To the cameras, she pretends to not be bothered by her sister’s comments, but, from her future actions, we learn that she is. Just like her 19<sup>th</sup> century counterpart, Lizzie believes her to be making wrong decisions with her life. Evidenced by her gift to Lydia on her birthday, which is a self-help book that tries to guide “party” girls into making good choices, Lizzie often disclaims how much she disapproves Lydia’s behaviour, which she characterizes as irresponsible. The view Lizzie has of her, however, is not completely agreed with by her viewers, whose opinion often diverge from Lizzie’s. Demonstrating what Bauman had theorized, in a liquid society, morals represent what individuals believe to be right, and not what the community has agreed on. And, because of the medium in which the videos are presented, the people who access it are from different backgrounds and thus, are even more likely to not necessarily have the same opinion as the protagonist of the story. While Lizzie seems to believe her sister to be reckless and irresponsible, many of her viewers go in her defence, stating that she is young and that is the age in which she should make mistakes and learn from them. Furthermore, they argue that just because Lydia does not act according to Lizzie’s expectations, it does not mean that she is in the wrong. In a liquid society, there is enough space for everyone to act according to what they believe and that does not make one less worthy of respect than others.

On receiving her birthday present from Lizzie, Lydia arrives to her breaking point. She has a huge argument with Lizzie and demands that se apologizes, which she does not do and,

therefore, they are not on speaking terms anymore. With most of the viewers on her side, Lydia starts posting videos of her own where she criticizes Lizzie – the same way Lizzie did to her – and shares her plans of going to Las Vegas for New Year's Eve. Although, in this version, she is already an adult, Lizzie seems to believe that, had their parents forbidden her of going to Vegas, she would not have gone. So, once again, her parents are omission of her wild behaviour. During New Year's, Lydia presents herself as the ultimate party girl: drinking, flirting and not caring about anything else. Yet, when she is abandoned by her friends, we can see the sadness in her eyes of being, once again, left out from the group of people she cared about – such as what happened in her house, where she was often excluded from her sisters' plans. In this moment of weakness, she encounters George Wickham who demonstrates interest in her. In the next few videos, we are presented to a version of her in which she is pondering about the two options she believes she has: either she could act morally, dismissing George, since he had been her sister's "boyfriend", and being with him would be something that most people in the 21<sup>st</sup> century would condone, or she could go out with the only person who seemed to want her company. As soon as she is back from Vegas, we learn her decision from her videos, that is, we assume she took the second option since she is reluctant to share what happened, stating that "what happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas" and that there "is like this alternate universe where there are no consequences and everyone is an entirely different human being" (The Lydia Bennet!!, Episode 22 – Surprise!). From this video alone, we can notice that she considers her actions to be wrong, and that she is aware her sister will also think that. That is why she creates excuses for her actions, stating that anything is possible in Vegas, that whoever did what she did was not her, but a version of her, and that is why she was allowed to behave like that. Her attitude towards her actions is of uncertainty. Unlike novel Lydia, who is never shown to have any second thoughts about what she had done – also because readers are only presented to the story from Elizabeth's perspective – Lydia is constantly questioning herself. Morality is no longer black and white; she does not have a definitive answer of what she should do, but has to trust her own judgment and be accountable for it.

When Wickham appears in her videos, she dismisses her viewers' concerns about his character and seems to have fallen for him. He is able to tell her exactly what she needs to hear: how special she is, that Lizzie does not want to see her happy and that he likes her for how she is; no changes are required. At the same time he does this, he makes her believe that nobody but him would want to see her happy and that he is her only possibility of happiness.

In the vulnerable state she is in, she believes every word of his, even when the threat of uploading a sex tape of them appears. While Lizzie believes Lydia to be aware of the fact and agreeing to it, Lydia is certain that Wickham is not behind it. She trusts him to be a good person and to love her and that he would never do anything to hurt her. The shock of discovering the truth completely breaks her. The one person she trusted the most backstabs her and, on top of everything, the sister she admires the most even thinks that it is possible that she allowed this to happen.

Completely devastated and regretting having fallen for George's charm, Lydia spends the rest of the videos trying to move past the incident. Once the threat of the sex tape being released is definitely removed – as she later learns, by Darcy – Lydia changes. She realizes the dangers of being irresponsible and of how easily manipulated one gets when they feel lonely. She relies on her sisters for support and begins her road to healing and, by the end of the story, she becomes more responsible – attending college and getting a job – and finds emotional support in therapy. At the same time she grows up, the main traits of her character do not disappear: she continues to be lively, cheerful and ready to party.

Extremely different from her novel version, this Lydia does not continue to defy morality. Instead, she learns from her faults, changes and finds a happier version of herself. Because she learns to communicate her feelings better – and her sisters begin listening to her – she does not feel alone anymore. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century version, Lydia was forever stuck with the memory of her immoral decision, yet this Lydia can move past her unfortunate past and see a different future ahead of her.

Jane, like her novel version, is also presented as a morally abiding person. After being presented to viewers as *practically perfect*, she seems to be the polar opposite of pride or of forming prejudices upon meeting new people. She always presents herself as humbled by any compliment she receives and she is the one who gives the benefit of the doubt to Darcy, even when Lizzie does not accept her view.

This time, when Bing Lee leaves town Jane seems to be even more devastated than her novel version. In a society where communication is so easily done, learning that your boyfriend moved back to his previous town by a tweet is even more mortifying than receiving a letter explaining that move. Instead of making her sisters get worried about her, Jane tries to pretend she is unbothered by what happened, although it is clear how much she is affected,

and tries to worry herself with other things. In the meantime, she gets a job promotion to Los Angeles and for the next episodes, she leaves behind the feelings she once had for Bing Lee.

Always thinking more about her sisters than herself, Jane often neglects her life to support them, acting selflessly. The best moment to exemplify this is when she decides to go back home when Lydia's life is in crisis because of the sex tape in order to be there for her. She knew that doing this she would make her lose her job, yet she does not even consider staying in Los Angeles. In a time when most people are used to thinking about themselves alone, since that is the motto of a liquid society – individuality first –, Jane values her family above anything else. After this situation, Jane comes out of it as taking her moral stance: she goes against the odds and favours emotional bonds that not necessarily will bring her any individual advantage over personal needs. After suffering the consequences of behaving morally, it is only natural to expect Jane to finally achieve her happy ending. By the end of the story, she is rewarded with an even better job than the one she had lost and with Bing Lee coming back and apologizing for his behaviour. Even more, he accepts to be with her on her terms and, instead of her changing her life because of him, he is the one who moves to New York in order to be with her.

Finally, Lizzie, much like her novel version, starts demonstrating the moral flaws that entitle the novel from which the show is based on. Her sense of pride is especially noticeable to the 21<sup>st</sup> century audience, since she seems to believe that her life choices are the correct ones and nobody could think differently from her without being wrong. Her arguments with Charlotte and Lydia are much more relevant in this narrative and present how limited her view of what choices are right is. Her disagreement with Charlotte is on the basis of life choices: while Lizzie believes no one should settle for any job that is not perfect, Charlotte is realistic. She knows how much she needs to find a job to remove the burden of her college debts from her family and accepts a high paying job, even if it does not fulfil her expectations. Lizzie finds this to be a way of selling out and does not respect her choice. She thinks that she knows best what Charlotte should do. Without bothering to evaluate her reasons for making such a choice, Lizzie trusts her choices and is unwilling to admit that she might not have all the answers to every question.

The same goes for the way she behaves with Lydia. Assuming her sister to be irresponsible, reckless and simply incapable of making good life decisions, Lizzie constantly diminishes her sister and states how little faith she has on her. Regardless of her actions, Lizzie

finds a way of criticizing her. At no moment does Lizzie consider that Lydia might be right. Since she behaves differently from her, she cannot be right. It is not until the end of the story that Lizzie realizes how one-sided her judgments had been. She never stopped to think that life does not have a single path anymore. Just because people might not see the world the same way she does, that does not mean they are wrong and she is right; in fact, life is no longer organized that way. And, despite being against Charlotte's and Lydia's life choices, she cannot deny the fact that they did not face the miserable future she had supposed they would. Much differently, they are able to make the best off of even the worst situations.

Lizzie is humbled by seeing how well they both turned out, even disregarding her multiple advice stating they would not be able to find happiness if they did not listen to her. But it is not only through them that she learns her lesson. Her viewers also expose how proud she is to believe she is the only one capable of making good decisions, pointing out her similarity to the man she, at first, despises: William Darcy.

Besides being proven wrong in her assessment of her sister's and friend's future, Lizzie also gets the two love interests in her story completely wrong. From the moment she meets Darcy, her dislike for him is clear. Similarly to what happened in the novel, in the videos, Darcy also says that no girl other than Jane is pretty enough for him. This time, however, he does not single her out in his dislike for the girls present; she is merely another one who he is not interested in. Despite Darcy not doing anything to personally offend her, Lizzie still cannot help but be judgmental towards him. She is also not able to see the similarities in their behaviour. Although both of them were "leaning against the wall, minding (their) own business" (Episode 7 – The Most Awkward Dance Ever), Lizzie finds this action an example of Darcy's pride, since she argues he believed himself to be too above everyone else to mingle, but does not see any problem in her doing the same.

This double standard is constantly pointed out by her viewers, who warn her of the possibility that she may be only portraying Darcy in a worse way than he behaved, and her sisters and Charlotte agree with that statement, but she does not accept their point of view, often stating that Jane is too nice to see any faults in anyone and that the rest of them was not present during the events, so, they cannot know exactly how rude Darcy is.

As to Wickham, Lizzie also proves to misjudge him as well. Here, differently from the novel, Wickham does not start their relationship by badmouthing Darcy. They develop their relationship for a long time until he reveals his story of how Darcy ruined his life. Since Lizzie

is already starting to develop feelings for him, she trusts his verdict without even questioning the probability of his being right. Even when he stands her up at the party and does not justify his reason for not going, she manages to blame Darcy and not him. He did not bother to call her to let her know, but that is irrelevant, since Darcy is the one who kept him away. By the end of the story, Lizzie learns how wrong she had been in her evaluation of both men. Her attempt of not being so judgmental is clear in the final episodes, which shows how much she grew and learned from her experiences. Much like her novel version, it is only when she has recognized her faults and has changed that she can attain her happy ending, which, in the web series, comes with the man she loves, her graduation and the promise of a future job she cares about.

As presented in this section, the concept of morality has greatly changed from where it originates. Instead of arising within the community, and, thus, being rather fixed and rigid, now it represents one's personal expectations of what it means to be moral. That is why the same actions may be interpreted in different ways. While Lizzie may think Lydia is being irresponsible, viewers may consider her to be only enjoying her young adult years; while Jane may be considered sweet and kind by her family, she may be viewed as naïve and foolish for never distrusting anyone.

Regardless of the changes in what being a moral person is, in both stories, only when the characters are able to become more morally abiding individuals do they reach a happy ending. That is why only the web series Lydia can find some happiness in her ending, because her novel version does not acknowledge her faults and thus, does not change.

## 2.2 Community, Family and Love

Relationships represent the core of almost every story, let alone the one of a romance such as *Pride and Prejudice*; however, it is not only the romantic relationships that the story presents that are the center of the text. In fact, *Pride and Prejudice* focuses on the relevance of community and the importance of family almost as much as it presents the growth of young characters who learn to surpass their prejudices to be able to build a loving relationship.

In the midst of the development of the relationships of the main couples, the relevance of the community is equally important. As Deresiewicz puts it, “what is presented

in (the) first scenes is more than anything the story of a community: of communal expectations, communal conventions, communal activities" (DERESIEWICZ, 1997, p. 503). In fact, the famous quote that opens the novel, that a single man with fortune *must* be in want of a wife, turns out to be a belief held by not only the Bennets but also by all the families that live in the neighborhood. The story only begins when there is a newcomer arriving in an otherwise established community. His arrival agitates the town, since he and his party seem to be very different from the rest of the families.

It is in Hertfordshire, where the main part of the story takes place, that we learn how much the group of people that live there depend on each other, are connected and are similar in the way they talk, act and in the judgments they create. Because it is such a far-off place, the families that live there enjoy the society of themselves and so, have limited interaction with people from other places and they are, to a large extent, isolated. That means that the small group of people are deeply connected. This is clear throughout the whole plot of the narrative, where the neighboring families are treated almost as an extension of the Bennets.

It is through them that the news is told, with them that entertainment is offered, they are the ones who introduce people of interest and who can attest for someone's character. In the novel, when Mr. Bingley and his guests arrive, their coming is announced by Mrs. Long and they learn more about them by Lady Lucas. The assessment the Bennets have of the Bingley group is not formed only by them; in fact, it is shared by the community. In a solid society, following the community one is inserted is a must. People do not act based on their sole wishes and feelings, but they recognize that the view of the whole must be more comprehensive than the view of a single person. Communities are the source of certainty. Thus, when they all determine Mr. Bingley to be a respectable young man, that becomes the accepted assessment of his character; while Mr. Darcy who is at first "much handsomer" than his friend, since he is discovered to have a larger fortune than Bingley, is later considered proud and rude when he fails to associate with the families of the neighborhood. This judgment is not made by one person alone, but by the whole community. In fact, most of what the readers learn about Darcy is not Elizabeth's assessment, even though it is her who the omniscient narrator follows throughout the narrative, but what the people decide of him: "His character was decided. He was the proudest, most disagreeable man in the world, and everybody hoped that he would never come there again." (AUSTEN, 1993, p. 12).

The same way that the people in Hertfordshire assess the newcomers, they are also the ones who recommend the people from the region. They are the ones who consider Jane the beauty of the county and Elizabeth to be an agreeable partner, and so, they properly represent the community they live in. The approval of the community is something extremely important. Because Darcy does not conform to what the people in Hertfordshire expect of a gentleman, he is rejected from the group and nobody is eager to include him in the community. He seems to represent everything the community is not and so, he is not worthy to be a part of the group. It is no wonder that Wickham is seen favorably by the Bennets since he succeeded in enchanting all the other people. He even manages to use his past connection with Darcy to his favor. After being told that Darcy is not liked by the people in the region, he has no reservation and tells terrible stories that only accentuate the main characteristics of Darcy that the people already detest. Therefore, Wickham integrates the community, by sharing the same expectations and preconceptions as the rest of the people.

However, as quickly as Wickham is approved by the Hertfordshire community, he loses their respect. When he and Lydia have already eloped, the people turn on him and start seeing him from a different perspective. His wrongdoings emerge and it becomes clear that he was not the sort of man that everyone thought he was. Instead of admitting the wrong judgments they made of him, they assert that “he was the wickedest young man in the world; and everybody began to find out that they had always distrusted the appearance of his goodness” (AUSTEN, 1993, p. 244). Sharing the concerns exhibited by the Bennets, the community feels for the pain the family is suffering and tries to bring full light on the reality they have to face: not only did Wickham elope with Lydia without having any intention to marry her, but he also had several debts all over town. The realization of Wickham’s true character happens alongside the Bennets. If both the family and the community had a liking towards his amiabilities and his charms, they are both shocked when they discover that it was all a façade to hide his true intentions and personality. Everybody felt betrayed by him.

At the end of the novel, even though Elizabeth has already changed her mind about Darcy and has recognized the prejudices she had towards him, the people in Hertfordshire are still reluctant to accept him in their midst. Since the people cannot move past the preconceptions they had made about him, it is no wonder that the couple becomes removed from that community, living the rest of their lives in Pemberley, far away from the small town that did not soften to Mr. Darcy.

All the importance that community has in the solid world of 19<sup>th</sup> century England has dissolved and now its influence is almost nonexistent. In a world where people barely know their neighbors, the significance the people next to you have is minimal. If in a solid society, the people around you were your guidance, in a liquid society they have vanished and one has only oneself as a guiding force. Much more important than community, individuality is what guides the people. Instead of waiting for the approval – or disapproval – of the whole, one makes their own assessment by themselves, and is not likely to expect others to agree with them. The community has lost its influence and that becomes extremely clear in the web series adaptation.

From the beginning of the story, it is clear that the pressure Lizzie feels to find a rich husband does not arise from the community, but from her mother's expectations. Although the famous quotation still makes its way into the video – this time, in the format of a T-shirt Lizzie's mother has made for her and her sisters – the “truth universally acknowledged” becomes her mother's belief. It is not as if all women of her age were expected to find a rich husband to get married to; Lizzie makes it absolutely clear that it is only her mother – and a select group of nameless parents, who are never mentioned again – who is so deeply concerned about this. In fact, Lizzie even admits how strange it is for anyone to have such expectations in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Similarly to the novel, the Bennets learn about the newcomers through Charlotte's mother – who, in the adaptation is called Emily Lou –; however, she is the only other person mentioned who cares to comment on his coming to the neighborhood. Instead of causing a commotion, Bing Lee's arrival seems to be of interest only for the Bennets. It is Mrs. Bennet who inflates the number of women Bing Lee is going to bring for the wedding and who later learns the true nature of the people who are coming into town with Bing Lee. Instead of this being an enterprise from a group of people, it is the concoction of a single woman who wants to marry at least one of her daughters.

In fact, the viewers are barely presented to anyone outside of the families of the characters we see in the videos, and when they are mentioned, they do not exert any relevance in the narrative. Because the view of the community is not presented, the impression we get of the newcomers is not the one that is made by a group of people, but by Lizzie herself. The consequence is that we might be less likely to believe Lizzie's retelling of the events and become more prone to considering her a little *over the top* when she portrays the people she

encounters. Viewers are unlikely to believe that anybody would speak the way she says Darcy does, and that any dance could be as awkward as the one she performs mimicking her and Darcy at the wedding. The belief she has of Darcy being proud and snobby is not built with a group of people, but by her alone. The same goes for Bing Lee and Caroline. Instead of learning what all the people at the wedding thought of them, we are presented Lizzie's perspective as the absolute truth and her sisters' and Charlotte's as the diverging – but not too much – views. Even though they do not agree with how suitable Bing Lee is for Jane or how genuine Caroline is from the start, these opinions are formed by the characters themselves.

The immediate like for Wickham happens the same way as the impressions we get from the other characters. Instead of learning about him through the view of the whole community, we are introduced to his character by Lizzie and her impressions of him. Even though later on he appears on the videos, and the viewers do not seem to agree with Lizzie on his character, she is not dissuaded by them as to what she has to think of him. The influence anyone has over her perception of the world is insignificant. Wickham is even aware of this, since he makes no attempt into convincing Lizzie's sisters or friend of his true character; his intention seems to be only to convince Lizzie of how good he is and how destructive Darcy was for his life. As a true liquid world woman, Lizzie trusts her views and hers alone. As Jane states in one of the videos, "Lizzie sees what Lizzie sees"; that is, her conclusions are made based only on what she believes, much unlike the novel, where she seems to agree with everyone's opinions of the newcomers. The 21<sup>st</sup> century Lizzie seems even more prejudiced than her 19<sup>th</sup> century predecessor: while the latter simply accepted the view of the community as correct, and when faced with evidence that proved her preconceptions to be wrong changed her mind, the former arrives at the wrong conclusions by herself and without the support of her community.

Instead of being a part of a community in the *real world*, Lizzie builds a different type of community: the people online who are watching the parts of her life she chooses to present in the video blogs. They are, just like Bauman argues, extremely different than the community the solid world relied on. Even though they do exist and are real people, their thoughts do not impact Lizzie's actions. The community she has is not the one from the solid world, where the opinions that evoked from the group were taken as certainties and thus, following them meant making the right decisions. Her community resembles the one from the liquid world, which "comes *after*, not *before* the individual choice" (BAUMAN, 2000, p. 169,

author's emphasis). Instead of following the group's opinion, and being convinced that her view is correct because she has ample support from her peers, Lizzie behaves differently in her story. In fact, she acts quite the opposite. Time and time again, she argues about just how wrong her viewers are. Even though they win in numbers, she does not accept the view of the many as any wiser than her own, much like the tendency that Bauman refers to in his works. In the liquid times we are living, the consensus is that only the individual knows what is best for them. We can see this in Lizzie's rhetoric, who often states that her viewers do not know exactly what happened and that, if they did, they would agree with her. She also rejects the criticism she gets for being biased on her portrayal of the events and people she narrates by excusing herself from any responsibility of depicting the truth, since the videos are meant to be her diary and, therefore, are required to present *her* truth, which might be disagreed with.

One could argue that Lizzie does not even belong to the group of her viewers. Much more than part of the community, she is the source of entertainment they long for. While they watch another's life unravel while making comments, giving their opinions and agreeing or disagreeing with the vlogger's conclusions, she cannot perform that role. By deciding to share her life, she invites the world to look at her decisions and either sympathize or not with what she does. Knowing that her viewers are bound to be from different realities, her online community does not seem to exist in order to guide her, but to get the validation she needs about the actions she decides to take. Instead of listening to what they have to say and really taking into account their perspective, Lizzie argues with her viewers trying to show them that they are wrong to disagree with her and claiming that they would be just like her if they were in her place. And even when she accepts that they could think differently than her, she never seems to consider what the viewers have to say as being something that impacts her decision-making process.

At the end of her videos, when Lizzie decides to stop updating her vlogs, she states that "I never got to meet any of you, but hopefully you feel like you got to really know me. I know I did. There's growing, and there's growing in front of tens of thousands of people. I went through a lot on this journey and hopefully you learned as much as I did. Or more." (Episode 100 – The End). That is, her journey was not one of mutual exchange: she talked and the viewers listened, she learned her lessons through herself and she hopes others did the same. More than anything, she affirms that she grew *in front of* her viewers and not along with them. It is only her journey and growth she can attest to.

As we have seen, the role of the community has had significant changes in the two realities I present in this thesis, so much so that plot elements were altered to make it more current to modern viewers. If *Pride and Prejudice* could be seen as a novel that portrays a community who, when faced with people that do not adhere to societal expectations, misjudges them, and the growth of a young woman who learns how prejudicial those judgments could be in assessing people one barely knows, moving past the *herd mentality*, *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* could be considered a story of individual growth of a young woman who, despite being warned by several people of her misconceptions, only changes her mind when she is faced by the reality of how wrong she had been.

Although society plays an enormous role in the story of the novel, there is another entity that is also extremely important in the development of the narrative, and that is the importance of the family. From a novel that starts showing all the Bennet members, to a web series where the protagonist's first topic is her sisters and parents, it is clear how important family ties are for the development of the narrative. The main problem presented at the beginning of the novel has its roots because of how the Bennet family is formed. Due to the entailment laws of Regency England, the Bennets were in a difficult position since they had no sons in the family. Thus, the law stated that the closest male relative would be entailed all the property once Mr. Bennet passed. This grim future would only add to Mrs. Bennet's concern of marrying her daughters, since, once one of them was advantageously married, the others would be safe from being homeless. Marrying someone meant not only that you were joining your life with your partner, but also with the entire family that would come along. It was not uncommon for single women to live in the families of their siblings once their parents had passed. Since women had very few ways of supporting themselves, their married siblings were expected to provide a place for them to stay, which was the destiny of Jane Austen herself (Le Faye, 2002).

The dilemma the family faces throughout the narrative does not regard only one of the sisters, but is something that affects them as a whole. In fact, family was hardly separated from the individual. Young ladies would define their rank in society by their closest male relative, and good family connections could elevate or lower the status of the individual. That is why Elizabeth affirms that because she is a "gentleman's daughter" (AUSTEN, 1993, p. 298) and Darcy a gentleman, she and he are equal; or why Miss Bingley and Mrs. Hurst are eager to show the Bennets' connections to their relatives that live in Cheapside, the most

unfashionable part of London. Relatives are a way of either uplifting one's position or undermining their relevance.

Family is so important that even the rich were concerned about maintaining their families pure or they might lose their status. It is no wonder that Miss Bingley is so concerned about her brother's attachment to Jane. She knows that, although he has money, they still do not have an influential family, since their money had been acquired recently through their father's work in trade, and so, it would be most advantageous for him to marry someone of an important family. She tries to unite him with Miss Darcy, who was from an ancient family and would bring her approval for their family and could, in addition, improve her chances of getting married to Darcy himself. In that sense, marrying Jane would not bring any advantage for the family. That is another reason as to why Darcy advises against their union, since he recognizes the importance of a wise union for Mr. Bingley.

Similarly, Darcy later recognizes that Elizabeth and her family also do not correspond to the expectations someone from his rank and family had for his future wife. She, but more emphatically her family, are from a different circle than Darcy and, because of this and their lack of connections, Elizabeth is seen as an unsuitable match. This is made clear during Elizabeth's visit to Lady Catherine. While being censured for the way her parents raised her and her sisters, Lady Catherine makes it clear how out of place she is in her company and how inferior she considers her to be. Despite believing Elizabeth to be unfit for the society he occupies, Darcy still chooses to propose to her. In his famous first proposal scene, he cannot help but state all the ways in which Elizabeth proves not to be from the same world he is and censures himself for not listening to his better judgment, but instead, deciding to listen to his feelings, unlike Mr. Bingley, who listened to his argument against Jane Bennet and gave up on his pursuit of her. He knows that his family has other expectations of him and that, in marrying a woman of such inferiority, he would be going against the wishes of his family.

Marrying up the social rank also meant bringing family alongside the marriage. Mrs. Bennet knows that, when Jane marries Mr. Bingley, it would be "such a promising thing for her younger daughters" since it would "throw them in the way of other rich men" (AUSTEN, 1993, p. 86). Although the decision of expressing such feelings in a public setting, in front of so many people such as happens in the book might be imprudent, it is true nonetheless. Being elevated to such a union would, most definitely, help the entire family. Since the sisters would

be in the midst of a different society, they would have many other opportunities that would, otherwise, be unattainable.

Thinking about family should come before anything else. When Jane accepts Mr. Bingley's proposal, her first instinct is to think of her family. Before telling her mother of the future wedding, she states how happy she is since she "know(s) that what (she has) to relate will give such pleasure to all (her) dear family!" (AUSTEN, 1993, p. 290). Much more than just bringing her happiness, her marriage would bring financial security for the whole family. By accepting to marry Mr. Bingley, Jane succeeded in saving her sisters from the terrible downfall they had suffered from Lydia's scandal.

Differently from Jane, Elizabeth does not think about the family's needs first. When she is offered the chance of marrying Mr. Collins who, despite being a pompous and somewhat idiotic person, is still a favorable match, she decides to refuse him, without even considering how such marriage could be beneficial to her family. Since Mr. Collins would be entailed the property of the Bennets, having a union between him and one of Miss Bennets would be most advantageous. Not only was he a respectable man, with a position in the clergy and a powerful patronage, he would also protect the Bennets from a dreadful future.

By rejecting Mr. Collins' proposal, Elizabeth puts her own wishes above her family's, something that does not happen with her friend Charlotte. Faced with the same dilemma, Charlotte accepts marrying to a man she has no respect nor feelings for. Her decision might not bring such joy for Charlotte herself, although she argues that "(her) chance of happiness with him is as fair as most people can boast on entering the marriage estate" (AUSTEN, 1993, p. 108), but it certainly brought relief for her family. On learning of the engagement, "the whole family, in short, were properly overjoyed on the occasion" (AUSTEN, 1993, p. 105), since such union would be incredibly helpful for her sisters and brothers. The first ones would be able to *come out* in society earlier and thus, secure a husband for themselves as soon as possible, and her brothers would not have to worry about Charlotte's future – since it was the men's role to care and support the sisters who remained unmarried – and, as Charlotte was not a young woman anymore, their concern about her "dying an old maid" (AUSTEN, 1993, p. 105) could be put to rest.

Regarding marriage, another Bennet sister who does not respect the wishes of her family, or her community, is Lydia. To Elizabeth and to their father, she is considered reckless

and foolish, disregarding moral conventions and acting in a way that might trigger her complete disgrace. Instead of following the legal and social rules about how a wedding was meant to take place, Lydia waves goodbye to formality and runs away with Wickham. Although this can be seen as an act of rebellion “against social and family conventions imposed to the women of her time”<sup>5</sup>, as Rossato (2016, p. 8) claims, Lydia nonetheless is seen as an immoral person because of her choice to go against the accepted rules.

Being underaged, it is not possible for her to get married without parental approval, which she does not have when she leaves Brighton with Wickham. Because of The Marriage Act of 1753, it was required from every young girl who was under 21 to have the consent of a parent or guardian for the wedding to be legal. Otherwise, they would have to travel to Scotland, where the Act did not apply, which seems to be the plan of the couple, at least that is what Elizabeth believes. On reporting to Mrs. Forster – the friend who took her to Brighton with her husband – about her intended elopement, Lydia finds the whole scene amusing and is sure that it is a good joke. As her intention seems to be, at first, to go to Gretna Green, in Scotland, it seems they were really earnest about the wedding. When she is dissuaded to go straight to Scotland, her wishes seem to change. On meeting Mr. Darcy, she is “resolved on remaining where she was” and “cared for none of her friends”. Her preoccupation with the wedding had also faded, since “she was sure they should be married some time or other, and it did not much signify when” (AUSTEN, 1993, p. 268).

While Lydia seems unfazed by her situation, her family is in despair. They are all aware of the danger Lydia put herself into and, while they remain expectant that at least the couple gets married, Elizabeth knows how deeply this deed is bound to reflect poorly on them. This fear is made certain by the arrival of Mr. Collins’ letter, where he states how “this false step in one daughter will be injurious to the fortune of all the others; for who [...] will connect themselves with such a family?” (AUSTEN, 1993, p. 245). Lydia’s downfall does not take her alone, but drags her whole family with her.

The wishes of the family are yet again seen during Lady Catherine’s visit to Elizabeth. In an attempt to discourage Elizabeth from ever being related to her nephew, Lady Catherine pays a visit to Miss Bennet in order to display her full disapproval of this supposed union. Since she is Darcy’s aunt and, from infancy, his union with her daughter has been expected,

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<sup>5</sup> My translation. On the original: “contra as convenções sociais e familiais impostas às mulheres de sua época.”

Lady Catherine is violently opposed to any rumors of Darcy and Elizabeth. While listing her reasons for objecting that union, one of her main arguments is Lydia's "patched-up" marriage and her "infamous elopement" and how joining ties with such families would make "Pemberley to be thus polluted" (AUSTEN, 1993, p. 299). Knowing how truthful those statements are, Elizabeth has no counter-arguments to present and, instead, asks her ladyship to leave. Even though Elizabeth tries arguing with herself how ridiculous the arguments Lady Catherine presented to be against their union are, she fears that when Darcy is bound to listen to them through the voice of his own blood, he might see them as containing "much good sense and solid reason" (AUSTEN, 1993, p. 301). Even Mr. Collins feels the need to advise Elizabeth against the union, since her ladyship would not give her consent – knowing fully well that Mr. Darcy, being over 21, would not need anyone's consent in order to get married. Still, being approved by the family was of such importance that, when that was not the case, the marriage was not advisable. This way, Elizabeth, once again, goes against the opinions and wishes of family; however, this time, is from the family she later enters by marrying Darcy.

More than two centuries later, family still is incredibly important in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Although its role has changed and the influence each member of a family has is different, the bond that unites families still proves to be a source of comfort and love. When adapting family and the relations that unite its members, *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* made some interesting choices by presenting the role families have in a liquid society.

Being free of the main problem the novel poses, since in the 21<sup>st</sup> century the law of entailment no longer exists, Mrs. Bennet's reasons for finding a rich partner for her daughters seems to be less urgent. Her pursuit is also less difficult since now, instead of having five single daughters, there are only three. The choice for lessening the number of Bennet sisters reflects the reality of families in this new Western world. It is really unlikely to find families with five children while those that have three are already considered to be large families.

Since the Bennets are not faced with the impending doom of losing their house to a possible male heir, the reason for finding a rich husband had to be explained in a different way. Throughout the videos, the viewers learn that the family is not in a good financial state and Mrs. Bennet wish for her daughters to move is because she fears they can no longer keep paying the mortgage of their house while supporting their family. In that way, marrying her

daughters is just a way of making sure the Bennet sisters can live on their own while being able to support themselves and not having to depend on their parents.

Much like the novel, the necessity for Jane, Elizabeth and Lydia to find a full-time job, or a rich husband, in order for them to move out of their parents' house, is a necessity for the whole family. The viewers are presented with glimpses of a worried conversation between Mr. and Mrs. Bennet where they discuss the real possibility of having to take a second mortgage on the house and being afraid the bank might take their property. Thus, having the children being independent would certainly help on the financial well-being of the family, and Mrs. Bennet, being presented as a traditional lady from the south, believes the best way for her children to attain this is through a beneficial marriage. The choice of making her being from the south, which is traditionally associated to conservative views in the US, seems to bring her character closer to the original Mrs. Bennet.

The role of Mr. Collins also had to be adapted. Since he is no longer the future owner of the Bennets' residency, because the law of entailment does not exist anymore, he has no alternative reason for wanting to marry Lizzie. In fact, in the web series, he is not even the distant cousin of the family, but a former neighbor. Since he is already in a relationship, his proposition to Lizzie is not for marriage, but for working with him in the mass communication company he works for. Having been made aware of Lizzie's vlogs and of how successful she has become, Mr. Collins wishes to recruit her to develop new sources of videos for the company. To show how out of touch with reality he is, even though he is not close to Lizzie, he still barges into her bedroom and says, as an excuse, that "(he) garnered (her) mother's permission to visit with (her)" (Episode 39 – The Insistent Proposal) much to Lizzie's shock that anyone would think that would be a suitable excuse for entering one's bedroom. It seems that he is the only person in the story who values the wishes of the family – and, in this case, the mother – more than of the individual, something that was common in solid society. Lizzie vehemently rejects such proposition, since the company only creates instructional videos, which she sees as stupid. And, although her mother still tries to make her accept the job offer, since having a full-time job would make Lizzie be financial independent, which would help with the expenses in the house, Lizzie's argument of her being a "grown adult [...] fully capable of making (her) own decisions" (Episode 40 – Proposal Fallout) is on par with what people her age would say. Instead of depending on their family to make decisions, the children are no longer expected to follow their parents' expectations.

When Charlotte accepts the offer a few episodes later, Lizzie feels betrayed by her friend, whose opinion she considers above her own family. Even though Charlotte's decision of taking the job seems to be less restraining than in the novel, considering it would not bind her forever to that job like marriage did in the novel, Lizzie is more impacted by the news, since Charlotte's role in the web series is larger than in the novel, and her importance for the protagonist is similar to the one of a sister.

It is interesting to point out that, while in the novel the wish for marrying well seems to be natural and nobody is shocked that the Bennets discuss such matter so openly, in the web series, the whole discussion of such future is dismissed and seen as something preposterous and antiquated. At no moment do the girls seem to agree with their mother – only as a joke – and her view is not endorsed by any of the viewers.

Even though family is clearly important for our protagonist, she is not defined by them. In fact, it seems that her sisters are much more important than her parents, since Jane and Lydia are frequently present and mentioned in the vlogs, while we never see the Bennets' parents. Although Lizzie is concerned about how her sisters act – mainly Lydia – she knows their actions are not going to influence the way people see her. It is common to see her nonchalantly mocking and undermining Lydia for the whole internet to see. Instead of trying to hide the behaviour she disagrees with, Lizzie shows it to the world, since she knows that her actions are not going to be representative of herself.

The wish to please family is also less present in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Jane, who continues to be described as the almost perfect daughter, does not care about the interest her mother has in her having a rich husband. Although she falls for Bing Lee and starts a relationship with him, at no moment does she mention the happiness she would bring to her parents by being with him. She knows her mother is extremely happy with their relationship but she chooses not to take her mother's wishes into consideration. The influence of a profitable union does not seem to be as relevant for the whole family as in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Even though Jane and Lizzie end up with their rich partners, they still continue working and living somewhat independent lives, so, it seems that a relationship has little power over the members of a family.

Because the young people of the story are not seen merely as belonging to their family, but as individuals, some alterations to the plot had to be made. One of the most

important ones is the reason to why it is not of Bing Lee's best interest to build a relationship with Jane.

Despite it being well known that the Bennets are not wealthy, as we have previously established, that does not matter as much as it did in the past. For that reason, Jane's connections could not be the excuse used to separate a couple that is in love, since uniting the families would not bring unfavorable consequences to Bing Lee. Instead, it was necessary to create a different reason as to why Caroline and Darcy would be contrary to their relationship. That reason is only discovered at the end of the series, and it is further explained in the *LBD* book.

Bing Lee starts the story as a med student, yet it seems he barely studies or shows any interest in his future profession. Instead, we are introduced to a man who, in the middle of the semester, decides to buy a house in an unknown neighborhood, does not have any appointments and never talks about his future. Even though such decision is odd, to say the least, his sister and best friend follow him to this little town to, as we later learn, try to talk some sense into him. In fact, as we later discover, Bing Lee starts questioning himself as to whether he should continue pursuing a career in medicine, since that is not one of his wishes, but of his family. He moves to this distant town because he is not interested in taking another semester in med school, and his sister and friend accompany him to make him change his mind. But when Bing Lee falls for a girl who lives in town, his conviction of not being made for being a doctor only grows. That is when Caroline decides to step in and find a way of separating the couple, since it would not be of his best interest abandoning his whole future for a girl he barely knows. Thus, she creates a plan in which Darcy sees Jane being too intimate with one of Bing Lee's friends, which only happens because the friend is drunk and taking the orders of Caroline. That is enough for Darcy to support Caroline and encourage his friend to leave behind his plans of abandoning med school. Shortly after this incident, they leave town and Bing Lee is, once again, in the hands of his sister, following her advice and deciding to continue on his previous path.

It is not until much later that Bing Lee decides to finally quit med school and pursue a career he is passionate about. That is also when he goes after Jane and tries to get back together with her and, even though she is resistant at first, stating that they could not go back to the point they had left off, she accepts trying something with him again. And when she is offered a job in New York, instead of asking her to stay in town for him, he asks if he can go

along with her to the city. In the end, it is not because of her family that Jane and Bing Lee spend most of the story apart, but because he is still trying to determine what he wants from his life.

That is not to say that Jane's family is not made to look inferior to Bing Lee's: they are constantly made fun of and her lack of money is also mentioned; however, these points are not the ones raised by Caroline nor by Darcy. They are aware of her family, yet their fear is not that Bing Lee may be united to them. Instead, they fear that, by being with her, he may not be so inclined to follow their recommendations and might not make the best decisions about his future, since, when he is with Jane, he is never concerned about his future.

Another storyline that had to be drastically altered is the one of Lydia. Her plot, in the novel, serves to show what could be the destiny of young girls who were not properly guided by their parents, thus working as a cautionary tale to any reader. Being let run wild, the *Pride and Prejudice* version of her character suffers severely from not being correctly conducted by her parents. While they let her be foolish and too concerned about boys, her disastrous future, in which she is cast away of her family, shows punishment for her. In the web series, however, the fault for Lydia's wild behaviour is never deposited in the parents. Instead of having the blame for her tragic destiny being put in her parents, it resides in Wickham alone.

Lydia's tragic episode is only prejudicial to her. Unlike the novel, in which her bad conduct reflects poorly on the whole family, in the contemporary version, the person who suffers the most is Lydia herself. She is not unfazed by her decisions and living a normal life as if nothing had happened. Instead, she suffers assuming that she is the only one to be blamed for such an unfortunate resolution of events. Even though Lizzie and Jane, and the audience, blame only Wickham for having exploited Lydia's fame and feelings in order to get some money, she still blames herself and feels at fault for her lamentable ending. Her misfortunes, however, affect only her, and her sisters suffer no repercussion because of the choices she made. Unlike the solid society, it is not her defective upbringing that made her end up in such a situation, but the act of a maleficent mind that manipulated her and managed to make her be in an unfortunate situation.

Finally, the influence Darcy's family has over his decision making is much lessened in the web series. While in the novel Lady Catherine travels a long way just to make her

disapproval over the supposed union between Elizabeth and her nephew heard, in the adaptation, she does not meddle with the possibility of the relationship. Instead, it is Caroline who warns Lizzie of the dangers of building a relationship with Darcy. She states that “(Lizzie) would destroy (Darcy)” since “(he) disappeared from his responsibilities for weeks to cover (her) sister’s scandal” and that “his aunt is questioning her investments in his enterprise” (Episode 95 – End of the Line). All of the arguments she presents against their relationship are not because of her family, but because of the actions Darcy himself decides to take in order to help Lizzie in her difficulties.

As we can see, family has taken up a new role in liquid society. Instead of coming first and having all of our decisions taken as to better help them, they are a source of support but not of restraint. The successes and downfalls witnessed by each member are felt by them much more than by anyone else. One person’s suffering does not necessarily impact another’s and they are no longer an excuse for improper behaviour. In an individualistic society, each person is the source of happiness or sorrow of themselves.

In realities where, as we have seen so far, so much has changed, the central plot of the story, which are the romantic relationships that unfold, also had to be greatly adapted. The concepts of relationships, marriage and love have changed dramatically and, because of such change, this new idea of love had to be adapted for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Even though we tend to look at the 19<sup>th</sup> century and think most marriages were formed on the basis of class rank and money, that does not seem to be the case for most people. Hibbert (1987) affirms that ideally, people should have some sort of affection before entering marriage, even if it was only in order to prevent immediate adulteries. Perkin argues that women “wanted affection and companionship, even if they thought romantic love was not likely to last” (PERKIN, 1989, p. 29) besides, of course, wishing for the means of maintaining a home and their family and having a distinguished status in the community as a wife and mother. Stone associates the rise in marriage for love with the popularization of the novel, stating that “for the first time in history, romantic love became a respectable motive for marriage among the propertied classes, and that at the same time there was a rising flood of novels filling the shelves of the circulating libraries devoted to the same theme” (STONE, 1977, p. 284). Steinbach further states that the nineteenth century “saw the rise of affectionate, companionable marriages in which spouses were friends and monogamous lovers as well as household partners” (STEINBACH, 2004, p. 118-119).

In advising young women on how to better choose a partner to share their lives with, Reverend Mr. Wetenhall Wilkes wrote a conducts book which became incredibly successful and summarizes appropriately what one should look for if they wished to have a companionate marriage. As he states,

The chief things to be regarded in the choice of a husband, are a virtuous disposition, a good understanding, an even temper, an easy fortune, and an agreeable person. Ask any Lady, if she would either receive herself, or recommend to her friend's acquaintance, a husband without these accomplishments, and her answer will be... none but a fool, or a mad-woman, would [...] She that, for a title, gives her hand without her heart, may expect a life more incumber'd with vexations than pleasure (WILKES, 1746, p. 168-169).

His was not the only book targeted to young women to present this view of marriage. As we can see in the novel, most characters concur to these expectations when searching for a partner. The importance of the future partner being an *agreeable person* is perfectly illustrated in Mr. Darcy's introduction in the novel. Being a young rich single man, even richer than his friend, at first, he is "looked at with great admiration" and the women declared him to be "much handsomer than Mr. Bingley" (AUSTEN, 1993, p.12), making him the perfect suitor for the eligible women present at the event. However, not even Mrs. Bennet, who seems fixated in finding a rich husband for any of her daughters and, to that point, had not expressed anything else she wished to see in her future son-in-law, finds Mr. Darcy tempting to any of her daughters. On discovering his unpleasant personality, he loses the post of most desirable bachelor and is abdicated to "being unworthy to be compared with his friend" (AUSTEN, 1993, p. 12).

If Mrs. Bennet tends to consider wealth above anything else when trying to find eligible husbands for her daughters, that is not the only concern Mr. Bennet has. Perhaps because of his own experience, Mr. Bennet advises Elizabeth to not only think of money when he gives Mr. Darcy his consent to marry her. To her, he says: "I know your disposition, Lizzy. I know that you could be neither happy nor respectable, unless you truly esteemed your husband; unless you looked up to him as a superior. Your lively talents would place you in the greatest danger in an unequal marriage" (AUSTEN, 1993, p. 315). Here, it is clear that, on his view, money could not be the only reason used to choose a partner. He emphasizes how Elizabeth should esteem and respect her partner, something she later reveals that already happens.

The wish for having an emotionally fulfilling marriage, or the willingness to put that wish aside, can be seen throughout the novel in the different couples that exist and are formed. First, there is Mr. and Mrs. Bennet, who we are led to believe that do not lead a particularly satisfied relationship. Elizabeth acknowledges that fact when the narrator states that

Had Elizabeth's opinion been all drawn from her own family, she could not have formed a very pleasing opinion 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 and illiberal mind had very early in their marriage put 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 (AUSTEN, 1993, p. 201).

His regret in his choice for a wife is clear, yet there was little he could do about it. In a solid society, marriage was meant to last. Even though divorce was a possibility, it would only be granted by the Parliament on the basis of adultery and even then, only people who were extremely wealthy could afford such method to end their marriage. Besides that, women suffered severe penalties being separated, such as not having access to the income of any of the real estate owned by the family, having to waive the possibility of being able to buy or sell property, losing all her savings to her husband while also facing the possibility of never being able to see her children again, since they could be controlled entirely by their father (STONE, 1990). Their unfortunate union proves to affect not only the happiness of the couple, who seem to have no pleasure in the company of each other, but also their whole family, since Elizabeth acknowledges that "she had never felt so strongly as now the disadvantages which must attend the children of so unsuitable a marriage" (AUSTEN, 1993, p. 202).

Elizabeth's wish to have a marriage unlike her parents is understandable, since she sees the drawbacks of building a family under an unsuitable union. That is why she pursues a marriage in which she has compatibility in personality, differently from her parents. The first man we meet for whom she feels strongly about is Mr. Wickham. He is often complimented by his gentlemanlike manners and pleasant countenance, and is presented as the opposite of Mr. Darcy. Being in the militia, he is not a part of the landed gentry, like Elizabeth and, as he later reveals, his financial situation is not promising. Attributing the blame of his misfortunes to Mr. Darcy, Wickham knows that his position in society is not advantageous and so does Elizabeth and her family. In fact, when her preference for his company becomes clear for her family, her aunt Mrs. Gardner advises her against the union. She recommends her niece not to

further encourage Mr. Wickham's advances, since their union could not happen. To this, Elizabeth disagrees, stating that although she "see(s) the imprudence of it", she believes that "where there is affection, young people are seldom withheld by immediate want of fortune from entering into engagements with each other" thus, "how can (she) promise to be wiser than so many of (her) fellow-creatures if (she is) tempted, or how (is she) even to know that it would be wisdom to resist?" (AUSTEN, 1993, 123).

From her interest in Wickham, Elizabeth shows that, for her, wealth is not a primary concern in her pursuit of a partner. Instead, she wishes a man who she can respect and that behaves like a gentleman. Furthermore, Elizabeth greatly values personality compatibility. When contemplating the reasons as to why she believes her sister and Bingley are going to be happy in their union, she concludes that it is "because they had for basis the excellent understanding, and super-excellent disposition of Jane, and a general similarity of feeling and taste between her and himself" (AUSTEN, 1993, p. 290).

The importance on having similar dispositions in one's partner is not something only Elizabeth values. In fact, when congratulating Jane for her impending marriage to Bingley, Mr. Bennet's argument for the future happiness of the couple is that "(their) tempers are by no means unlike" (AUSTEN, 1993, p. 291) and so, their union is completely different from his. Assuming that conjugal happiness depends on the couple's dispositions being similar, unlike himself and his wife, Mr. Bennet expects them to have a suitable marriage.

Unlike the main characters in the story, Charlotte's view of marriage is more practical, which shocks Elizabeth. At the beginning of the story, when talking to her friend about Jane and Bingley, Charlotte suggests that Jane should show her interest for him more, and not to be so guarded. She believes that is the way to assure the man understands her intentions and that, even if she is not certain of the feelings, "when she is secure of him, there will be more leisure for falling in love as much as she chooses" (AUSTEN, 1993, p. 20). In fact, opposing the view of her friend, Charlotte believes that "happiness in marriage is entirely a matter of chance" (AUSTEN, 1993, p. 21) and that the fewer one knows about their partner before marrying, the better, since the couple will have a lifetime to learn about each other's defects. Instead of wanting the companionate marriage, and believing that was her way of attaining contentment, she settles for one that would provide her a home and a comfortable living. By accepting to marry Mr. Collins, a man she neither respects, nor admires, and has no feelings towards, Charlotte is able to attain what she wishes the most: the role of a wife and

lady of her own house. Her reasons to marrying him are not because of the feelings she might grow for her husband, but because of the life he was able to provide for her. Her satisfaction on their marriage seems to derive from him being absent from the house in order to fulfil his business. In Elizabeth's visit to her friend, she notices that "When Mr. Collins could be forgotten, there was really an air of great comfort throughout, and by Charlotte's evident enjoyment of it, Elizabeth supposed he must be often forgotten." (AUSTEN, 1993, p. 134).

A final view of the role of marriage that is presented in the novel, and that goes completely against to what the other characters' maintain, is the one of Lady Catherine. She does not present her view on love or feelings, but she has some strong opinions on the institution of marriage. When she calls on the Bennet's house and informs Elizabeth of her disapproval on her supposed intention of marrying her nephew, Lady Catherine states that Darcy is intended to marry her daughter and that their union had been agreed on when they were infants. In her list of reasons as to why Darcy should marry her daughter, not once are feelings listed as the driving motive for their union. She mentions her wish and the wish of his late mother, the lineage they would preserve and the wealth they would keep in the family, yet the wishes of the couple is never brought forth. Surely Lady Catherine's attitude towards marriage does not reflect the sentiment of the time, since she seems to be the only one who still considers marriage entirely a matter of the State.

In finding a suitable partner, Stone (1977) states that there are basically four ways from which matches for a future marriage can be made, varying from one extreme to the other. The first gives full power to the parents and guardians, who decide your future partner without their children having any say on the matter. This is the way Lady Catherine sees the marriage of her daughter and Mr. Darcy: since their parents agreed on the union, they should simply accept their wishes. The second keeps the power on the hands of the parents; however, the children have a say on the match, being able to veto candidates that seem unsuitable for the child. The third and the one we most clearly see in *Pride and Prejudice* is the one where children decide on their future partners, but parents provide their consent in order for the marriage to occur, such as when Mr. Darcy and Mr. Bingley ask for the consent of Mr. Bennet, only after having been accepted by Elizabeth and Jane. The fourth and final way is the one most used in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and, therefore, the one we can see in the adaptation of *LBD*, where children decide on their partners and merely state their choice for parents or guardians.

They do not have any say on the matter and are simply informed of the decision when it is made.

In a reality where the number of marriages is decreasing and the divorce rate only increases, it seems safe to assume that love has taken a different form from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In a liquid society, where reality is ever changing, marriages present too much stability and certainty for it to be a future people desire. Bauman argues that in the reality we live in, “the old-style ‘till death do us part’ marriage [...] is replaced by a part-time, flexible-times ‘comings together’” (BAUMAN, 2003, p. 36). Commitment, and especially, commitment for life, sounds more than ever before like a trap. Couples do not wish anymore to share every aspect of their lives, neither do they need it. In fact, they make a point of having separate houses, their own financial independence and group of friends. In reality, they lead separate lives that are only shared when it is for their amusement or benefit. The way this generation chooses to treat relationships brings with it pros and cons. At the same time people get to preserve their own individuality, they are unwilling to fully commit to the hardships a lifelong commitment entail. They know that investing strong feelings in your partner makes you dependent on them, while they may not feel such dependency. As the author puts it, “*you* are bound, but *your partner* is free to go, and no kind of bond that may keep you in place is enough to make sure that they won’t” (BAUMAN, 2003, p. 90, author’s emphasis).

These tendencies that Bauman discusses and that are so prevalent in the liquid society are possible to be seen in *LBD*. Some interesting choices had to be made in order to fully depict what it means to have a relationship in such a self-sufficient world. People no longer need to get married to have a house, to live an independent life or to proclaim the love they feel for someone else. Gone are the days in which marriage asserted one’s future for life and, at least in novels, represented the happy ending of the protagonists.

For a story that, in its source text, has four weddings taking place, the adaptation greatly reduces this number. Instead, only one happens and it is with side characters who are never mentioned again. It is there where the Bennets first meet Bing Lee and Darcy and, from the report of the evening that Lizzie does, despite her not enjoying her night, she has nothing judgmental to say about the wedding. In fact, the only criticism she spares for the occasion is for the tradition of catching the bouquet. As for the rest, it seems that she, much like Jane, are not completely against the idea of getting married, which, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, is already a step forward to this institution.

Unlike the novel, the web series does not present an unhappy union between Mr. and Mrs. Bennet. Depicted as two extremely different people, their opposing characters do not bring them disagreements. Mrs. Bennet still seems incredibly concerned about marrying her daughters, and her husband continues to be indifferent to her fits. Their portrayal in the videos, often made by Lizzie representing her mother and Charlotte, her father, is of a sweet bickering couple. Their different tempers are never presented as a weakness in their marriage and they are usually depicted having lovable conversations. We must keep in mind, however, that all that we see of their interaction is Lizzie's portrayal of them, since they never appear in front of the camera; therefore, it is her view of the couple that we are presented and not necessarily how they behave outside of their children's sight.

The decision of changing the portrayal of the Bennet couple seems, at first, odd. Their unsuccessful marriage is one of the main examples of what might happen if one is not careful in choosing their partner. They serve as a deterrent example of how one should be sure of the compatibility between the partners and not to make a hasty decision before agreeing to spend the rest of their lives with someone. For the solid society of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, this is useful advice. However, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, this is not so effective. These lessons are not necessary to be learned. With the rhetoric that *opposites attract*, the necessity of having compatible personalities is no longer made imperative. Love, in the reality of the web series, is not based on the premise that the couple is similar; in fact, the differences are often highlighted and seen as something positive. Another lesson that does not need to be learned is of decisions made for life. In a liquid society, no decision made is for a long period of time. And even though some people still choose to get married, it is with the full knowledge that it does not have to be a decision they will have to agree with for the rest of their lives. This might also be the reason as to why the Bennet couple is seen favourably by their daughter, since otherwise, viewers would wonder why they have not gotten divorced.

If compatibility is not a must in finding a partner in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, one might wonder what is. As most things in this liquid world, there is no answer and no guide is accepted as the norm. Instead of following a conduct book that instructs people on who they should choose, there is a variety of sources that each advises their reader differently on what they should look for in a partner. There is no consensus on what a suitable partner is. It is the responsibility of the individual to consider what they want and expect from a relationship and how their partner should be.

The three Bennet sisters, who, at some point of the story, are involved in romantic relationships, have different versions of what love is for them. Their relationships also develop differently and their choice of partners reveal a lot of the people they are and that they become at the end of the story. First, there is Jane, whose relationship is the one that is faster developed. She is introduced to Bing Lee at a wedding and she is quickly smitten by him. Receiving a lot of criticism from Lizzie, since she finds it too strange that Jane might be interested in a guy that their mother has already dreamt as being part of the family, Jane does not seem to mind this. In fact, after their first encounter, she already presents the possibility that she might fall for him and imagines her future with Bing Lee, something her sister finds too sudden. In the course of the next videos, we are presented to a very much in love Jane, who shares most moments of her life with Bing, until the moment he leaves town and Jane behind without saying goodbye. When he leaves, Jane has a taste of how unsure the future might be: in one moment you might think you have found the love of your life and in the next, he has chosen that their time had been enough.

We later learn that Bing Lee decided to go back to L.A. because of his sister and friend's influence. He learned from them of Jane's "indiscretion" at his birthday party and, without giving her the benefit of the doubt, he leaves her behind. Instead of being advised of the unwise union between them in part because of her family and lack of wealth, in the adaptation they are separated because of her assumed reckless behaviour at his party, thus it is her loyalty to the relationship that is put into question. The other reason given, similarly to the novel, is that Jane was partial to Bing Lee's feelings and that he was much more invested in the relationship than she was. In the few episodes that follow, Jane is seen suffering because of the breakup, but, as the weeks go by, she delves into her work and seems to have moved on. In fact, at one point of the story, Lizzie affirms to Bing Lee – when they meet at Pemberley Digital – that she is unsure if Jane is dating anyone and, to Darcy, she states that she does not know whether Jane would even want to get back together with Bing.

At the end of the series, Bing Lee returns to town and appears at the Bennets' residency, having discovered Lizzie's videos and watched them. There, he claims to be sorry for not listening to Jane's side of the story and asks to speak to her. At first, she refuses to talk to him but later she comes down and they discuss their relationship. Instead of being persuaded by Bing and accepted on resuming their relationship, Jane says they cannot go back to where they were, since they both changed. They decide to start fresh, this time, as friends, and Jane

seems to treat their time together as something of the past, saying that “(her) time with Bing will always be a good memory for (her)” (Episode 91 – How About That). Right after her statement, she accepts a job offer in New York, without even questioning if she was making the right choice, and it seems that her relationship with Bing is something from the past. When she sees Bing again, she claims that she would never give up in her opportunity of going to New York and that if he asked her to stay with him he would be selfish, stating “and this fresh start, it’s not enough for (her) to just give up (her) career” (Episode 92 – Goodbye Jane). Her independence is more valuable than any possibility of relationship with Bing. And, instead of asking her to stay, Bing wants to go with her to New York and find out what he really wants from his life, now that he has quit med school. Jane eventually agrees with his proposition of going with her, on the condition that they would not go together, that is, that they would each have their own separate houses and lives and that, on these bases, they could begin rebuilding their relationship.

At the end of the story, Jane achieves a truly happy ending for a 21<sup>st</sup> century individual. Not only is she able to advance on her career, obtaining her independence, and, in a twisted way, succeeding on her mother’s wish of seeing her children successful living on their own, but she also manages to obtain a relationship according to her rules. Instead of having her life completely interwoven with her partner, as her precedent in the novel did, she is an independent woman who accepts sharing parts of her life with Bing. Taking into consideration the liquidity of her reality, this might be the best result she could have hoped for, since the wish “to be concerned solely with (oneself), with what is good and desirable for (one)” (BAUMAN, 1994, p. 15) is what seems to drive this liquid society.

Similarly to Jane, Lizzie also attains her happy ending which proves to be remarkably similar to what her sister achieves. Her path to love, however, proves to be unlike her elder sister. At first, Lizzie presents herself without any aspirations to finding a partner, despite being often called “perpetually single” by her sister Lydia. Her first sign of interest in a man is with the introduction of George Wickham. He is elevated above all other men that she met at the bar when she went out with Lydia, since he was a “gentleman” in the midst of “douchebags”. Saying that she did not expect much from men, especially at a bar during swim week – the period of time that, every year, the town hosted a swimming competition – she is pleasantly surprised by Wickham. She portrays him as witty and considerate in a sea full of drunk perverted men. Just like in the novel, he is set apart from other men by his charm and

eloquence, and also by his looks, or more specifically, his body. As soon as Lizzie meets him, she starts drawing a comparison between him and Darcy, stating that since Wickham is such a gentleman, “there’s no excuse for a guy to be rude, arrogant, or stuck-up” (Episode 18 – 25 Douchebags and a Gentleman).

On listing the reasons as to why Lizzie likes him, she states his love for his career – and emphasizes the fact he has a paid job –, his pursue of his passions – which she empathizes for, since she feels that is what she is doing with her videos – and his ability to have interesting conversations with her. This version of Lizzie, unlike her novel version, seems to be attracted by Wickham because of his interests and passions, much more than because of his character. She is even blind by the fact that Wickham’s interests are entirely different from her, only noticing this later on, when his character is revealed. Even before learning about what Wickham had done, Lizzie clearly loses interest in him. Since he often disappeared from town, returned only for a short period of time and, in the meantime, was even able to flirt with Lydia on camera, Lizzie realizes that Wickham does not date people, he can only have casual relationships, which is something she does not wish to have. All the reasons she lists for liking Wickham, however, are true for Darcy: his career and interests are similar to hers, he is witty and he proves to be of good character.

Her ending, similarly to her sister’s, does not revolve around her relationship with Darcy. After receiving a job offer from her now boyfriend, Lizzie firmly denies it, since she does not “want to be the girl who dates the boss” (Episode 99 – Future Talk). Instead, she starts a company of her own in San Francisco, thus, living in the same city as Darcy. Lizzie is given the chance of working with Darcy, but refuses it. Much like her sister, she values her independence and does not wish to have her whole life entangled with Darcy’s.

Finally, there is Lydia who, from the start of the adaptation, does not seem to be too concerned about love. Instead, she is labelled as the flirty sister, who makes out with many guys and is only interested in their looks. Often drinking too much, she is never attached to anyone in particular until she starts dating George Wickham. Knowing that he used to date her sister, Lydia, at first, hesitates to start anything with him, since she feels it would be wrong, but she argues with herself that she and Lizzie are having an argument and that just calling him would not be a crime in itself. When she meets him, she is in a deplorable state: she is alone in Las Vegas, has been abandoned by her friends, who make an excuse for not spending the New Year’s with her, and has had a serious argument with Lizzie. She also knows that her

sister has not been watching her videos, which makes her feel even more left out than she already did. Since throughout the series Lizzie only undermines Lydia, it is no wonder that she feels like she is the least preferred Bennet sister.

In this moment of loneliness, Lydia calls Wickham and they start a romantic relationship, which she fully shares on her YouTube channel. From the videos, the audience, knowing Wickham's real story – since Lizzie had already made a video explaining how wicked George really was, a video that Lydia had not watched – can notice how manipulative he really is. He alters his story to make Lydia sympathize with him, makes her get even angrier with her sister and convinces her that he is the only one who cares for her. Since she feels abandoned by her sisters and her friends, she believes him and places her full confidence in everything George says. So, when the news comes out that he is threatening to post their sex tape on the Internet, she assumes that he has been hacked and that he does not mean it. When she realises that their whole relationship was nothing but a way of him making money off of her – since he requests money in order to release the tape in which he claims to have sex with the YouTube star Lydia Bennet – she is devastated. The man she had trusted the most, that she had shared all her darkest secrets and insecurities turned against her. Her desolation continues for a long time and it is not without the help of her sisters and of her new therapist, and with the knowledge that the sex tape would never be released – since, as we later learn, Darcy bought the rights of the video in an attempt to protect her – that she begins to heal.

Lydia's experience truly represents what Bauman calls *liquid evil*. Instead of it being easily recognizable, it assumes the appearance of love. Her wish to make a true connection with someone/anyone, which can be seen in her attempt of making videos any time she is distant of her family in an effort of having someone she can confide in, makes her an easy pray for Wickham. In fact, Lydia's videoblog seems almost like a cry for help. She sees them as a way of finding people who might not judge her so harshly as her family and friends do and, if they prove to be the same as her sisters, they are only one delete button away.

If, in the novel, Charlotte was sceptic about love, preferring to guarantee her comfortable living instead of her wish to have an agreeable husband, in the web series, her cynicism continues; however, it is in a different area. Charlotte is never presented to any potential love interest, but she achieves her financial independence. Since that is all her book version really wanted from her marriage, it seems suitable that her plot would be thus adapted.

To Catherine de Bourgh's view of love, we are not presented. Since she has a much lesser part in the series, having only been mentioned as the investor of businesses, she does not meddle with the affairs of her nephew. In the adaptation, she also does not have a daughter, only a dog, thus, she cannot argue that Darcy would have to marry her daughter. Instead, she is a strong supporter of Caroline, complimenting her whenever she has the chance, but not to an extent in which she would reprove Darcy's decision of being with Lizzie. Because she does not have any personal reason to meddle with his affairs, she remains indifferent to who Darcy ends up with.

As I have discussed in this chapter, relationships, in their most different ways, have greatly changed from the solid society of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, to the liquid one of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and these changes can be seen in the two versions of the story of *Pride and Prejudice*. The role of the community, that was once intrinsically connected to the way one acted, has now been delegated to the side lines, being almost irrelevant. Now, it is the individual who matters and it is in their hands to decide what they should do. Although families continue to be a source of support to some people, they are not the ones who decide on how one should act. Their role as guide has been extinguished, now, each one has the task of figuring out their own paths. As for love, it still is important and it has not disappeared, but with its separation of one's whole future, love has been delegated to being only a complement to one's life, instead of being the major factor in deciding one's happiness. As Bauman affirms time and time again, that is not to say that any of these societies is better than the other; they simply reflect of the way people behave in a period of time.

### **2.3 A Time for Secondary Characters to Shine**

In a society that is more inclined to listen to those who are usually left unheard, it has become more common to give the spotlight to voices that did not have this chance in the past. This willingness can be seen in media as well. More than ever before, we are presented to different perspectives of the same story, or even expanding the story of characters that seem to be less important to the narrative they are first introduced in. It is not surprising to see the vast quantity of spin offs that arise from successful stories. Besides it being a safe way of making a profit for the creators of the content, since fans of the original story are bound to be

interested in whatever follows it, spin offs are also a way of exploring themes that may not fit in the first story.

In the adaptation analyzed in this study, creators also took advantage of this notion and expanded the story in many different ways, as it was previously presented. They took some characters that, in the novel, were unimportant – or less important – and gave them relevance. There are many of them that could be listed such as Charlotte, who although is important to the *Pride and Prejudice* plot, does not take any central role whereas in *LBD* she is elevated to one of the creators of the vlog; Georgiana, whose role is much more significant in the videos, having even been contemplated with a spin-off of her own; and Fitz, whose character participates and is mentioned in many episodes, unlike his counterpart in the novel who is only briefly involved in the story.

There are three characters whose roles, besides being amplified, have suffered significant changes and, therefore, their perception among viewers have also changed: they are the ones of Caroline Bingley, Mr. Collins and Lydia Bennet. Of these characters, Mr. Collins, is the one whose presence is the most important in the novel. He takes on an important role and is crucial for the development of the narrative. Both Caroline and Lydia, however, are not that memorable, and the first may easily be forgotten by the readers, while the second is overshadowed by her romantic partner. The roles of these characters in each of the works is going to be further explored in the following sections.

### **2.3.1 The pompous Mr. Collins**

One character that has his role amplified is the one of Ricky Collins, also known as Mr. Collins, who, in the adaptation, appears in a considerable number of episodes and even has his own spin off called *Better living with Collins and Collins*. If in the novel his main trait is to be oblivious to social cues, often coming across as impertinent, in the show, he is a lovable fool who is also unaware of when his presence is welcomed or not.

The plot that involves his character is one that had to be changed the most, since the reason for his introduction in the novel does not exist in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. While in the first, he is introduced as an antagonist to the Bennet family, since the estate of the family was entailed to him, in the second, this reason is gone and Ricky Collins is only a former neighbor of the

family, who is visiting the city and decides to go over to see Lizzie, since they used to be classmates and even ran into each other in a convention a few videos earlier.

Because he is not going to produce any harm to the protagonist's family, Ricky appears to be a likable character, whose only problem is not being able to recognize when he is overstaying his welcome. Lizzie's prejudice towards him is much clearer, since, besides her, no one else seems to have so many strong opinions against him. And even though he continues to have a pompous way of speaking, and seems to be inconvenient when he appears on screen, there is no deep reason for Lizzie not liking him. Regardless of that, she still treats him badly being rude, sarcastic and arrogant. That is also the case in the novel, but there, her behaviour at least may be excused as resentment towards the man who is going to inherit her family's property.

His proposition to Lizzie at first, seems extremely different; however, if we consider the epochs, it seems appropriate. In the novel, Mr. Collins tries to mitigate the damage he is inflicting on the Bennet family by proposing to Lizzie. Encouraged by his patroness, Lady Catherine de Bourgh, he is in search of a wife since that is what is required of a clergyman, and he sees the opportunity of marrying one of the Bennet sisters so that their estate would continue in the family. Due to his personality, lack of social awareness and because she does not love him, Elizabeth rejects his proposal even though it would help her, and her family's, financial situation, which her mother does not take well. Since she is concerned with the future of her daughters and herself, seeing Elizabeth rejecting what could save their family is disheartening.

Because his offer seems to be so advantageous to Elizabeth, Mr. Collins cannot believe that she is rejecting him. His insistence is due to his belief that any sensible young woman whose future was uncertain would be more than happy to accept what he proposed. That proves to be right since, a few chapters later, the readers learn that Charlotte did not dare to let this opportunity pass. She decides to overlook Mr. Collins' faults and accepts his proposal, thinking of how this would help her and her family.

In the adaptation, Mr. Collins also makes a proposition to Lizzie; this time, however, he offers her a job. Although the offer seems to have little resemblance to marriage, we must consider the importance of marriage for a woman in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Besides being the union of two people and their family, marriage was the career women aspired to have. It was the way they could participate in society, alongside their husbands, control their homes and have

financial stability. Marriage was also the only possibility of moving up the social ladder. In that sense, marriage provided women what jobs do today: the opportunity of living a (somewhat) independent life.

Lizzie's position in the 21<sup>st</sup> century adaptation is also one of financial instability. She is twenty-four and still lives at home, she has a mountain of student debt and no income, her family is struggling financially, and she has no prospects of having any well-paid job once she finishes her grad course. When she receives a generous offer of working in a job with mass communication media, something she is pursuing, in a company that has an important investor, Catherine De Bourgh, and the only condition for her to start working there is for her to move and, therefore, quit grad-school, it seems reckless not to accept it.

Blinded by her prejudice and in search of the perfect job, Lizzie does not accept the offer. She deems the work Ricky does to be ridiculous and laughable and considers taking a position in such a company a miserable path. That is why she is so shocked when she discovers Charlotte accepted the offer. Having the same reasons as Lizzie, Charlotte decides that it is better to have a laughable job than none at all. When Lizzie visits Charlotte, she sees Ricky again and, this time, her view of him changes. He is still irritating and often intrusive, but now she does not despise him anymore. Lizzie acknowledges Charlotte's decision and understands that just because she does not think this life is for her, it does not mean that other people cannot have a different idea.

In both versions, Mr. Collins is a comic character who is clearly too formal for the situations in which he is presented. He feels out of place and, from the start, we know that Elizabeth is never going to accept his proposal. Her refusal, in both versions, is understandable, since there are clear drawbacks in each of them; however, it is only in *LBD* that Lizzie reconsiders the offer.

Even if briefly, Lizzie recognizes what a great opportunity she let pass by her. However, in a liquid world, she knows that as soon as something disappears, something else is bound to make its way into her life. Living in the age of opportunities, as soon as she considers accepting Mr. Collins' offer, she reminds herself that if something better comes along, she will not be able to accept it being tied down to Collins and Collins.

Later on in the story, when Mr. Collins, Charlotte and Elizabeth visit Miss De Bourgh, his recommendations to Elizabeth are met differently in both versions. In *Pride and*

*Prejudice*, Elizabeth is not alone in visiting the patroness. Accompanied by Maria and Sir William – Charlotte’s sister and father – Mr. Collins’ comments on what to wear and what to expect are met as useful instructions on how they should behave in the presence of a person of such different rank. Maria especially, who has never been in company of such a distinguished woman, is nervous and tries to follow every recommendation given to her. Elizabeth is not fazed by the prospect of meeting Lady De Bourgh and finds the commotion to be too much, but the other people in the party do not see it so; in fact, they view it as guidance. In *LBD*, Lizzie is the only one who is going to be introduced to Catherine De Bourgh and her reaction to the many pages she receives from Mr. Collins, full of advice on how to behave and what to do in her company is of disbelief. She cannot believe that in order to be in the company of an investor she would have to follow so many steps. If in *Pride and Prejudice* Mr. Collins’ concerns are a little exaggerated, they are still understandable since ranks had to be respected in 19<sup>th</sup> century England; in 21<sup>st</sup>-century California, however, these formalities are no longer relevant and so, his list of dos and don’ts becomes more absurd, only accentuating Ricky’s disconnect to the reality in which he lives in.

Another major difference that influences Mr. Collins’ role in the stories is his letter, at the end of the story, advising Elizabeth not to be involved with Darcy. In the novel, Mr. Collins feels the need to advise his cousin against marrying Darcy – even before any proposal has been made. His concern on the matter, although feel disproportional, is not out of place. Being related to the family, he knows that if Elizabeth decided to go against Lady Catherine’s wishes and accepted a possible marriage offer, he would also suffer the consequences. The decisions of one person have the power of affecting those around them. In *LBD*, Ricky never concerns himself on advising against such relationship, since he certainly would not suffer any consequence of that decision; in a world with weaker human connections, a person’s choice affects themselves alone.

Mr. Collins’ adaptation presents a more human and compassionate character. Although he acts too formally and his speech continues to make him sound like a caricature much more than a regular person – especially if one watches his videos in the spin off – we cannot help but find him endearing. He truly seems concerned about Lizzie’s feelings, wants to be helpful and treats her well. He does not see himself as superior to her in terms of manners and morals and does not undermine her because of her choices – even though he tries to show her refusal of his offer was not in her best interest. If Mr. Collins sees himself as morally superior to Elizabeth and her family, so much so that he spares no criticism to Lydia’s

misfortune, Ricky is a lovable fool who only wants to excel at his job and receive recognition for the work he does.

### **2.3.2 The sidelined Caroline Bingley**

Caroline, Bing Lee's sister – or Bingley's sister, in *Pride and Prejudice* –, is another character whose role is immensely amplified. If in the novel she is a minor antagonist, who may be forgotten by the reader once she disappears the story, that does not happen in the adaptation. Besides being present in many of the videos and having active social media accounts, where she posts much content when she does not participate in the plotline of the story, she is constantly mentioned by Lizzie, who considers her a sort of friend. Unlike the novel, the vlogs present a different side of Caroline and end with what could be considered her redemption arc.

In both versions, their introduction is similar: they are presented alongside Darcy and Bingley/Bing Lee, and are praised by their looks and accomplishments. They are described as being (somewhat) the opposite of the Bennets' sisters and the model of what women should aspire to be. Miss Bingley, as she is often called in *Pride and Prejudice*, fulfills the role she has as a lady and the single sister of an important man. When they first arrive in the new town, she is the one who approaches Jane and Elizabeth in order to better be acquainted with them, who are seen as exemplary women of the region.

When it becomes clear that Mr. Bingley is starting to consider marriage with Jane, and when Caroline starts noticing Darcy's interest in Elizabeth grow, she is one of the main agents to separate the couples. As we later learn, it had always been her wish to marry Darcy and advance on her social standing through marriage. To achieve that, she rationalized that Darcy would be more inclined into marrying her if her brother married Georgiana, Darcy's sister.

Caroline's interest in Darcy, or her concerns about her brother's marriage, does not seem to come from feelings. She is interested in maintaining social stability and increasing her family's wealth. Her lack of regard for her brother's affection towards Jane might seem antagonistic, since she puts her desires above his; however, her assumption that Bingley's marriage would not impact him alone is not without reason. Caroline knew that whoever

married her brother would be tied to her as well and could affect her badly, or positively, since marriage was a matter of the whole family.

Because of their parents' death, the novel does not present any guidance regarding on the choice of a partner from Bingley's family, other than her sisters' disapproval of his entanglement with Jane. Even though the parents are not heard, it is not hard to imagine how they would have guided Bingley. Since his family had recently acquired their fortune and still had no property – that is why he decides to settle in Netherfield – it would be advised for him to marry someone from an equal or higher social rank, preferably, from a known and respectable family and, since he had money, that probably would not be hard. When Bingley decides not to follow what was socially expected from him, Caroline intervenes. And, although she is portrayed as a selfish woman, one that would only think on what is best for her, she does what is expected from someone of her rank. She acts according to the rules of her time and so, her actions are justified, even though they may be considered greedy.

Adapting such plot to the 21<sup>st</sup> century, one has to keep in mind that meddling in someone else's love life is not socially acceptable anymore; therefore, Caroline's decision to separate her brother from Jane in *LBD* should have an ulterior motive or she would just seem a villain for no reason. In order to present another reason for Caroline's behaviour, her presence in the story is much more prevalent, especially in the second part of the videos. Starting in video 27 and ending in 35, Lizzie and Jane are invited to stay in Bing Lee's house, since theirs is under construction – all part of her mother's plan to make Jane be closer to Bing Lee. During their stay, Caroline discovers Lizzie's vlogs and soon starts to be a recurrent character in the videos. Since she is the only one of the newcomers who is aware of Lizzie's project, her presence is even more uncharacteristic, since, for the viewers, this is the first time they are introduced to one of the people they have heard so much about.

Proving to be as beautiful and elegant as presented, the seemingly pretentious girl that Lizzie first presents her as does not match to what we see on the screen. Admitting her knowledge about the videos, and that she had seen all the prejudicial things Lizzie says about her and her brother, Caroline proves to be the bigger person: she forgives Lizzie and even offers herself to help her film the videos while she is staying in Netherfield. From that moment on, Caroline is careful to always present a nice side of her. She compliments Lizzie, sides with her when she rants about Darcy, and even buys her expensive presents. Caroline makes sure

she is well seen by the viewers and that she gets their empathy, while making Lizzie dislike Darcy even more than she did before.

One example of how she acts is in Episode 32 – Turn about the room. It is only because of her insistence that Lizzie decides mentioning the events that had recently taken place. In the video, Lizzie describes an evening at Netherfield when there was a confrontation between her and Darcy. At first, it seems that Lizzie does not find Darcy's comments irritating; she agrees that walking around inside a closed space, as she and Caroline were doing, was not something people would normally do, and thus, does not find a problem with Darcy stating how unconventional such action was. Caroline does not drop the argument there and tries, at any cost, to make Lizzie agree that Darcy's behaviour had been rude. At the end of the video, Lizzie is furious at his actions and agrees completely with Caroline, while she smiles at her victory. After the Bennet sisters leave Netherfield, and the party that Bing Lee had promised to throw is over, the newcomers decide to go back to San Francisco without giving any explanation to the friends they had made in town. They only learn of this departure through their Twitter accounts and are left to wonder what happened.

It is not until much later that she reappears and takes the role that, in the novel, had been of Lady Catherine de Bourgh. During Episode 95 – End of the line, Caroline appears in Lizzie's house and accuses her of having ruined her brother's life. In her mind, he had his entire life planned out and the road to success was certain, so when he decides to leave med school and accompany Jane to New York in the hopes of finding a new purpose for his life, she sees this decision as reckless. Caroline is not against the relationship because of Jane's lack of money or her *social inferiority*, but because Bing Lee seems to be making decisions on his own and not blindly following her. Even worse than that, with his decision of going to New York, he is leaving her behind, and she is losing her brother who she clearly is close to.

Besides blaming Lizzie for what she considers to be Bing Lee's downfall, she also accuses Lizzie of trying to seduce Darcy and tries to explain how this would destroy his company, arguments that are quickly dismantled by Lizzie. Caroline's actions are clear both for Lizzie and her audience: she is afraid of facing the reality that she and Darcy are never going to be together. All this time, even though he showed no romantic feelings towards her, she could always hope that one day he might feel differently for her, now, she has to confront the reality that this is never going to happen.

Although her actions are cruel and cause a lot of harm in both relationships, it is hard not to feel sorry for Caroline. In the end, she is just another human being, afraid of being alone and of losing the imaginary future she had created in her head. When she sees the plans she lived her whole life trying to put into practice dissolve, she feels lost and does not know what to do. She is faced by the reality that the few people she imagined would always be at her beck and call also have lives of their own and do not need her to make their decisions. Lizzie seems to understand this feeling of having made decisions for others only thinking of herself – just like what she had done with Charlotte's decision of taking Collins' job – and does not keep resentment of Caroline. In fact, she invites her to stay and have dinner with the family, which she politely declines, and does not seem to have any hard feelings for Caroline.

Caroline's action in the videos, just like in the novel, can be considered a failure, since in the former she fails to distance her brother from Jane and to convince Darcy of how unsuitable Elizabeth is for him, and in the latter, she fails in her attempt to gain Darcy's affections. However, if in the novel readers are unlikely to sympathize with her, since we are only presented to her conceited and selfish side, one that is only concerned with appearances and influence, in the videos, we meet a version of her that is deeply hurt because of how abandoned she feels by the people she cared about and are more likely to excuse her behaviour, no matter how wrong it was.

### **2.3.3 The redemption of Lydia Bennet**

Without a doubt, the character whose role has been amplified the most and whose personality has had the most significant change is Lydia Bennet's. Among the characters who appeared the most in the videos, Lydia's relevance in the story is immense. From her first appearance in the first episode, it was clear that this version of her would be extremely different from the novel and, because of her charisma, viewers could not get enough of her. She is the only character, aside from Lizzie, who got a book and whose spin offs were watched almost as much as the main vlogs.

Described as a foolish girl, the Lydia from the novel is considered vain, reckless and a flirt by Elizabeth, whose side we are presented. She is the opposite of the ideal woman of the time. While Fordyce would advise young women

always to dress with decency and moderation; never to go beyond their circumstances, nor aspire above their station, so as to preclude or hinder works of mercy; not to value themselves on their dress, or despise others more meanly habited; in short, never to spend too much time or thought on the embellishment of the body; but always to prefer the graces of the mind, modesty, meekness, prudence, piety, with all virtues and charitable occupations, all beautiful and useful accomplishments suited to their rank and condition (FORDICE, 1809, p. 3),

Lydia does not bother following such guidance. She cares much more about her looks, is interested in the way she dresses, does not care about cultivating her mind – and is even considered a fool by her own father –, and loves undermining her sisters while elevating herself. Encouraged by her mother, she spends most of her time fantasizing about the men around her and concerned only about herself. Because of this, her decisions are made with only herself in mind. Eloping with Mr. Wickham is one example of this: she decided to run away with him without thinking of the consequences that her family would have to face. She saw an opportunity to be with the man she wanted, and took it, without second thoughts.

Her ending presents a punishment for her – even though she may not see it for what it is. She has to marry a man who has finally been exposed, is exiled to the north of the country and is removed from the society of her sisters, while still needing money from them. She is destined to continue living a life in ignorance, without having the opportunity of learning from her mistakes – which are none other than acting against societal expectations.

The Lydia from the adaptation gets much more attention and her role varies from the one from the book. From the first episode on, Lydia is a recurring guest in the *LBD* videos. Portrayed as a young excitable woman, she is often restrained by her sisters while she tries to be a part of the videos. Her wish for fame and recognition is obvious. When she learns about her sisters' endeavour in making a vlog, her eyes shine of excitement with the perspective of participating on something that is going to be public – and also, of having an excuse to spending more time with her sister.

Lydia's presence usually stems from her wish: she is hardly ever invited to participate, yet she is a frequent figure on the frame. Trying to present her enthusiastic side, Lizzie is often extremely critical of Lydia. Calling her a flirt who does not care about anything other than partying, drinking and finding random guys to sleep with, Lizzie clearly does not agree with how Lydia behaves. This view of her is not shared by the viewers, since the comments on the videos are often favourable towards her and judgemental to Lizzie.

Similarly to the novel, Lydia's primary concern is finding partners. Whenever the topic of the conversation steers to the future, education and jobs, she is not interested. Instead, she tries to find excuses to go to bars, party and flirt. Although she is heavily criticized by Lizzie, her other sister Jane refrains herself from doing the same. She also does not concur with Lydia's behaviour; however, she avoids making her feelings known for the internet. Much like the novel, Lydia's purpose seems to be the one of a comedic character, but in the adaptation, being treated as the clown is not something that she likes. Whenever she is mistreated by Lizzie, instead of acknowledging it and not being fazed by it, her expression changes and her dislike is clear.

Because she can share her side of the story, the viewers have access to what she does when her plot does not revolve around Lizzie. The first time this happens is when Lizzie and Jane stay in Netherfield for some time, at Bing's invitation, and she is not invited. Instead, she and her parents stay with their cousin Mary during the renovations at their house. There, Lydia starts her own YouTube videos and we see her interact with her cousin and are presented to a more emotional side of her. She admits missing her sisters and tries to help Mary with the problems she has.

When they are back at their house, Lydia realizes that Lizzie has not watched her videos and her role as the *left out* sister is back. In Episode 50 – Moving On, she even acknowledges that by saying that she knows she is not Lizzie's "go-to sister", but she still tries to be a part of her life and wants to hang out with her. This cycle repeats itself whenever Lizzie is not at home. If she is staying someplace else and recording her videos there, Lydia is hardly mentioned by her. In the meantime, she uploads her own videos where she often states that she misses her sisters. Unlike the book, in the web series, Lydia and Lizzie have a huge argument which lead them to be not on speaking terms for a large portion of the story. For Lydia's birthday, Lizzie buys her a book intitled *Where did I park my car? A party girl's guide to becoming a successful adult*. Lydia's reaction is not the best, since she sees it as an insult to how she behaves. Trying to explain her reasons for the gift, Lizzie calls her *energetic*, like Darcy had done when he was describing Lydia, which causes Lydia to leave the room and avoid any conversation with Lizzie. That is when she decides to go to Vegas for New Year and when her last portion of videos start.

In them, we are presented to a hurt Lydia, who has decided to rebel against her sister who, in her view, had only mistreated her. She parties all the time, is shown drunk and starts

a relationship with Wickham – who had previously been casually dating with Lizzie. Although she knows she is in the wrong, Lydia relies on his affection since everyone else in her life is not around her and he seems to be perfect for her. He embodies all that she wishes to have: a person who understands her, cares for her and is on her side of the argument she has had with her sister. Wickham uses all the vulnerabilities she has to make her believe him and, in the process, distance herself from her family. He makes her feel important, special and loved while keeping her reliant on only him for affection.

Much like in the novel, Lydia becomes submissive to Wickham. In *Pride and Prejudice*, because she elopes with him, she cannot go back to her family without being either married to him or ruined in the eyes of society. There is no way of going back to how her life was before that. In the web series, Lydia relies on him for affection and so, his betrayal by threatening to upload a sex tape of them is even more cruel. He was the only person who she saw as trustworthy, since he seemed to understand her, yet he still decides to upload a video without Lydia's consent. When she learns about the website in which the video would be posted – there is a countdown for its release – she is reluctant to believe the reality that Wickham is the one who is behind the website. Instead, she wants to believe that the video was hacked and some anonymous person is blackmailing him to release the video.

As a result, Lydia is devastated by the realization that Wickham could not have been trusted and that she was only the means of him getting more money. Because of this treason, Lydia starts reconsidering her life decisions and reconciles with her sister. She realizes that, although many of the judgments people had had of her were wrong preconceptions of how she should behave, some of her choices had not been the most responsible ones. The tragedy that afflicts her is a way of reevaluating her behaviour in the past months and reflecting on whether that displays the Lydia she wishes to be seen.

Her relief of being *saved* by Darcy is also unlike the reaction book Lydia had of Darcy's arrangement for the wedding. While in the first, Lydia is embarrassed because Darcy – the man who put her personality as a deterrent for his relationship with Lizzie to develop – is the one who manages to remove the sex tape from the internet; in the second, Lydia does not feel flustered for being discovered and having her marriage arranged by Darcy – a man who she knows little about.

Instead of being stuck forever in the *bad* decision she had made like in the novel – even though that version of Lydia does not seem to view her elopement as something bad –

the web series shows a version of the character who reflects upon her choices and is able to change her path. She does not have to be forever reminded of her mistakes, but can move on and learn from them.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Regardless of how discrete the process of first publication of Jane Austen's works has been, the enterprise can be considered revolutionary. Not only did Austen help popularize the novel as a genre even further, but she also made a point of being called a novelist, something her peers did not usually do. Austen added psychological depth to narrative, creating nuanced characters whose inner selves were presented through a narrator that was an entity of its own. Presenting stories that did not revolve mostly around the plot, but around feelings, thoughts and impressions, Austen left her mark in the way we understand novels to this day.

The other work analyzed in this thesis is also innovative in its own terms. The simple act of modernizing a story that is so intertwined to its historical context is a feat of its own, yet the creators went further and developed an intricate narrative that broadens into different media that, when joined together, present a fuller picture of the puzzle that *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* is. Be it through its use of social networks, engaging viewers, or through the spin offs that present well-known characters through a new set of lenses, the web series was able to transform the way we consider telling stories in an online platform.

Not only is the media used in both stories different, but also their context of production. If writing the novel involved only Jane Austen and she could work on it from the comfort of her home without a specific deadline to finish the final product, the *LBD* demanded a whole production with actors, directors and marketing involved who had to abide to a specific schedule and therefore had no time to lose. While the novel portrays the view of a single person, living a middle-class rural lifestyle, who depicts the world she encounters, the web series presents an array of people from all backgrounds who try to present their point of view to this classical story. The result is translated to the works. *Pride and Prejudice* is concerned with showing the life of her heroine and the paths she takes in order to become a better person; the *LBD*, on the other hand, presents characters from different ethnicities, walks of life, social backgrounds, and their path to being better understood by the viewers who choose to follow Lizzie on her adventures.

If in *Pride and Prejudice* the world of the novel is small and restricted to a few neighboring families, the *LBD* characters interact through the internet. There are no boundaries to those who can hear about the life of the Bennets and their acquaintances. If in the former the thoughts and actions of the protagonist are only visible through the narrator, in the latter,

it is the protagonist herself who does not shy away from confiding her most private feelings to an unlimited unknown audience. While in the novel, the characters are subjected to a strict set of actions that would define whether they were moral people, and, therefore, should be valued by or restricted from society, the web series presents a world where going against the general agreement does not end one's life. Although both works depart from different societies, depicting the realities from which they were created, they still present the same themes that were further delved into in this thesis of morality, community, and love and how they are treated.

The idea of what it means to be a moral person stems from different sources in both societies. While in a solid society being moral meant following the rules and manners presented by your community without much questioning of the individuals on whether they agreed with the rules or not, in the liquid world morality is a matter of the individual who has the role of assessing each situation and acting according to what they believe to be right or wrong. Looking at the three Bennet sisters who are in both works we find that they are represented rather similarly regarding their behavior towards morality. Jane continues to be praised because of her character, since she is depicted as being humble and considering others' problems before her own. She also continues to give people the benefit of the doubt, which is viewed by Elizabeth as a positive trait in her personality, although, for other people, she might be seen as naive. In the adaptation, however, we could say that Jane's ending is not so altruistic, since she makes the decision of moving to New York City without considering first what other people might want from her, but what she wants for herself, unlike her novel version that, on being proposed, first thinks on the happiness she would bring her family. Lydia's path is the one that changes the most in the adaptation. In the novel, Lydia is the character who acts most in dissonance to the expected behaviour of a young woman. She disregards the general consensus that she should be embarrassed by her actions and change to a morally accepted way of living. The constant censure of her sisters and Bingley and his party does not make her change the way she acts. She continues to follow her impulses and speak her mind. Her 21<sup>st</sup> century version is constantly aware of how she does not conform to how her sister Lizzie wishes her to act, and, for a long time, seems to be unfazed by this, continuing to behave as she pleases. In this version, however, her actions are not immoral, since morality does not arise from the community but from the individual. She is criticized by her sister because for Lizzie, her behaviour is not responsible, not because she is generally agreed to be immoral. This Lydia, unlike her previous version, changes her behavior once she suffers in

the hands of Wickham. Although she continues to be talkative and energetic, she seems to accept that she has to be more responsible in order not to be taken advantage again and then starts to be interested in her college and in finding a job. Elizabeth's path in both versions is similar. Believing herself to be morally correct, she misjudges both Wickham and Darcy, while also condemning the second for judging people without knowing them. And, despite finding Darcy's pride to be a moral defect of his, she repeats the same fault. It is not until she is able to recognize her faults and change the way she acts that she can find her happy ending with the man she learned to love.

Another theme that has been dealt with in this thesis is the role of community in both works. In the novel, the community had a major influence over the way people would act. Because the story is set in a small rural city, to which the access was difficult, the people who lived there all depended on each other for company, entertainment and resources; therefore, it was advantageous to be well accepted by the group. This acceptance depended on the ability of newcomers to conform to the expectations the community had of them; that is why Bingley, who tries to fit in and who enjoys the company of the people, is welcomed with open arms, whereas Darcy, who does not make the effort to mingle, is seen as proud and his presence is unwanted. The community also rejoiced on the gains of one of its members, and suffered with its downfalls. More specifically, the closer community, that is, the family, was almost an extension of the individual. That is why when Jane profits from an advantageous union, all her sisters are also gratified by it, and when Lydia elopes with Wickham, it is not only her reputation that is jeopardized, but all her family's. Bringing this theme to the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the relevance of the community is not so prevalent as it was. In a world so deeply connected as the one presented in the web series, where Lizzie cares more about the comments her online viewers leave her than the opinions of the people in her town, the importance of the community has relied on the individual. Their successes and failures only impact themselves, therefore, one acts according to their beliefs alone.

Love is yet another theme that has been liquified. In the solid society of certainty, love and its ultimate representation through marriage was a binding contract for life, that not only united the couple, but their families. Since it was not something one could easily back away from, deciding on the correct partner was an important matter, one that the whole family felt compelled to participate in. The most important traits one could have were being morally abiding, having a similar disposition to their partner and developing mutual affections towards each other. An extra plus was to be in a financial stable situation, so that their partner could

provide a comfortable living. The two main couples check all those criteria and, therefore, achieve their happy ending, while Lydia's partner does not and, therefore, their marriage is prone to being unhappy. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, love is no longer bound to marriage. In fact, there is no talk of marriage throughout the show, since relationships assume a temporary role in one's life. As easily as one is joined to their partner, their relationship may be dissolved. Marriage is obsolete and relationships no longer are the sole wish of a single young woman. The people in the adaptation still seem to look for the same attributes in a partner as did their counterparts, but now, financial stability, or the lack of it, does not count as much in the pursuit of a partner. In the end, instead of achieving their happy ending through marriage, the characters find their happiness not only by being in a loving relationship to a person they admire and care for, but also by being prosperous in their careers and in finding their independence. Because of this change in the view of marriage, Lydia's ending is no longer bound to a partner who proves himself to be wicked. Instead, once she recognizes how little he cares for her, she is able to free herself from him and heal, sending a message of hope for her future that continues to be an unfinished ending, one that she still has the opportunity of deciding for herself what she chooses to do with it.

Although the solid grounds of society have liquified and assumed a new shape, the main problems that humans face such as their wish to be accepted, the process of learning and changing with our mistakes and the path to finding love remain. In the end, who is to say that fluidity is better than stability? Or that the inevitability of life is better than its uncertainty. As Bauman reminds us, we tend to look at life through the lenses of our reality and, because of this, see the world we live in as being the most ideal one, yet as time will surely prove, each society is simply a product of its time thus reflecting the best and worst traits the people who live in it value. And, since no person is made purely of pros or cons, so are the societies we find depicted in both stories.

Nevertheless, it is undeniable that we have made progress in important issues as time went by. There has been significant improvement in the search for gender equality, a larger acceptance towards people who are different from the majority, and lower relevance to the role of social classes in defining a person's worth. The possibilities presented by literature continue to be endless. With the advance of technology and with the different media that we now have in our hands, the potential to storytelling is unlimited. Long are the days when the only way one could access a canonic story such as *Pride and Prejudice* was with a considerate amount of money, through a serialized printing of a novel. Now, we have access to these

stories at the click of a button, in a platform easily accessible to everyone who has access to the internet. Never before was literature so easily accessible and the possibilities of how to present a story so bountiful. And, despite being able to tell limitless stories, it seems inevitable to go back to the classics, since they remain relevant to this day. From the success of *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, it seems safe to assume that *Pride and Prejudice* still has its place in our world and that, when a book truly is a classic, its themes resonate with different types of audiences.

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