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Constructing Mr. Darcy: Tradition, Gender, and Silent Spaces

in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*

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Constructing Mr. Darcy: Tradition, Gender, and Silent Spaces

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ABSTRACT

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The reality of Jane Austen's characters in *Pride and Prejudice* is socially constructed; their goals and actions become a typification of society's institutions and conventions. Examining Austen's pivotal characters, with a particular focus on Fitzwilliam Darcy, reveals that each is a product of a socio-cultural determinism as they reflect social institutions and represent cultural conventions.

Gender categorizes social interactions in everyday life. As individuals act out gendered prescripts and expectations, they create gendered systems of dominance and power. These learned patterns of gender norms and roles are carried out in everyday life with "masculine" and "feminine" perpetuated as divergent and oppositional. Austen's Mr. Darcy is the product of the social construction of gender. Darcy's actions and self-representation reflect a historicity and ideology that is founded on gendered power relations. His is the ideology of patriarchy which guarantees the hegemonic position of men and the oppression of women.

Language establishes and maintains the connection between personal identity and gender identity that produces the problem of masculine/feminine duality. In an effort to recast the prevailing masculine rhetorical structures that have defined language and society, Austen creates, in *Pride and Prejudice*, a model of feminine writing that deconstructs the repressive structures of thinking that invent gender inequality. Jane Austen offers us a new manner of masculinity in the "transformation" of Fitzwilliam Darcy and a feminist's recasting of relations between genders.

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Constructing Mr. Darcy: Tradition, Gender, and Silent Spaces

in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*

An Introduction

The ways of becoming and being human are as numerous and diverse as man's cultures; humanness is socio-culturally variable. The specific shape into which this humanness is molded is determined by those socio-cultural formations and is relative to their numerous variations. Peter Berger states that Man (both male and female) constructs his or own nature, or more simply, man produces himself: "there is no human nature in the sense of a biologically fixed substratum determining the variability of socio-cultural formations" (47). The development of the human infant is dependent upon certain social arrangements; the direction of organic development, and indeed a large part of biological being, as such, are subjected to continuing socially determined interference. As soon as one observes phenomena that are specifically human, one enters the realm of the social, for as Berger states, "Man's specific humanity and his sociality are inextricably intertwined. *Homo sapien* is always, and in the same measure, *homo socius*" (49).

Human existence takes place in a context of order, direction, and stability. Social order is a human product, or more precisely, an ongoing human production which precedes any individual organic development. Judith Lorber states that the primary system of social control in any society is found in the existence of institutions: "Institutionalization is incipient in every social situation continuing in time" (14). Lorber explains that individuals perform "discrete institutionalized actions within the context of their biography" everyday of their lives, and soon the institutional world is experienced as a body of valid truths making up everyday reality. Members of a society assume that the institutions do, indeed, function and integrate as they are supposed to, and since the well-institutionalized individual "knows" that the social world is a fixed and consistent whole, he or she will be constrained to rationalize both its functioning and malfunctioning in terms of this "knowledge" (14). For the large majority, this rationalization is carried out successfully, though often unconsciously, in our attitudes and behaviors via the language we incorporate into our daily lives, and which consequently structures our very existence.

Language provides the fundamental burden of logic on the objectified social world. Joyce Hertzler states that "the edifice of legitimations is built upon language and uses language as its principal

instrumentality" (182,183). The logic thus attributed to the institutional

order is part of the socially available stock of knowledge and taken for

granted as such. Everyday knowledge constitutes the motivating

dynamics of institutional conduct and designates all situations occurring

within them. This everyday reality defines and constructs the roles to be

played in the context of the social institutions in question.

For the individual, gender construction starts with assignment to a

sex category on the basis of the genitalia at birth. A sex category becomes

a gender status through naming, dress, and the use of other gender

markers. Judith Lorber states:

> Once a child's gender is evident, others treat those in one
> gender differently than those in the other, and the children
> respond to the different treatment by feeling different and
> behaving differently. As soon as they can talk, they start to
> refer to themselves as members of their gender. (14)

Parenting is gendered, with different expectations for mothers and for

fathers. The work adults do as mothers and fathers and the different roles

and responsibilities they perform each day shapes women's and men's life

experiences. Those experiences produce different personality

characteristics, consciousnesses, relationships, motivations, and skills—

ways of being that we categorize as feminine or masculine. All of these

processes constitute the social construction of gender. The process of

gendering and its outcome are legitimated by religion, law, science, and the society's entire set of values.

When we hear that gender is socially constructed, we often mistakenly understand the term to mean that we, as individuals, are not responsible for what we do. Michael Kimmel points out that we might hear someone say "Society made me like this," or "It's not my fault" (87). This form of rhetorical strategy, or what Kimmel refers to as "reflexive passivity," is a device we use to deflect individual accountability and responsibility, and "It is also a misreading of the sociological mandate" (87). When we say that social identity is socially constructed, what we do mean is that our identities are a fluid assemblage of the meanings and behaviors that we construct from the values, images, and prescriptions we find in the world around us. Our gendered identities are both voluntary-we choose to become who we are-and coerced-we are pressured, forced, sanctioned, and often physically beaten into submission to some rules. We neither make up the rules, nor do we glide perfectly and effortlessly into these pre-assigned roles.

Becoming masculine or feminine is, for some in Western society, a smooth and almost natural transition into behaviors and attitudes that are familiar and supportive. For others, it is an incessant and oppressive nightmare in which some parts of ourselves must be suppressed to please

others—or simply to survive. For most of us the experience falls

somewhere in between. There are dimensions of ourselves we love and

wouldn't want to part with, and other parts where we feel we've been

forced to exaggerate selfhood at the expense of others. A sociological

perspective specifies the ways in which our own experiences, our

interactions with others, and the institutions combine to shape our sense

of who and what we are. Biology provides the basic components, while

society and history provide the context, the road map we follow to

construct our identities and our lives.

Jane Austen's novel, *Pride and Prejudice*, reveals that when a society

is blindly and exclusively constructed as male, women must live with the

consequences of the culture's distorted and misrepresented conventions

and values. The recognition, by Austen's female characters, of social

powerlessness under difficult and unequal conditions is juxtaposed

against the author's male characters and the reader's recognition that the

use and misuse of social power accrues to the male gender, since

patriarchy always and explicitly serves men. Austen's Mr. Darcy is a

representation of hegemonic masculinity. He is the product of a

patriarchal historicity that promotes inequalities of power and

domination. Darcy has been taught and conditioned to think of

relationships with young women, such as Elizabeth Bennet, as man and ornament, not as equal human beings. Darcy must be re-taught and re-conditioned to discard patriarchal notions of relations between men and women and reject as unworthy the conventional model of heterosexual love relations, which overemphasize men's interests and neglect women's desires.

Darcy's individuality is constituted by what is male, by the permanent assignment of masculinity to the role of subject, while the feminine is denied subjectivity and assigned to the role of object. Austen's novel needs to be re-opened in order to discuss the ways class and gender have shaped her characters' existence, for as Sarah S. G. Frantz points out, "Marginality is visible and painfully visceral" (158). Austen's novel exposes a set of socially constructed attitudes and behaviors that keep masculinity masked and render femininity problematic. Her delicate, yet cunning, authorship shows us that men such as Fitzwilliam Darcy benefit from the inherited biological and sex-role definitions of masculinity, which implies activity, mastery, rationality, and competence. If gender relations are encoded in our genes or culturally mandated, then the extent to which these definitions are based on men's power over women is obscured. Feminism has enabled us to see the sleight-of-hand that substitutes "normal" for normative. If we understand today the centrality

of gender as an organizing principle of social life, it is because modern

feminist research and politics, aided by the early efforts of women writers

such as Jane Austen, has compelled us to do so.

For Jane Austen, the formation of existing discourse serves to

defend the dominant masculine position within a strict patriarchal culture

by sanctioning hierarchal roles as innate and moral. Woman's sexuality

and the language in which we communicate are inextricably linked. To

free one means freedom for the other. Austen's novel examines the

premise that if women's creative efforts are to escape the discourse of

mastery, we must begin to write the feminine body. The textual

production of feminine writings is an experiment which, in order to refute

the psychoanalytic assertion that woman does not exist, aims at

challenging the notion of deficiency and inferiority with the positive

affirmation of female subjectivity. To write from one's body is to flee

reality, to escape the hierarchal bonds of repression by inscribing a

language that does not hold back, but instead makes possibilities limitless

and heterogeneous. By writing the feminine body, Austen deconstructs

and recasts the pervasive, one-dimensional logic of a misogynistic culture.

She challenges socio-cultural conventions through a practice where

difference is conceived in positive terms, rather than in terms of

opposition. Taking the difference between the sexes seriously, Austen

comes to model a new definition of gender relations.

 I argue that Austen's feminine text frees women from sexual and

historical roles that have reduced them to "half-humankind" (Henderson

& McManus 3). Austen invents a new writing that allows women to

transform history and to seize the occasion to speak. Austen's novel seeks

a method of writing that places experience before language and

communicates that which literally embodies the female, as an inscription

of the feminine and female difference in language and text. Women are

struggling to find a terminology that rescues the feminine from its

stereotypical associations with inferiority. Austen creates such a language

and changes the climate of the written word. Out of the experience of

women's oppression, Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* makes it possible for

men like Fitzwilliam Darcy to "de-construct" (Tolson 19) the socially pre-

formed attitudes and behaviors of patriarchy that are routines of daily

existence. Though Darcy's masculinity and personal experiences are

necessarily socially constructed, his identity is interwoven with the

ideology of "free-individuality" (Tolson 145). Austen's novel invites

change and rejects the impulse to compromise or destroy the *other's*

uniqueness and individuality in order to construct a selfhood based on a

masculine position of dominance.

This essay seeks to explore the social construction of gender in individuals with particular emphasis on Jane Austen's Mr. Darcy. In Chapter 1, I will examine the institutional aspects and reasons that contribute to gender formation. The question is asked as to whether masculinity is the problem in gender politics—specifically in the oppression and subordination of women—or whether it is the institutional measures implemented by a patriarchal society that produce inequality. I will seek to explain some of the mystery surrounding Austen's most famous male protagonist, Fitzwilliam Darcy, the reasons and justifications for his arrogance and over-developed pride. I hope to prove that Austen's Mr. Darcy is a product of the social construction of gender and that his actions and attitudes reflect an ideology founded on gendered power relations that are preserved, guarded, and passed on to future generations of males.

In Chapter 2, I will examine the social construction of the individual with a focus on the citizens of Meryton in Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. I will endeavor to show that the everyday reality of Jane Austen's characters is socially constructed, that each is a product of a socio-cultural determinism as they reflect social institutions and represent cultural conventions.

Finally, Chapter 3 will reveal the ways in which language and discourse establish and maintain the basic gender identity that produces female inferiority and male supremacy. The latent correlations between reason, truth, and masculinity, on the one hand, and between emotion, error, and femininity, on the other, will be explored in relation to the deeply embedded and prevalent notions of gender that lie shrouded in the history of Western culture and prevent women's separate destinies. More importantly in Chapter 3, I will seek to explain the rhetorical devices and techniques that Jane Austen uses to transcend traditional male-dominated language and discourse by writing the feminine body, a new language inscribed within the feminine text, in an effort to effect change and invent a space in which and from which the female voice or subjectivity can be heard. Austen's feminine rhetorical strategies subvert the male text and, consequently, the socially constructed framework through which the reader views her characters. Austen de-constructs the repressive structures of thinking that invent gender and generate the unequal social status in a patriarchal society. Finally, Austen de-constructs Fitzwilliam Darcy and offers us a new manner of masculinity and a feminist's re-casting of relations between the genders.

Chapter 1

The Social Construction of Gender: Masculinity

and Austen's Mr. Darcy

Gender is a human conception much like language, kinship,

religion, and technology; like these establishments, gender organizes

human social life in culturally specific patterns. Gender categorizes social

interactions in everyday life, as well as in major social structures, such as

class and the hierarchies maintained in bureaucratic organizations. The

social construction of gender in individuals sustains and strengthens

societal structures; as individuals act out gendered prescripts and

expectations in the public domain to the most intimate setting, they create

gendered systems of dominance and power. These learned patterns of

gender norms and roles are carried out in everyday life through an arena

of gender politics, with "masculine" and "feminine" continually

perpetuated as divergent and oppositional.

Sociologists have theorized that men's and women's behavior

generates the unequal social and political status in any society; however,

this would imply that individual actions construct social institutions and

that changes in individual behavior would, theoretically, make it possible

to break down social institutions. It is a fact that without individual participation, whether voluntary or coerced, there would be no institutions, since, as R.W. Connell explains, "the social structures we call gender, government, family, economy, and so forth must be enacted everyday in order to continue, and in that enactment, are strengthened or weakened, sustained or resisted" (43). Social institutions—except, perhaps, in times of revolution and political upheaval—exist prior to the individual's birth, education, and social development. The intertwining of various gendered social structures acutely and continuously shapes the lives of individuals beginning at birth, since gender construction starts with assignment to a sex group depending on whether the child is a boy or a girl. Through the interplay between gendered personalities and identities in a context of social and historical relations, these constructed models of masculinity and femininity are internalized and willingly performed again and again by each succeeding generation.

Once we acknowledge the institutional aspects of gender, it becomes difficult to avoid the question: Is it, in reality, masculinity that is the problem in gender politics—specifically in the oppression and subordination of women—or is it, rather, the institutional measures that produce inequality, and thus, cause tensions that have brought "masculinity" to the forefront of cultural and sociological analyses?

Clearly, the definitions of masculinity are deeply and resolutely enmeshed in the history of institutions and of economic structures. According to Michael Kimmel, masculinity is not just an idea or a "'thing' that one possesses, but a set of activities that one does"; these actions are validated and legitimized by the evaluations of others (88). Kimmel states, "We do gender in every interaction, in every situation, in every institution in which we find ourselves" (88). Therefore, gender is less a characteristic of the individual than it is an outcome of our interactions with others. The fact that masculinity may modify and fluctuate at different periods in history and in different cultures does not mean that gender is a transient quality which is sometimes present and sometimes not. How men conduct themselves will ultimately depend upon the existing social interactions of gender. By this I mean the way in which men and women respond to each other ideologically and politically. Moreover, masculinity can never exist apart from femininity; it will always be a demonstration of the current image that men have of themselves in relation to women.

Gender roles are not organized in a contingent or random manner, nor do we simply inherit a male or female sex role. Today, many men deviate from what Arthur Brittan refers to as the "breadwinner ethic" (52), which was rigorously followed by past generations of males out of a sense

of moral principles and prescribed rules of conduct. These men, in an

effort to formulate a new definition of masculinity, no longer burden

themselves with the prescribed expectations of marriage and family. The

fact that they are rebelling against socially constructed roles as husbands

and providers and are pursuing happiness and fulfillment in other ways

does not necessitate the undermining of their dominance in the political

and economic spheres, nor does it imply that they have ceded dominance

in the family and domestic realm. As Brittan explains, "What has changed

is not male power as such, but its form, its presentation, its packaging. In

other words, while it is apparent that styles of masculinity may alter in

relatively short time spans, the substance of male power does not" (52).

Karen D. Pyke asserts that we need to think of masculinity and femininity

not as a single object with its own history, but as being constantly

constructed within the history of an evolving social structure that

sanctions male supremacy and female subjugation (89). Deeply

entrenched and often unconscious beliefs about the nature of men and

women shape how gender is perpetuated in everyday life. Because these

beliefs are formed by preceding power structures, the culturally

acceptable means of producing gender prejudices men's interests over

those of women. Thus, gendered power relations are not only

maintained, but also reproduced.

Jane Austen is, perhaps, exceptional in the extent to which she illustrates the molding of human character, for good or bad. Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* reflects with startling accuracy a world in which social interactions are the substance of everyday life, and which, because these exchanges are acted out within recognized systems of power relations, affect the balance of interests in society. Juliet McMaster states "Austen registers exactly the social provenance of each of her characters, and judges them for the ways in which they judge each other" ("Class" 129). Rachel Brownstein states that Austen's novel depicts the concerns of a culture in change, which debated the nature of authority and personal distinction, and the value of the sentient self (35). But more important for a writer of this time period, Austen cleverly suggests the inequitable gender ideals of the late eighteenth-century as closely related to the broader values of the society in which they were produced, a society which endorsed and naturalized women's relative powerlessness and oppression in connection to a larger enterprise of maintaining an authoritarian social order. Austen's novel delicately describes the disappointments and adjustments that define the feminine experience. Carol Houlihan Flynn adds further confirmation of Austen's feminist concerns by explaining that "Austen's many letters, fragmented and broken, expose the difficulties that she and other women faced under a

system of checks and repressions" (101). Moreover, the first sentence of *Pride and Prejudice* is a statement belying the social construction of the individual as alluded to in the status symbols and cultural markers of Austen's society: the estates; the marriages and conventions; the wealth, or lack of; but also in the inequalities of class and gender. Austen writes: "It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife" (1).

In *Pride and Prejudice*, Fitzwilliam Darcy's over-developed pride stems from an acute consciousness of his family's wealth and social station, but also from deeply embedded and socially constituted ideas about the nature and meaning of masculinity in a patriarchal society. Austen's Mr. Darcy is a product of the social construction of gender. Darcy's actions and self-presentation typify society's institutions and conventions; his identity and behavior reflect a historicity and ideology founded on gendered power relations. His is the ideology of patriarchy which guarantees the hegemonic position of men and the subordination of women.

Masculinity cannot exist outside history and culture. Victor Seidler asserts that the habit of ascribing some sort of exalted power to masculinity is ingrained in the logic of Western culture (40). This

pervasive philosophy which justifies male superiority, also rationalizes

the myth that there is a fundamental difference between men and women.

It promotes without question the sexual division of labor and sanctions

the hierarchal position of men in the political and economic spheres of

everyday public and private life as normal and appropriate. Moreover,

masculine ideology tends to be relatively resistant to change, although, as

noted, aspects of men's behavior often do fluctuate over time. R. W.

Connell explains that what he refers to as "'hegemonic masculinity' is not

a fixed character type, always and everywhere the same. It is rather, the

masculinity [or behavior] that occupies the hegemonic position in a given

pattern of gender relations" (76). The concept of "hegemony" derives

from Antonio Gramsci's analysis of class relations which refers to the

cultural phenomenon by which a group claims and sustains a leading

position in social life (Gramsci 110). "'Hegemonic masculinity' can thus

be understood as the configuration of gender practice which embodies the

currently accepted explanation to a problem of the legitimacy of

patriarchy" (Connell 76), thus securing the authoritarian position of men.

Granted, men themselves are historically exploited by other men, and to

presume that a dominant group's ideology is inevitably imposed upon

everyone else or that women are collectively forced to accept the

preeminence of men as a natural component of everyday life is a coarse

form of belief that presupposes that what Michael Kimmel terms as

"masculinism" is some sort of monumental worldview which is formed

by a governing group to validate its claims to rule (88).

Nevertheless, there exist historically and in the present, gender

relations in which the power of men is taken for granted, not only in the

public, but in the domestic realm as well. Kimmel states that masculinism

is reproduced and reaffirmed at any given moment in the home, in the

economy, and in the polity (88). Although the number of men practicing a

hegemonic pattern of behavior may be relatively small, the majority of

men do gain from the enterprise, since they benefit from what R. W.

Connell calls the "patriarchal dividend"—"the advantage men in general

gain from the overall subordination of women" (78). Even when there is a

great deal of gender and sexual experimentation, such as was observed in

the nineteen sixties and early seventies, masculinism was never in real

jeopardy because gender relations continued relatively undisturbed,

although, women did make strides in education.

Men occupying a hegemonic masculinity are asserting a position of

power. They accomplish this by "winning the consent" (Connell 81) of

other males and females in order to maintain control. Men are able to

position other men in a hierarchal system through social stratification in

the institutions of class and economics. If we consider aspects of gender

construction as having a degree of "free individualism" and autonomy as

Borden P. Bowne states (367), and with which I concur, then many

different styles of masculine behavior can be present in the same

hegemonic institution.

In Austen's novel, the reader is presented with copious and assorted

types of masculine characters: the acerbic Mr. Bennet, a man of some

property, but much lower in the social hierarchy than Mr. Darcy; the

good-natured and cheerful, but new monied Mr. Bingley; and the kindly,

sensible merchant Mr. Gardner; as well the more insidious and

repelling varieties of manhood, such as Wickham and Mr. Collins. This

plurality of masculinities is produced through individual life histories that

involve family background, peer groups, and other social experiences.

Connell argues that in exploring how "different masculinities are

constituted in relation to other masculinities and to femininities through

the structure of gender relations" (736), the problems of class, race, and

global inequality might be better understood. Gender relations are a vital

part of social structure as a whole, and gender politics are among the

primary determinants of our everyday reality.

Jane Austen's Mr. Darcy is a representation of hegemonic

masculinity in *Pride and Prejudice.* Rather, his manner and actions occupy

the hegemonic position in a given pattern of gender relations; his

everyday experiences are located in the broad framework of patriarchy.

To be an adult male is to inhabit a distinct, almost venerated space in the

world; it is to possess a physical presence that is valued and cared for.

Austen writes, "Mr. Darcy soon drew the attention of the room by his fine,

tall person, handsome features, [and] noble mien" (16). Even Mr. Bennet,

and Mr. Collins, though their character is clearly portrayed as dubious,

command a certain respect merely because they are part of the patriarchy,

as does the scandalous Wickham—at least in the first chapters of Austen's

novel. R. W. Connell states that "Gender differentiation is not simply a

function of socialization, capitalist production, or patriarchy, but is

grounded in a sex dimorphism that serves the fundamental purpose of

reproduction" (51). The body is undeniable in the construction of gender,

but what is obvious is only part of the development of the individual.

Males and females at birth experience the bodily process and immediately

assume an identity and value by way of whether the twenty-third

chromosome is a double X, as in a female, or an X and a Y, as in the male.

Children quickly enter into the social process and become part of a

collective history that has been influenced by social symbolism and

control. Austen's Mr. Darcy is young, handsome, and justifiably proud of

his tastes, standards, wealth, and pedigree. His family, long established,

dutiful, but untitled landowners, are "respectable, honorable, and ancient" (Austen 356). Juliet McMaster explains that "their income is from land, inheritance, and rent-roll" ("Class" 117-118).

And unlike Mr. Bennet who takes no interest in the land or the management of the property and has no tenants, Mr. Darcy has a long-term commitment to the land, which makes good stewards and moral aristocrats ("Class" 117-118). Darcy's friend, Mr. Bingley, seems indifferent to establishing permanent ownership of an estate such as Netherfeld Manor. The amiable Mr. Bingley has not developed a sense of pride and obligation to the preservation of place and tradition. His is a much more urban mindset formed by an entrepreneurial culture on the verge of commercial capitalism; his social ethics are a byproduct of the early industrial revolution and the accumulation of wealth from sources other than the land. These "new capitalists," such as Bingley, were the predecessors of a new style of masculinity, which Connell refers to as a "calculating masculinity," and which created and legitimized new forms of gendered work and power relations (188). In Austen's world, Darcy is the moral and social ideal—the country gentleman. The adulation and respect he receives from others simply by virtue of the property he owns serves to confirm his dominant role in the social structure of Regency England. Darcy's superior education, which, according to historian

G. E. Mingay, was the best that was available for the time (131), and which

is evident in his keen interest in reading, and in his family's extensive

library collection are material reminders of his wealth, power, and high

social status.

> "I am astonished," said Miss Bingley, "that my father should
> have left so small a collection of books. What a delightful library
> you have at Pemberley, Mr. Darcy!"
> "It ought to be good," he replied, "It has been the work of many
> generations."
> "And then you have added so much to it yourself, you are
> always buying books."
> "I cannot comprehend the neglect of a family library in such
> days as these." (Austen, *Pride* 67)

His words may be taken as those of a proprietor, a man who has

knowledge of the finer things and a sense of his responsibility as the

successor of a great estate (Brower, "Controlling" 58). Moreover, his quick

thinking and successful efforts to find Lydia after she elopes with the

disreputable Mr. Wickham in the second half of *Pride and Prejudice* is also

a reliable indicator in determining the degree of direct male dominance,

for as any man will attest, men view having information as a form of

hierarchy. R. W. Connell states, "Men who possess more information are

further up the hierarchy" (3). Clearly Fitzwilliam Darcy, a member of the

landed gentry, possesses the resources and the knowledge needed to

resolve the crisis. The admiration for Darcy quickly wanes, however, as

his "proud" acts at the opening ballroom scene are interpreted as arrogant

and mean. Austen writes:

> Mr. Darcy soon drew the attention of the room by his fine, tall
> person, handsome features, noble mien; and the report which
> was in general circulation within five minutes after his entrance,
> of his having ten thousand a year. The gentlemen pronounced
> him to be a fine figure of a man, the ladies declared he was much
> handsomer than Mr. Bingley, and he was looked at with great
> admiration for about half the evening, till his manners gave a
> disgust which turned the tide of his popularity; for he was
> discovered to be proud, to be above his company, and above
> being pleased; and not all his large estate in Derbyshire could
> then save him from having a most forbidding, disagreeable
> countenance, and being unworthy to be compared with his
> friend. . . . His character was decided. (*Pride* 16)

That Darcy is acting out the learned patterns of hegemonic masculinity is

taken as snobbery; his social provenance and wealth are consequently

viewed by Elizabeth and other female characters as the defining condition

in Darcy's life that, as Juliet McMaster says, "overrides all other categories

of judgment, physical, intellectual, or moral" ("Class" 128-129). He later

offers an explanation for his behavior in a statement to Elizabeth:

> I have been a selfish being all my life, in practice, though not in
> principle. As a child I was taught what was *right*, but I was not
> taught to correct my temper. I was given good principles, but
> left to follow them in pride and conceit. Unfortunately an only
> son, [. . .] I was spoilt by my parents, who though all good
> themselves, [. . .] allowed, encouraged, almost taught me to be
> selfish and overbearing, to care for none beyond my own family
> circle, to think meanly of all the rest of the world, to *wish* at least
> to think meanly of their sense and worth compared with my
> own. Such I was, from eight to eight and twenty. (*Pride* 282)

G. K. Chesterton states that in finally acknowledging his faults, Darcy gets nearer to a complete confession of the hegemonic male "than was ever portrayed in the Bronte heroes or the elaborate exculpations of George Eliot" (20).

What Elizabeth and the citizens of Meryton fail to realize is that Darcy is simply following the instruction manual provided by society and history, the one we all use to construct our identity. A compromise between a biological determinism and a social determinism will never do as the basis for an account of gender, yet we cannot ignore either the radically cultural character of gender or the bodily presence. The social construction of gender is ultimately about relationships based on power, the power of men over women, which is the basis of the feminist perspective on gender. But the practices of power are layered and interwoven in society, and gender dominance and its ideological justification include not only the exploitation of women, but also the subordination and denigration of other men.

Philip Carter explains that even a subject like male dancing reveals the ways in which the "polite arts" were compatible with established concepts of masculinism and patriarchal ideology. Carter states that John Locke, an early advocate of incorporating dancing into the education of the gentry, thought it contributed not only to gentility, but to "above all

things masculine," by which he meant hardiness, confidence, and mental

and physical poise (73). Similar attention to the practice of traditional

manliness is evident in discussions of men's conversation. The good

conversationalist was regularly depicted as thoughtful, well-read, and

quick thinking (73). The polite gentleman of Regency England,

according to Carter, attempted to redefine and affirm his manliness by

attempting to minimize or "alleviate the marginalization of women" that

had been witnessed in so called less civilized societies by mixing in female

society. This "new manner of being men," as Andrew Tolson refers to the

changes in masculine behavior during this period (18), supposedly

lessened men's superiority over women and, thus, such men discovered

their authority "through acts of generosity, complaisance and gallantry"

(Carter 74). Of course, these same men, while narrowing the behavior gap

between the genders, continued to preserve their manliness by displaying

a façade of greater rationality and intelligence than the majority of women

with whom they socialized and to demonstrate their patriarchal authority

through a display of traditional male qualities—naturally greater physical

and mental strength, for example—to which, as we have seen, succeeding

standards of gender inequality remain indebted. This "new manner of

being men" (Tolson 18) was invariably characterized as an idealized

correspondence between, rather than a synthesis of, the sexes (Carter 74).

David Morgan explains that rationality is associated with the practice of ideal men, with the public sphere, and with those individuals most visibly and actively involved in public life. It is associated with the logic of the marketplace, with the dominant principle of public institutions, and with the conduct of the domestic realm (70). The idea of rationality is a central theme of modern cultural history that incorporates both class and gender, forming a basic feature of hegemonic masculinity and furthering efforts to legitimize patriarchy. While patriarchy is an ancient phenomenon in Western culture, Anthony Rotundo states that almost everything we know about human behavior historically concerns men, yet ironically, "we know far more about womanhood and the female role than we know about masculinity or the man's role" (35). Rotundo explains that women's historians in the last two decades have shown the importance of gender as a "system of power relations, a pattern of social relationships and a cultural construct of profound influence" (35). As capitalism began to expand at the end of the eighteenth-century, the ideal of manhood urged men to actively participate in existing social structures and to take advantage of its opportunities—opportunities that were male-centered. The ideal male was presented as naturally active, influential, and commanding. Strong, aggressive action coupled with ceaseless effort and dogged persistence was considered vital to the cult of masculinity.

For a man to retain distinction and authority in an increasingly competitive environment, men such as Fitzwilliam Darcy had to be independent in thought and action, and "compelled to think and act for themselves" (Rotundo 37). But more importantly, these models of supreme masculinity had to be clear-headed and rational; thus, the restraint of excessive emotion was emphasized. R. W. Connell points out that what he refers to as "hegemonic masculinity established its hegemony partly by its claim to embody the power of reason" (165). Connell asserts, "It is a mistake to identify hegemonic masculinity purely with physical aggression" (165). According to Rotundo, the prescripts imposed upon the socially constructed male were those equated with accomplishment, both personal and material, and autonomy, as well as aggressive economic relations in the production for the markets and in extraction of rents (37).

Austen's Mr. Darcy is a rich man; his 10,000 per year places his family in the upper level of landed gentry. The fact that the landed classes formed an elite and were habitually accustomed to receiving respect and praise from the community at large was the natural mind-set of an era in which each man knew his place in society and acknowledged his superiors who, in reality, were superior simply by reason of their superior education, style, authoritative manner, and above all, wealth, and who

were acknowledged as such because they claimed the rights of their

ancestry and social position with self-assurance. The patriarchal ways of

the landed classes had a social basis in the acceptance of aristocratic

authority and an economic basis in the dependence of farmers, servants,

and the laboring poor on the patronage of individual land owners. In

light of the profound impact in Europe of the French Revolution and the

fear of rebellion in other countries during this same period, ideas of

equality, at least for a short time, gave way to rank and title. Therefore,

new capitalists, such as Austen's Mr. Bingley looked to traditional

authority represented in men like Darcy, as the only reliable guardian of

order and property in a time of great unrest.

Fitzwilliam Darcy has been instructed from birth to fulfill an

inherited position of authority; his class and gender converge in the

concept of "hegemonic masculinity" (Connell 76). Pauline Hunt explains

that "individuals are born into social classes, but they are socialized into

their class position" (9). This process of socialization, including learning

gender, occurs within the family unit making Darcy a proud participant in

a collective experience and shared fate. His consciousness is historically

imbued in, and by, his ancestry with a desire to preserve and improve

society. Alistair Duckworth provides insight into the social code of the

landed gentry as being the "responsible commitment of an individual to a

heritage", a heritage that "though basically sound, is in danger of

becoming static and moribund without 'improvement'" (x). Mr. Darcy is

the product of a hierarchal organization that promotes inequalities of

power. David Morgan explains that these sets of differences are

"structured in that they, to a greater or lesser extent, exist outside

individuals and persist over time" (165).

I do not wish to infer that the idea of socialization is a process

imposed upon a passive recipient; rather, I argue that once gender and

class identity solidifies, the child, from that time on, structures experience

in accordance with his or her socially constructed identity. Once firmly

established, gender and class identity become a basic means by which

lived experiences are defined and enacted. Thus, working class boys learn

to accept as natural a lifetime as wage earners; landed gentry boys learn

that their world is one of opportunity and power; their sisters learn to

accept as natural a lifetime, as Hunt asserts, "as adjuncts to the male" (9).

Austen's hero, while remaining faithful to inherited and learned patterns

of behavior, must ultimately achieve a level of "self-individualism"

(Bowne 367) before he can transcend the trappings of his own social class.

Darcy's accountability and resourcefulness in the face of adversity reveal

attitudes and behaviors that remain the positive and estimable virtues of

Darcy's, as yet, undiscovered depth and maturity that are revealed in the

second half of *Pride and Prejudice*. Despite the eventual, steady erosion of the general social basis from the weight of economic expansion, Austen's little world of the country house continued in its patriarchal ways well into the twentieth-century when it was shattered by the disintegration of the large estates, servant shortages, surtaxes, and unionized farm laborers. Though Austen's moral vision was grounded in tradition and manifested ideally in the structure of the estate, she understood that the formal and static facade of authority should be balanced by individual energy.

R. W. Connell states that with the eighteenth-century, England and North America witnessed the construction of a gender order in which masculinity in the modern sense was crystallized and consolidated. "Gendered individual character, defined through an opposition with femininity and institutionalized in economy and state" (189), was embodied in the landed gentry who dominated the North Atlantic world of the 1700s. The state and its institutions were controlled by these great families through patronage, thus perpetuating the hierarchal structure of society. Land ownership was rooted in kinship; a man's lineage was as important to his personal identity as his class and wealth. There was a strong ethic of family honor and duty, and affronts to a man's honor were taken very seriously. Darcy's sensibilities are cut to the core when

Elizabeth accuses him of not acting honorably towards her. He agonizes

over his failure to uphold his own social code. He states:

> I cannot be so easily reconciled to myself. The recollection of
> what I then said, of my conduct, my manners, my expressions
> during the whole of it, is now, and has been many months,
> inexpressibly painful to me. Your reproof, so well applied, I
> shall never forget: 'had you behaved in a more gentleman-like
> manner.' Those were your words. You know not, you can
> scarcely conceive, how they have tortured me; [. . . .]
> (Austen, *Pride* 281)

This scene from Austen's novel portrays the conflict of ideals seen in the

social code of the landed classes. Darcy understands full well the

definitions of gentleman-like behavior and patriarchal duty. His

treatment of Elizabeth in his first marriage proposal, however, is

condescending and degrading; thus, exposing the true nature of the

hegemonic male's respect and valorization of womanhood. Gentry

masculinity involved domestic authority over women, though women

were involved in making and maintaining the community alliances that

tied the gentry together; the strategies lovingly scrutinized in Austen's

Pride and Prejudice.

Though they are unaware of the fact, women are producers of

masculinity. Just as society constructs gender, so women contribute to the

production and reproduction of male identity and, thus, a patriarchal

social structure. Elizabeth's delight over the prospect of becoming

mistress of Pemberley, despite her initial disgust for Darcy's exceeding

pride, reveals the reality of Elizabeth's world in that to be a woman and

end up a penniless old maid was to assure oneself of a life of hardship and

dependence on reluctant family members. For femininity too is

constructed; women perpetuate the gender norms of a hegemonic society

reaffirming the entrenched power structures of domination and

subordination that pushed women into the home and dismissed their

claims of equality. Charlotte's resolve to marry a man who Elizabeth

views as ridiculous and uninteresting is never quite resolved in the mind

of Austen's heroine. Charlotte's actions illustrate the paradox of gender

construction in that Charlotte, who at first seems to possess an

individualism and freedom of mind, eventually demonstrates

complacency and indifference, thus forfeiting the possibility of a

meaningful relationship for the more trivial, materialistic advantages of

the social world. Elizabeth states:

> She had always felt that Charlotte's opinion of matrimony was
> not exactly like her own, but she could not have supposed it
> possible that, when called into action, she would have sacrificed
> every better feeling to worldly advantage. (Austen, *Pride* 96)

Charlotte allows Mr. Collins to consume her identity and self-worth; she

becomes comfortably ensconced in the only society she knows, a society

where men's interests and needs are groomed and nurtured and women's

are conveniently overlooked or cast aside—thus keeping the ideology of masculinity firmly intact. McMaster asserts that for Elizabeth, it seems fitting that her eventual "adjusted view" (*Achievement* 72) of Darcy involves the material trappings of his social role, since for Jane Austen, character (whether male or female) is "completed in society" (Simpson 14).

Alistair Duckworth states that for Jane Austen, in *Pride and Prejudice*, "the estate as an ordered physical structure is a metonym for other structures—society as a whole, a code of morality, a body of manners, a system of language—and 'improvements,' or the manner in which individuals relate to their cultural inheritance" are a way of determining responsible from irresponsible behavior (ix). Juliet McMaster states that many critics have pointed out that Austen's depiction of Pemberley is a "covert description of Darcy's character" (*Achievement* 71); it is clearly a reminder of his wealth and social status, but more importantly a visible manifestation of his masculinity. Austen writes:

> It was a large, handsome, stone building, standing well on rising
> ground, and back by a ridge of high woody hills; - and in front, a
> stream of some natural importance was swelled into greater, but
> without any artificial appearance. Its banks were neither formal,
> nor falsely adorned. Elizabeth was delighted. She had never
> seen a place for which nature had done more, or where natural
> beauty had been so little counteracted by an awkward taste.
> They were all of them warm in their admiration; and at that
> moment she felt, that to be mistress of Pemberley might be
> something! (*Pride* 245)

Pemberley stands as a monument to the upper class male's patriarchal

right of inheritance. Women in the eighteenth century, such as Elizabeth

Bennet, were at the mercy of either a male sibling or constrained to marry

up in station, since the father's property could never be left to his

daughters. From inside the house, Elizabeth provides a pleasing view of

Pemberley from a window:

> Every disposition of the ground was good; and she looked on
> the whole scene, the river, the trees scattered on its banks, and
> the winding of the valley, as far as she could trace it, with
> delight. As they passed into other rooms, these objects were
> taking different positions; but from every window there were
> beauties to be seen. The rooms were lofty and handsome, and
> their furniture suitable to the fortune of their proprietor; but
> Elizabeth saw, with admiration of his taste, that it was neither
> gaudy nor uselessly with less of splendor, and more real
> elegance, than the furniture of Rosings. (*Pride* 246)

Darcy's physical environment must be taken into account when studying

his character; his house, or his "shell" (McMaster, *Achievement* 72)—to

borrow from Henry James's character, Madame Merle, in *The Portrait of a*

Lady—is a part of Darcy's "whole envelope of circumstances" (*Achievement* 72). James writes:

> There's no such thing as an isolated man or woman; we're each of us made up of some cluster of appurtenances. What shall we call our 'self'? Where does it begin? Where does it end? It overflows into everything that belongs to us—and then it flows back again. I know a large part of myself is in the clothes I choose to wear. I've a great respect for *things*! One's self—for other people—is one's expression of one's self; and one's house, one's furniture, one's garments, the books one reads, the company one keeps—these things are all expressive. (231)

Elizabeth Bennet's difficult adjustment to reality in the sense that all the characters of Austen's novel exist in a permanently established society, her enthusiasm for the "things" at Pemberley, and her positive change of heart concerning Darcy's character emphasize the duality of Austen's mind and viewpoint in her attitude to the attainment of individual identity and morality balanced against her acknowledgement of the limits and restraints of society. *Pride and Prejudice* was written at a point of transition between two centuries of thought: eighteenth-century ideas testified to a world that was divinely structured and essentially ordered, while the nineteenth-century saw a loss of faith in any spiritual foundation for society or individual existence and a shift towards a reliance on the self as the only determinant of order and value. In the last lines of *Pride and Prejudice*, we realize that Elizabeth has become part of

Pemberley and its heritage, and the stable self remains exactly where

Austen would have it, in the center of a stable eighteenth-century world.

 The history of masculinity is often related to ideas of paternal

inheritance, recollections of group solidarity, and experience with physical

labor. Andrew Tolson explains that men place great importance in talking

about their antecedents, their property, their work, and find reassurance

in the fact that they can "project [themselves] into the past" (14). History

can affirm a man's legacy and "can invoke the ancient law of patriarchy:

the continuing symbolic power associated with property inheritance,

organization of the family, and the maintenance of male supremacy" (14).

This history becomes enmeshed in the unconscious minds of men with

regularity and persistence through a "passing on" to each succeeding

generation; it predisposes itself in the form of attitudes and temperaments

deep beneath the surface of an individual's, even a whole culture's

awareness. Patriarchy is a powerful anachronism and supplies men with

a point of reference for the formation of identity in the masculine gender,

and for the justification of their dominant role in society.

Chapter 2

The Socially Constructed Characters in *Pride and Prejudice*

The sociology of knowledge is the knowledge that guides conduct in everyday life. It concerns the everyday or commonsense understanding that is constructed at different levels of society all the way from language, to family history and memories, to human sexuality and social status, to formal theories and paradigms, and finally to what is called symbolic universes or over-arching world views. Everyday life presents itself as a reality to be interpreted by men and women as a meaningful and coherent world. The world of everyday life is not only taken for granted as reality by the average members of society as they carry out their daily routine; it is a world that originates in their thoughts and actions and is perpetually maintained as real by these same conscious human processes. Everyday life intrudes upon consciousness in the most pressing, all-consuming manner. It cannot be disregarded, and its overbearing presence is hard to weaken. Consequently, it forces people's attention to it in the most intense way. Our daily experience is a common one of existing in and apprehending the reality of everyday life, and this is accepted as normal and self-evident.

The basic ideology behind constructionist scholarship has been in place since Karl Marx, at least for the key points. David R. Maines explains that the social construction of meaning, which I will refer to in this analysis as the sociology of knowledge, is a study that examines the core of the sociological endeavor questioning crude essentialisms and models of human group existence based on reified constructs that are incongruous with what scientists know about the human species (577). This particular area of social theory is an intentional turning away from the emphases of earlier investigations into the social construction of knowledge, which Sergio Sismondo explains are a sort of "sociological gloss" on the history of ideas (518), which was developed extensively in the 1960s by such philosophers as Michel Foucault (*Archeology* 137).

Sociologists Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann state in their analysis of the reality of everyday life that a non-human animal lives in a largely fixed relationship to its environment which it shares with other members of its species. All non-human animals exist in "closed worlds whose structures are predetermined by the biological equipment" of the species (46). The human child, however, is still developing biologically, explains Berger and Luckmann, while already established in a relationship to its environment; therefore, the process of becoming human takes place in an interrelationship with the world around him. The

developing human being not only interrelates with his specific natural surroundings, but also with a particular cultural and social order which is arbitrated by the "significant others" (Berger & Luckmann 46) who have authority over each person and whose possibilities for existing in a world-openness are pre-empted by social order, direction, and stability.

The progress of the human is contingent upon certain social arrangements; the direction of development is socially determined. From the moment of birth, a person's development is subject to continuing socially determined interference. The same social processes that determine the completion of the human being also produces the self in its particular, culturally relative form. For "man's self-production is always, and of necessity, a social enterprise" (48).

Michel Foucault's premise in his treatise on the history of ideas is congruent with the disciplines incorporated in the sociology of knowledge in that Foucault defines the history of ideas as being "concerned with all that insidious thought, that whole interplay of representations that flow anonymously between men; [. . .] the history of ideas sets out to cross the boundaries of existing disciplines, [. . .] to re-interpret them. [. . .] it relates work with institutions, social customs or behaviour, techniques, and unrecorded needs and practices. It becomes therefore the discipline of interferences" (*Archeology* 137).

Humans exhibit a great deal of flexibility in their response to the environmental forces at work in their everyday lives. We are extremely vulnerable to socially determined interference. The inherent instability of the human being makes it necessary that the individual provide a constant environment for his or her conduct. This biological truth serves as an important premise for the production of social order and the inevitable institutionalization of society. Sergio Sismondo states that the momentum of an institution is sustained by socialization and legitimation (520). He explains that institutions endure because a significant portion of society understands them to exist and acts accordingly. This doesn't make the institutions any less real in the minds of the people: we cannot "wish them away" (Berger & Luckman 51), and our continued participation concretizes the historical processes that first formed these great monuments to order and control.

Institutionalization takes place through "habitualization," which, according to Berger & Luckmann, is any act that is repeated frequently and is directed into a pattern which can be reproduced with very little effort (46). Habitualization further means that the action or ongoing activity may be performed again in the future in the same way and with the same ease of effort. Habitualization narrows our choices; it provides the direction and the specialization of activity that is lacking in the human

being's biological makeup. Institutionalization occurs whenever there is a

"reciprocal typification of habitualized actions" performed by varying

types of human "actors." These "actors" construct a "background of

routine" which ultimately constrains behavior (51). These typifications of

habitualized actions that makeup institutions are always shared ones.

They are accessible to all of the members of a particular social group, and

the institution characterizes individual group members as well as

individual actions, thus further substantiating the objective reality of

everyday life. The reality of Jane Austen's characters in *Pride and Prejudice*

is socially constructed; their goals and actions become a typification of

society's institutions and conventions. By examining a number of

Austen's main characters, with a particular focus on the character

Fitzwilliam Darcy, the reader learns that each is a product of a socio-

cultural determinism as they reflect social institutions and represent

cultural conventions. The social interactions and relationships acted out

between Austen's Mr. Darcy and the citizens of Meryton illuminate the

unequal and divergent social and political institutions that have been

habitualized in Austen's world.

My argument for the socially constructed individual in Jane

Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* can be summed up in the character of

Fitzwilliam Darcy. His name, his family's lineage, and the grandeurs of

Pemberley identify him as a well-to-do Northern landlord at a time when

territorial influence, especially in the wide-open spaces of the North, was

still all-powerful (Chapman 188). The estate of Pemberley is symbolic of a

whole social and moral inheritance, and Darcy's wealth (10,000 pounds

per year) is of primary significance in *Pride and Prejudice*. Jane Austen's

novel is liberally sprinkled with references to the institution of money

(Heldman 38). Characters are defined by their incomes and fortunes as

much as by their appearances and manners. Suitors are eligible or not

mainly because of their incomes.

Austen was not so cynical as to believe that money could ensure

happiness, but she was a realist and understood that a sufficient income

was vital to the security of any marriage (38). Darcy's initial refusal to act

against his nature in *Pride and Prejudice* can be taken as a sign of a man of

integrity in whom taste and morality are inseparable. Darcy's moral

maturity provides him with a great sense of his own role in society. He is

also above mere personal interests. While his careful upkeep of

Pemberley—a most perfect property—qualifies him as a competent

defender of both taste and the institution of the estate, his constant

standard of good judgment and charity set him apart from the other

members of Meryton. Darcy's sense of duty and responsibility, his

methodical nature and respect for tradition, and his strong advocacy of class distinction reinforce his unreserved support of society's doctrines and conventions—even Darcy's carefully executed letters written with perfect diction and calligraphy exemplify institutionalization, as does the fact that he takes his role as businessman very seriously (Moler 51). While Wickham proves unworthy in his dependence on false manners and deceit, Darcy, in the end, proves himself capable and the bearer of a sincere heart. Fitzwilliam Darcy epitomizes neoclassical beliefs in society as art, which is evidenced in his family's exquisite estate and in their exemplary collection of art and literature, and his loyalty to place and tradition sustains the secure and ordered society (Moler 47). But Darcy also reinforces Austen's views on compromise and balance in life in order that the best of both worlds may be obtained.

Society's institutions are built up in the course of a shared history—they always have a history of which they are the products. Institutions, simply because of their massive existence, control human behavior by setting up already defined patterns of conduct which lead us in one certain direction instead of in the many other directions that could be theoretically possible. To say that a sector of human activity has been institutionalized is to say that this same sector has been subsumed under social control. The habitualizations and typifications carried out in the

person's common everyday life now become historical situations; the institution was there before the human was born and will be there after his death. The institutions that have formed (i.e. language, marriage, property, paternity/maternity) now exist over and beyond the individuals who take part in them; they are now experienced as having a reality of their own, a reality that confronts the individual as an external and coercive reality.

In Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* there is a sense of inherited security in the institution of the estate into which an individual is born and which provides the person with harmony and peace. The individual lives on the property surrounded by family and by others in the community. He or she has lived here for generations. The individual derives a consciousness from the community that is shared and structured in all areas. Each person is in possession of a common language and mode of behavior. In the houses and landscape such a community possesses an organization that has evolved over a long period of time; it has a history. Though it is a human institute, it is secure, complete, and comforting. It seems to be truth. But if the security is taken away we may find in this same secure society the totally unsupported woman reduced to poverty and degradation; and as Susan Kneedler states, a victim of the

"institutionalization of hostility to women" (29). For this is the danger facing Mrs. Bennet and her girls, that security may become isolation, that the institution of the estate and the good opinion of her neighbors may be exchanged for life as a governess or servant which in Bronte's *Jane Eyre* was akin to slavery.

The socially produced self cannot be adequately understood apart from the specific social context in which the individual is formed and defined. By social context, I mean not only the cultural constructs which order everyday life, but also the beliefs we "pass on" to our children and were taught ourselves that cause us to value certain achievements and impose particular ideals as universal truths. The characters in Jane Austen's novel, without the conventional reference points of an ordered inheritance, feel at a loss on how to act. Isolated from a secure and inherited estate, an individual suffers from more than a loss of status; he or she is, more importantly, barred from a center of being and action and denied a personal history. Two subjects are paramount in Mrs. Bennet's life and conversation: the injustice of the entail of Mr. Bennet's estate to his closest male relative, rather than to his wife and daughters, and the problem of getting her daughters married. Out of her obsession with these set ideas and void of any caution, wit, or intellect, Mrs. Bennet derives all of her functions as wife and mother in Austen's story. She

continually reveals her inanity and her whole being revolves around an intense fear of social dislocation and being sure that her daughters marry into money and position.

The problem of finding a "single man of large fortune" (Austen 1) to marry one of her daughters involves Mrs. Bennet in the plot of the novel much more than the matter of the entailment-this threat serves mainly to illuminate the heroine's attempt at independence and self-reliance. Mrs. Bennet's opinion of Mr. Collins wavers from extremes of deference to indignation since she must consider him either a gain or a loss, a suitor, or a holder of the unjust entail—a fact the menacing Mr. Collins has no shame in reminding the Bennet family of. When Elizabeth turns down Mr. Collins's marriage proposal despite her mother's pleadings, Mrs. Bennet's feelings change from admiration to loathing as she laments over her misfortune and the fact that Mr. Collins can't wait to get his hands on Longbourn. Mrs. Bennet's shameful vulgarity in discussing Jane's marriage to Bingley convinces Darcy that any association with the Bennet girls—for him or Bingley—would be unwise and degrading. Mrs. Bennet's inadequate intelligence and uncertain temper, her marriage to a man who can only despise her, and her persistent, untiring preoccupation with the material concerns forced on a woman of her class by a controlling, prescriptive society have all combined into one all-important

motive: to ensure comfort and security for herself while at the same time reinforcing this security by getting her daughters settled in sensible marriages. For life at Longbourn is a game of matrimony, and the Bennet girls are the playing pieces. In Austen's novel, society can be considered as a support and protection for the self, as a body of public manners and conventions in accordance with which the self may act. For Mrs. Bennet, every situation in life culminates as a clear affirmation of society; her conduct becomes a typification of society's institutions and beliefs.

The reality of the social world is a historical one which comes to the new generation of users as a tradition rather than biographical memory. The individual's biography is understood as an episode located within the objective history of a society. The institutions, as historic and objective facts, confront the individual as undeniable truths. The original meaning of the institutions is unobtainable to the new generation in terms of memory; therefore, it becomes necessary to interpret the meaning to these inexperienced individuals in various logical formulas—this is usually a job for the primary care givers, guardians or parents. The explanations will have to be consistent and comprehensive with respect to the institutional order if they are to be convincing to the new generation. The same story must be told to all the children. The expanding institutional order once again develops a "corresponding canopy of legitimations,

stretching over it a protective cover of both cognitive and normative interpretation" (Berger & Luckmann 58). The "legitimations" are learned by the new generation, and at the same time these individuals are effectively socialized into the institutional order.

The more a person's conduct is institutionalized, the more predictable and controlled it becomes. If socialization into the institutions has been successful, coercive strategies may be applied economically and selectively as with entailment, class prejudice, shame. Most of the time, however, conduct will occur "spontaneously within the institutionally programmed channels" (59). The more conduct can be taken for granted in society, the more the possibilities of a world-openness will recede. The belief that this is how these things are done provides both child and parent with a firmness of consciousness. The institutional world becomes controlling in an ever more massive way, and it cannot be overlooked as readily. In *Pride and Prejudice*, the "mercenary view of marriage" (Chapman 191) is proclaimed by several of Austen's characters, and practiced by even more. Charlotte Lucas defends her acceptance of the fortuitous Mr. Collins's proposal of marriage after Elizabeth condemns her for marrying a man she does not love. But the alternative to marriage for a penniless woman was to risk the socially useless and economically dependent old age that could be Charlotte's fate if she does not marry Mr.

Collins. Charlotte's "calculating prudence" (191) directs her to take refuge within the controlling, yet supportive institution of marriage—*her* motive is purely survival. Charlotte understands the reality of her everyday life and endeavors to provide a stable environment for herself. Austen states, "Single women have a dreadful propensity for being poor—which is one very strong argument in favor of Matrimony" (Letters, 483). In this society, income and property—and ultimately recognition and respect—are given to men; women are supposed to acquire these things through a husband. The reality of Charlotte's world is one in which men are provided for and women are not; it is a society where one gender is valued and the other is dismissed. Charlotte Lucas's seemingly independent thinking in the beginning chapters of *Pride and Prejudice* ends up being subsumed under social control; her behavior reflects compliance with the institutional order.

The primary knowledge about the institutional order is knowledge on the "pre-theoretical level" (Berger & Luckmann 61). It is the sum total of "what everybody knows" about a social world, a collection of social maxims, morals, proverbial bits of wisdom, values and beliefs, and myths, the theoretical incorporation of which requires great intellectual stamina. On the pre-theoretical level, however, every institution has a "body of transmitted recipe knowledge" (61) or knowledge that furnishes the

institutionally proper rules of conduct. Since this knowledge is considered as a body of generally valid truths about reality, any radical divergence from the institutional order appears as a departure from everyday reality. While such deviation on the part of an individual may be labeled as immoral or simply ignorant, all who take part in the movement will share an inferior cognitive status within the particular society (61-62).

The new generation poses a possible problem of compliance, and its socialization into the institutional order requires the establishment of sanctions. The institutions *must* and *do* claim authority over the individual independently of any subjective meanings the individual may attach to a particular situation. The importance of the meaning of the institutions must be consistently maintained over individual attempts at redefinition. The children must be "taught to behave" and once taught, must be "kept in line." So must the adults for that matter (Berger & Luckmann 59). In Jane Austen's novel, Elizabeth Bennet is a contradiction. She does seem to resist customs and institutions at first glance; her character is portrayed as individualistic and high-spirited, her love of the outdoors suggests a desire for freedom from the constraint, and her conduct can be considered a deviation from the pre-set rules of everyday reality. Socially held conventions inhibit her natural impulse,

interfere with the dictates of her conscience (for Elizabeth is democratic

with regards to economic and social standing), and weaken the

convictions of her uncorrupted mind—but the institutions are there. They

are external to her, persistent in their reality, whether she likes it or not.

The institutions resist her attempts to change or evade them; they have

coercive power over her simply by way of the sheer force of their reality

and through the control mechanisms that are attached to the most

important of them.

　　Pride and Prejudice moves from an initial circumstance of probable

social fragmentation (between classes and between minds in the more

close-knit context of the home) to a resolution in which the foundations of

society are reestablished as the principal protagonists come together in the

institution of marriage. Only through the education of the hero and

heroine does the broad gulf between opinions and social positions lessen.

If the excesses of Elizabeth's individualism are shown to be lacking—for

she has not yet obtained a sense of her social role—so, too, is Darcy's

arrogant conviction that social status defines value. Once Elizabeth

realizes that individualism must find its social limits, and Darcy admits

that tradition without some semblance of individualism is void of

fulfillment, does Austen's novel end satisfactorily.

Through Elizabeth's development from a private to a social point of view, we discover that for Jane Austen an individual's moral responsibility is necessary to an objective society, and that any deviation toward a subjective morality is imprudent. And so it is in the resistance of the main character to those forces threatening her world which allows the continuity of a vital society. Considering the irresponsibility of others—both in the fictional story and in the real world—it is even more important for the Austen heroine to support and maintain an inherited structure of values and conduct. There is little disagreement over the fact that Austen does cast a critical eye on so called programmed social responses, but she also confirms inherited social principles and a commitment to duty.

Yet, if one believes that Jane Austen does genuinely affirm the prior objective existence of socially constructed moral doctrines and respects society's institutions in her novel, then the view that Austen is an author who commits hidden, subversive attacks on society's values is unacceptable. Austen's characters lead everyday lives of the typical gentlefolk whom Austen chooses to portray, and all of her heroines do marry men who are either rich or are in comfortable circumstances. R. W. Chapman states that Austen might well be inclined to reply that she is entitled, that out of duty she is bound to secure her main characters the felicity they deserve since a good income was a condition of happiness.

Romantic convention demanded that the eighteenth-century novel end on

a prospect of lifelong happiness and good fortune, and Austen loved the

characters in *Pride and Prejudice* far too much to allow any real tragedy to

befall their future—she referred to her novel as her "own darling child"

(Chapman 186). The reader should look at *Pride and Prejudice* in light of

the cultural constructs of the eighteenth-century and consider the pattern

of her plots, not as an expression of compliance, but as an indication of

Austen's outlook on society and on the individual's place in society. For

Austen's determined attempt is not one of forceful protest, but one of

accommodating reason and feeling, of rendering sympathy without

advocating rebellion. She ultimately supports tradition and external

authority over unbridled individualism, and in the end, is positive about

the real values and principles of her world. The Englishman's great fear

of the consequences of the French Revolution defeated any notion that

goodness could be found in the undisciplined human nature. Austen's

serious concern over the state and continuity of the social structure is not

to be doubted. She is concerned with place and tradition and with the

relation of the individual to his or her history and inheritance. Alistair

Duckworth states, "The strength of the novel is like that of Antaeus; it

depends upon frequent contact with the ground" (34). The ungrounded

use of the imagination is treacherous for the writer of fiction and

boundaries should be considered when writing (34). These limitations are proof that there is a center to reality aside from the subjective individual mind. In Austen's close attention to physical fact, in her fidelity to truth, she proclaims her belief in man's freedom to create within a prior order—the order that is inherent in a society. Her originality as an author, like the individualism of Elizabeth Bennet, finally respects the order and social constructs of society. Her careful attention to detail in *Pride and Prejudice* takes on something of an ontological importance (Duckworth 34).

Man's humanity and his sociality are inextricably intertwined. The separation and uncertainty that Austen's heroine feels in *Pride and Prejudice* is followed by a reinstatement into society as she comes to a mutual understanding with Mr. Darcy. Moreover, her heroine is ultimately located in a properly ordered space for her socially responsible activities, in a "suitable, becoming, characteristic situation" (Chapman 8) such a Pemberley. And while Austen's plot does move in the direction of division and subjectivism in Elizabeth's—and Darcy's—refusal to conform to certain stereotypes and conventions associated with courtship and marriage, it also, in the end, affirms a rapprochement between self and society. Often it appears that Austen's plot resolutions are acts of "bad faith" (Duckworth 9), and the reader questions whether she is a heretic to

her own early acknowledgments of the inadequacy of society. But in finally stating that society is the proper backdrop for individual conduct, Austen escapes the problem of achieving balance outside of collapsing— yet comforting—conventions. Clearly all of Austen's characters in *Pride and* Prejudice live in a reality that is socially constructed. Their thoughts and actions are affirmations of the controlling presence of society's conventions and institutions. Knowledge about society for the individual is a realization in the double sense of the word, in the sense of apprehending the objective social reality, and in the sense of continually producing this reality—and don't we all today, in the twenty-first-century, find ourselves just like the citizens of Meryton still "passing on" *the* tradition?

Duckworth states, "The manners of one age are very like those of another, only the greatest writers can transcribe them" (210). Austen's novel is referred to as a "novel of manners" and manners in *Pride and Prejudice* can be considered indicators to major cultural and personal values while also defining an all-inclusive and extensive reality—once again affirming the sociology of knowledge (Babb 9). Language in *Pride and Prejudice* has "public meanings" (9) in the conceptual nouns and the careful balance of Austen's sentence structure, characteristics which provide a linguistic background of order against which the improprieties

and irregularities of speech, and the lexical crudities of her immoral

characters may be judged.   In Austen's novel the institution of language is

essentially equivalent to institutional reality (Searle 60). Language

perpetuates the justification for and validation of class and gender bias

and upholds the outmoded, archaic prejudices that have historically

produced gender inequality and, thus, discord and misunderstanding

between the sexes.

Chapter 3

Austen's Silences, the De-Construction of Mr. Darcy,

and Spaces of Possibility

Language establishes and maintains the basic gender identity that

produces female inferiority. Susan Hekman states that "language erases

the distinction between female and feminine that is central to an

understanding of the nature of the oppression of women" (51). The

language we speak constructs a condition in which the qualities that

women possess simply by virtue of their biological sex become

indiscernible from those they are taught they should possess in order to be

acknowledged as feminine. "Sex and gender become intertwined" (51)

producing historically specific gender roles that have bound women in an

inferior place on the literary and socio-economic scene. The fact that

women are regarded as irrational and men as rational exposes the

underlying fundamental problem of masculine/feminine duality, since, as

Hekman explains, "woman is always defined as that which is *not* man; she

is a 'minus male' who is identified by the qualities that she lacks" (51).

Many dichotomous categories of thought can be traced to ancient

Greek civilizations, and as Moira Gatens explains, the earliest records we

have, which date from the ancient Ionians (approximately 1000 B. C.),

reveal a table of dichotomous distinctions: good/bad, light/dark,

unity/plurality, limited/unlimited, and male/female (99). Maleness is

associated with positive connotations, while femaleness is associated with

the negative. Gatens explains that dichotomous thought is not bad or

oppressive per se; but rather, it can covertly promote social and political

values that generate hierarchies and advance masculine sexual and

linguistic modes of behavior, which serve to obliterate the many facets of

feminine voice and desire. This deliberate schism between the natures of

men and women is a major aspect of patriarchal ideology and is deeply

enmeshed in European philosophical tradition, a tradition that has

profoundly affected the formation of our concept of masculinity and

femininity (99).

    G. Lloyd's analyses of the history of conceptions of reason

demonstrate that "the maleness of the Enlightenment 'man of reason' is no

superficial linguistic bias" (ix). Rather, she asserts that the latent

correlations between reason, masculinity, truth and the intellect, on the

one hand, and between sense, femininity, error and emotion, on the other,

are so embedded and prevalent in the history of Western culture that they

effectively prevent women's "participation in reason" (ix) by denying

them access to basic institutions and relegating them to the domestic

realm. R. W. Connell states that masculinity establishes its dominant

status in a society, in part, by its claim to embody the power of reason,

which logically, and as the supporters of patriarchy would have women

believe, represents the interests of society in general. This link between

masculinity and rationality is a key aspect in societal change, as well as in

changes in masculinities (165).

　　　With the growth of capitalism in the late eighteenth-century,

rationalism also increased, not only in the marketplace, but in the culture

as a whole. As the nineteenth-century progressed, reason evolved as

technology advanced, and "efficiency of means" became valued over

"ultimate ends" (Connell 165). The era of the powerful hereditary

landowners, the gentry, such as Austen's Fitzwilliam Darcy, with their

ancient code of honor and duty to family tradition, gave way, according to

Connell, to a splitting of gentry masculinity and an emergence of new

hegemonic forms (191). The reasons central to these complex changes can

be attributed to increased challenges to the gender order by women. The

emergence of eighteenth-century feminism as a form of mass politics,

along with the inevitable gendering of the industrial work force severely

affected men's prerogatives. Moreover, the conditions for the

preservation of patriarchy changed with these new affronts to

conventional male and female roles, thus, forcing men to

reassess and reformulate predictable attitudes which overemphasized

men's needs and neglected women's separate destinies.

Susan Kneedler states that the oppression of women is caused by

how both women and men are taught to think women are "uninteresting

and irrelevant" (36). In Austen's novel, men and women are equally

remarkable. Austen persuades us to imagine that, in both life and love,

there is the possibility of a "reciprocity of mutual cooperation and

knowledge and communication," which is more personal than what a

patriarchal society teaches us to expect (78). Austen's novel recognizes

that a patriarchal psychology imposes a system in which men enter

relations with women and marriage as predators and conquerors, whereas

women are expected to find contentment in being, as Kneedler states,

"taken over, taken away, and taken in" (78). Fitzwilliam Darcy first

proposes to Elizabeth Bennet under the egotistical assumption that he is

such a good "catch" that this independent-minded, yet lower-class young

woman will naturally delight in the prospect of marrying into such a

wealthy and important family as the Darcys. Mr. Darcy's feelings are, at

once, baffled, frustrated, and decisively wounded when Elizabeth

promptly, and curtly, rejects his offer of marriage realizing that her

"connections" (38) are objectionable, and somewhat mortifying to the lordly Mr. Darcy. Elizabeth teaches him, as he states toward the end of *Pride and Prejudice*, "How insufficient were all my pretensions to please a woman worthy of being pleased" (282). Darcy discovers that love needs to be equally shared.

For Austen's novel to extricate us from patriarchal forms, the story must somehow change how we view gender identity. Since we are constructed to think according to the culture's definitions, and as Susan Kneedler states, "according to its oppositions" (79), then those prescriptions are what must be upturned in order for society to change. Kneedler points out that a culture perpetuates its power through how it defines the distinction between or the relation between virtue and evil, the desirable and the scorned, what is safe and what is perilous, revealing how the old oppositions impair women's lives (79). Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* shows that the prevailing dualisms about men and women are not only monotonous, but are dishonest and misleading. Jane Austen liberates us from established modes of judging and from conventional categories.

Feminist analyses of language often focus on the way in which language forms a connection between personal identity and gender identity. Barbara Fried points out that language and gender identity

appear at about the same time in a child's life. Fried states, "Language does not simply communicate the link between one's sex and one's gender identity; it constitutes that link" (49). She further explains that children never learn a clear and equitable sense of "personhood," only female personhood and male personhood (49). This personhood is not simply linked to a biological sex, but moreover, to a specific gender identity, an identity that typifies a society's accepted ideas of what is masculine and feminine. Central to that identity for women is irrationality.

G. Lloyd adds further insight into the problem of masculine/feminine duality by explaining that "our conception of reason informs our conception of personhood" in that the language we speak connects rationality with what it means to be a "good, fully human person" (ix). Since women are excluded from the realm of rationality, it follows that they can neither be fully self-actualized or wholly moral human beings. The changes that occurred in the conceptions of reason during the Enlightenment period brought about an inheritance of thought in which women were associated with the sensuous realm of the body, and men with the non-sensuous realm of reason. This connection of women with the senses has generated extensive discourse on the relationship between women and nature that, as Michèle Cohen argues, established a "difference in *mind* that constituted the distinction of

character" that marked the sexes and determined the "respective, appropriate qualifications" (79) for gender identity.

Discourse of the eighteenth-century attempted to tutor women on the distinctions between men and women and on the importance of keeping with the image of the ideal woman—which was passive, weak, emotional, and of course, domesticated. In 1785, Hannah More wrote in her Introduction to *Essays on Various Subjects*:

> Women have generally quicker perceptions; men have juster sentiments. [. . .] Women speak to shine or to please, men to convince or confute. Women are fond of incident, men of argument. Women admire passionately, men approve cautiously [. . .] Men refuse to give way to the emotions they actually feel, while women sometimes affect to be transported beyond what the occasion will justify. (fiche 1)

Hannah More was not the first writer to comment on the binary oppositions between genders. Michèle Cohen states that eighteenth-century clergyman, James Fordyce, some twenty years earlier, had lectured young women on the finer points of deportment and on the different traits assigned to each sex (79). In his book, *Sermons to Young Women*, Fordyce argues that "nature" had "formed" women's "faculties" with less "vigour" than those of men (fiche year 1809). Fordyce reminds women that their principal concern must remain their "destination in life." Their "chief business" is to "read men, in order to make [themselves] agreeable and useful." It is the "sentimental" talents, not the

"argumentative," that women must develop. Interestingly, it was

Fordyce's *Sermons* that Jane Austen's Mr. Collins, in *Pride and Prejudice*,

chose as proper instruction for the Bennet girls. Austen writes:

> Mr. Collins readily assented [to read aloud to the ladies] and a
> book was produced; but on beholding it (for every thing
> announced it to be from a circulating library), he started back,
> and begging pardon, protested that he never read novels.
>
> Kitty stared at him, and Lydia exclaimed . . . .
> . . . Other books were produced, and after some deliberation he
> chose <u>Fordyce's Sermons</u>. (51-52)

Whether Fordyce is correct in his belief that the weaknesses of women's

minds is simply a "natural" extension of their "more delicate frame" (fiche

year 1809), or that men's and women's minds are indeed fundamentally

different, as More asserts, the discourse on what Michèle Cohen refers to

as "the sexed mind" implied that there was a threat to women in the

subversive content of the prevailing masculine rhetorical structures that

defined language and, thus, patriarchy itself (79). Women's identity as

subservient and marginal was confirmed in a system of archaic

conventions and endless superstitions that removed them from truth.

While the discourse on "the sexed mind" justified an education which

firmly located women within the confines of the domestic space, it had an even greater influence on the education of boys and on the way males and females have been positioned in society (79).

Hannah More's *Essays*, which were published at the end of the eighteenth-century, and J. L. Chirol's *Enquiry into the best System of Female Education*, published in 1803, are two texts concerned with the education of women during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century. Both More and Chirol agreed on the cleverness, sparkle, and resourcefulness of woman's minds, but they also agreed that these qualities constructed the visible manifestation of her mental inferiority. Chirol went so far as to state that woman has scarcely a thought she can call her own, except "what is fugitive and transient as lightning" (qtd. in Cohen 80), whereas, More placed women's "quicker perceptions" in opposition to men's "juster sentiments" (fiche 1). What is intriguing about these comments is that the presence of certain mental characteristics in the female constructs her as deficient, while the absence of the same qualities in the male is thought to enhance his intellectual powers. Cohen asserts, "The more invisible [the qualities], the greater their strength . . . . By a rhetorical *tour de force*, the sexed mind was constructed so that the females would generate not only the physical space for the domestic comfort and felicity of man, but the mental space which guaranteed the superior intellectual

powers of the male" (Cohen 80-81). The discourse on "the sexed mind"

(79) constituted male intellect as greater, more complex, and stronger than

the female's. Strength was at the core of maleness, and access to

knowledge was calculated on that condition.

Both More and Chirol advocated a home-based education for

women, which forced females into the home as men's inferiors. Chirol's

rudiments are harsh; he states that women are "created for the domestic

comfort and felicity of man." Mothers must "train their daughters to

consider a Husband as a Master; and matrimony as the grave of liberty . . .

a state of pain" (qtd. in Cohen 81). J. Paul Hunter states that Jane Austen

"deploys her laser-like irony" to depict courtship and the marriage

marketplace for women whose economic status made them less than

perfect wives (16-17). In Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, the appropriate

economic and social negotiations are made that will ensure a husband.

The women characters in Austen's novel experience a "hovering sense of

precarious social status" (16-17), which forces all of them, even the

independent and spirited Elizabeth Bennet, to recognize their social

powerlessness, not just victimization, but survival, under difficult and

unequal conditions.   More and Chirol believed gender roles were natural

and superiority was providentially inherent in the male. The discourse on

"the sexed mind" (Cohen 79) suggested not that males had minds and

females did not, but that the minds of each sex must be educated for his or her appropriate place in society. Since the discourse stressed difference, it was crucial that what women were taught should develop their femininity and confirm the "natural" distinction between the sexes.

Michael Kimmel states that "Much social science research has been mired in tired formulations of 'sex roles', those fixed, ahistorical containers of attributes and behaviors that are said to refer to masculinity and femininity" (95). Biological males and females are separated into these "containers" (95) where they are socialized into accepting the attitudes and actions appropriate to their gender. Relationships based on power, for example, the power of men over women, are viewed as inevitable and "natural," and are not subject to challenge or change. Kimmel explains that those beliefs which are normative—constructed and enforced through social sanctions—begin to appear as *normal*, "designed by nature acting through culture" (95). But this occurrence is deceptive, for the normative is not normal; rather, it is the result of a long and complex set of social conflicts among groups. "It is precisely through the process of making a power situation appear as a fact in the nature of the world that traditional authority works," writes anthropologist Maurice Bloch (ix). By diminishing the historical flux of masculinity and femininity, both genders lessen the ability to change (63).

In rhetorical history, questions about how thought develops are explained with the concept of *invention*, a Latin term meaning "to come upon" or "find." Karlyn Kohrs Campbell explains that the nearest Greek equivalent would be *heuresis*, which refers to a related, yet distinct, possess of trial and error (110). The frequent topics of invention, according to Campbell, which included "maxims and shared assumptions (causality or that the future will resemble the past)," and which Aristotle identified as the areas from which arguments could be developed, are the closest associations. The persuasive impact of character or *ethos* was based on shared and accepted virtues, and appeals or *pathos* arose out of assumed universal relations between attitudes and socio-economic class dynamics. Campbell states that if "truth is merely uncovering what is hidden (*aletheia*) and its discovery is remembrance (*anamnesis*)," such explanations of the origins and evolution of thought may be sufficient, but if truths are socially constructed and change and develop through time, as I argue they do, how does this process take place and what occurrences are involved (110).

In discussing how ideas change, we know that discourse is created out of prior discourse and that rhetoric evolves from prior rhetoric. The same sources through which any change can be achieved are, at the same time, "the dead hand of the past" (Campbell 110). Our available resources

limit us, for they in themselves are limiting. Moreover, originality is never possible since it has all been said before. On the other hand, and as Campbell points out, "the symbolic resources of language are limitless" (112). In analyzing the roots of the second wave of feminism, Jo Freeman discusses the notion of the "justifying myth," or the ideology that rationalizes the subordination of a particular group. The catalyst of change, according to Freeman, includes processes that destabilize or question such explanations (12). N. J. Smelzer states that this erosion of a dominant ideology is the "symbolic or rhetorical dimension of change or structural strain" (viii) and must, as T. R. Gurr points out, involve a dominant reference group to which subordinates can compare themselves; moreover, the erosion must experience a "persistent aggravation" that ultimately propels the subordinated group toward change (48).

Invention of this type is a major force in the attrition of the myths that justify women as a lesser being and the ideological barriers that obstruct social change. Therefore, according to Campbell, "The principle of rhetorical invention is subversion" using the "master's tools" to undermine, even destroy the "master's house" (112). For that which seems exclusively to be the tools of the master—language, symbols—are, at once, the tools of the subordinated. Campbell states "Invention adapts, reframes, associates, juxtaposes, satirizes, reverses, ridicules, and

constructs dominant discourse using and misusing every rhetorical resource possible to distort and challenge meaning." Invention has the ability to exploit history; it is, as Campbell states, "parasitic" (112). She illuminates this particular point in her analysis by noting Henry Louis Gates's example of the "signifyin(g) of African Americans (Gates x). Invention is semiotic in nature and assigns meaning to the many differences in human beings and to their different behaviors. These meanings may appear, to the members of a society, natural and, therefore, inevitable and universal. However, meaning is always mediated through and influenced by cultural and historical circumstances.

As women have discovered, social change is an exceedingly slow process, and the gains made can be worn away and annihilated by material factors, such as the removal of women's history and the denial of equal education to women. Because the constructions of womanhood as silent, pure, private, and submissive have denied them personhood, as well as civil and political rights, women have been compelled to explore new modes of expression from which women's voices can be heard and respected. Michel Foucault wrote shortly before his death that "the idea that the self is not given to us" teaches us "that there is only one practical consequence: we have to create ourselves as a work of art" ("Geneology"

350, 351). This is what women have always done and will continue to do.

Foucault writes:

> I am well aware that I have never written anything but fictions. I do not mean to say, however, that truth is therefore absent. It seems to me that the possibility exists for fiction to function in truth, for a fictional discourse to induce effects of truth, and for bringing it about that a true discourse engenders or "manufactures" something that does not as yet exist, that is, "fictions" it. One "fictions" history on the basis of a political reality that makes it true, one "fictions" a politics not yet in existence on the basis of a historical truth. (*Power* 193)

In seeking to effect change, great works by women exploit existing symbolic and rhetorical resources, as illustrated in Jane Austen's novel, *Pride and Prejudice*.

Austen addresses women's concerns and speaks to all of us about what it means to be a human being. J. Paul Hunter states that Austen takes special interest in "women whose roles, interests, feelings, and values have been ignored almost completely in traditional histories that emphasize public life" (16, 17). Austen successfully combines fact and fiction, argument, and as Karlyn K. Campbell states, the "powerful emotion arising out of identification" (122). Austen's novel is a model of what I consider to be the calculated use of "feminine style," or what Jan Marcus calls "a model of female discourse," a "tri-log" among the woman writer, the women in a male-dominated society, and the woman reader (146-148). Jane Austen "echoes, yet transcends convention" (Campbell

123), and speaks, some two centuries later, to continuing cultural discussions about relevant social and political issues of the day. *Pride and Prejudice* is authored by a woman who is rhetorically mature both in terms of education and practice. In other words, the masterpieces of women's rhetoric emphasize the accuracy of Virginia Woolf's astute comment about invention, in that "masterpieces are not single and solitary births; they are the outcome of many years of thinking in common, of thinking by the body of the people, so that the experience of the mass is behind the single voice" (68-69).

In *Pride and Prejudice*, Jane Austen invents a space in which and from which the female voice or subjectivity can emerge. The space is empowered through irony; the condemnations and opposition sometimes aroused over the culture's use of women for its own ends are eased by the author's clear understanding of human nature and by her gentle amusement over the all-too-human shortcomings and eccentricities of her beloved characters. In an effort to recast the prevailing masculine rhetorical structures that have defined language and, thus, society as a whole, Austen creates a model of feminine writing as a powerful form of rhetorical discourse that ultimately permits feminine desire. Austen seeks to specify in some detail the *absence* that is femininity. For Austen, what is feminine is what is *not said*, a realm of the unconscious and of desire

excluded from representation in the male language-centered sphere of action. Austen gives voice to the revolutionary and subversive character of women's thought, while undermining the language of male rationality.

Women's writing invents a relation to meaning other than that fundamental to male-dominated discourse. Such meaning, according to Luce Irigaray, is "always in the process of weaving itself, of embracing itself with words, but also of getting rid of words in order not to become fixed, congealed in them" (29). The silences in Austen's text, the gaps in conversation reveal Austen's skillful efforts to subvert the male text and the masculine word by writing that which is *not said*, a new terminology that would allow women to transform their history, and as Elaine Showalter states, "rescue the feminine from its stereotypical associations with inferiority" (249). Austen undertakes to invent a role for women, one in which they can speak and act uninhibited and unrestrained. Austen quietly finesses a "de-construction" of the repressive structures of thinking that invent gender and, thus, generate the unequal social and political status in a patriarchal society.

Jane Austen offers us a new manner of masculinity in the character of Fitzwilliam Darcy, and a feminist's recasting of relations between genders in the union of her two main characters, Elizabeth and Darcy. Darcy's "transformation" is essentially a discovery of possibilities,

a penetration of the mysteries of the masculine presence that rejects the

"normal," socially accepted definition of the dominant hegemonic male

with its prejudices and limited horizons. Austen writes the feminine and

in doing so encourages us to envision a new society of free and equal

relationships that, though never fully realized within the limiting

boundaries and traditions of her own culture, function to induce the

effects of Truth. Her lasting appeal resides in her fiction's capacity to

invent new images which can lead us to new aspirations for our lives.

Andrew Tolson states, "Feminism explicitly invites men themselves

to change" (18), to become conscious of new forms of masculine identity.

It is an uneven and complicated process; men often find it hard to talk

about themselves or to explore relationships. "I certainly have not the

talent which some people possess," states Darcy, "of conversing easily

with those I have never seen before" (Austen 135). Tolson asserts that, in

their personal lives, men are commonly dogmatic and aggressively

conservative, but the "experience of gender-fragmentation and the

uncertainties of proletarianization" (18) force many men to question

traditional masculine personalities. Sheila Rowbotham explains:

> Men . . . are ashamed of their own sensitivity to suffering and love because they have been taught to regard these as feminine. Men are as afraid of being rejected and despised as we (women) are. They have only a defensive solidarity . . . . We must be honest and help one another until they find a new way to express and organize themselves. (43)

Tolson states that we must recognize that many men remain separated from their emotions. Whereas feminist women are able to theorize "*from* their own experience, preserving its nuances and sensations," men, even at their most discerning, seem to theorize "*about* themselves, analyzing from the outside" (19). In the context of commercial capitalism, the uncertainties of a more complex society, and the Women's Movement, it has become possible for men to "de-construct" (19) their personal lives. The experience is difficult and most men "need to be shocked, or driven, to its threshold" (19). There is a barrier of trepidation made even more formidable by attitudes of ignorance and guilt.

Mr. Darcy's overbearing conduct and obvious self-importance become clear very early in Austen's novel. At the assembly dance, Bingley states:

> Come Darcy, I must have you dance. I hate to see you standing about by yourself in this stupid manner. You had much better dance.
>
> I certainly shall not, Darcy replied smugly. At such an assembly as this, it would be insupportable. Your sisters are engaged, and there is not another woman in the room, whom it would not be a punishment to me to stand up with. (Austen 7)

To contrast, Mr. Bingley, who "had a pleasing countenance, and easy,

unaffected manners" states:

> I would not be so fastidious as you are." "Upon my honour, I
> never met with so many pleasant girls in my life, as I have this
> evening. (Austen 7)

Obviously, and for a good portion of the novel, the residents of Meryton

are measured by Darcy as unworthy and deficient. Even Darcy's close

friend, Mr. Bingley, is soon a mark for Darcy's arrogance when Darcy

hastily thwarts the relationship between Bingley and Jane Bennet on the

pretext of concern for his friend's well-being in contemplating a romantic

involvement with a woman of inferior family and fortune. Darcy's

inherited upper class status and socially constructed behavior as

authoritarian and controlling are key factors in Darcy's recurring

manipulation of his friend, Bingley, and in his rude and condescending

manner at the assembly dance. Darcy and his party find the society of

Meryton an annoyance, and indeed, it is reported by Mrs. Long that Mr.

Darcy "seemed very angry at being spoken to" (Austen 13) by anyone

other than those of his party. Mr. Fitzwilliam Darcy's remarks regarding

the dancing at the assembly reveal his "(*silent*) indignation at such a mode

of passing the evening" and at being subjected to such insipid and noisy

people (Austen 19). Darcy's hasty retort to Sir William Lucas' comments

on the charms of dancing are curt, snobbish, and the syntax is broken up

with dashes; in fact, much of the dialog in Austen's novel in which either

Darcy and his upper class entourage, Mr. Collins, or Lady Catherine de

Bourgh are speaking is carefully inscribed by Austen with frequent pauses

in sentence structure and irregularities in punctuation use. Sir Lucas

states:

> There is nothing like dancing after all. I consider it as one of the
> first refinements of polished societies.
> Certainly, Sir; replied Darcy—and it has the advantage also of
> being in Vogue amongst the less polished societies of the
> world.—Every savage can dance. (Austen 18)

Darcy's manifestation as Connell's hegemonic male (76) sustains

convention and perpetuates the patriarchal ideology of power and

supremacy. Darcy's boorish silences, his haughty tone, and the gaps in

his rhetoric communicate an image of the hierarchal male. Whereas

silence is used as a means to deny women their subjectivity and autonomy

in Austen's world, silence for Fitzwilliam Darcy is a means of control and

strength.

In the first half of *Pride and Prejudice*, Darcy is, as Mrs. Bennet states,

"ate up with pride" (Austen 13). He has been taught to be "selfish and

overbearing," and his "mean" countenance is a product of his heritage, his

fortune, and his privileged social standing (Austen 282). Austen writes:

> Darcy had "no sooner . . . made it clear to himself and his friends
> that [Elizabeth Bennet] had hardly a good feature in her face,
> than he began to find it was rendered uncommonly intelligent
> by the beautiful expression of her dark eyes. To this discovery
> succeeded some others equally mortifying. (16)

Austen's choice of the word "mortifying" reveals Darcy's shock and

anxiety over his keen interest in a woman of considerably less social status

and wealth. Darcy struggles, for well over half of Austen's novel, to

repress his feelings for Elizabeth. The narrator states that "were it not for

the inferiority of her (Elizabeth's) connections, he (Darcy) should be in

some danger" (Austen 38). The silences inscribed in the lines of *Pride and*

Prejudice and the gaps in conversation are Austen's tools of rhetorical

invention which allow her to adopt a specific female representation of the

unconscious and of desire, which is the non-said of all discourse, in an

attempt to repossess and recover the "positivity" of the feminine. Irigaray

states, "One would have to listen with another ear, as if hearing *an 'other*

meaning'. For if 'She' says something, it is not, it is already no longer,

identical with what she means" (29). In the final chapters of *Pride and*

Prejudice, the silences and gaps in dialog and sentence structure largely

disappear from Austen's text as she inscribes Darcy's role and his

language with much "more thoughtfulness" (255). His discourse reveals

Austen's feminist rhetorical strategies that ultimately serve to unify and

transcend the rigid, alienating boundaries of patriarchy allowing for the

possibility of both male and female desire and an establishment of

harmonious gender relations. Darcy is imbued with more sensibility, with

thoughtfulness and feeling, and is changed in attitude and in behavior

into a new manner of being male.

Austen, in both quietly exploiting and circumventing the language

of patriarchy, also transcends the repressive structures of thinking that

force men into traditional masculine personalities and confine women to

the unchanging domestic milieu. In a twofold movement that combines

denunciation and creation, Austen unveils the masculine character of

discourse, while imagining a new female feminist subject. Darcy states,

upon offering Elizabeth an explanation for his abhorrent actions, "I have

been a selfish being all my life, in practice, though not in principle"

(Austen 282). The prevailing masculine rhetorical structures which

maintain the principles of patriarchy, coupled with Darcy's strong sense

of duty and responsibility to family and estate, will not allow him to

succumb to his own sensitivity to the hardships of others or to the

possibility of a free and equal relationship based on mutual love and

respect—especially with "a young woman without family, connections, or

fortune" (Austen 272).

Austen writes the body feminine, and in doing so, deconstructs and

liberates Darcy from the oppressive yoke of hegemonic ideology. Darcy's

sense of Elizabeth's inferiority—"of its being a degradation—," of the

family obstacles "which judgment had always opposed to inclination,"

and which Darcy voices to Elizabeth using a male-centered language of

domination and power (Austen, *Pride* 145) gives way in Austen's

discourse to a new feminine-centered "language" that erases both gender

and class prejudices and permits feminine—*and masculine*—desire.

Austen's text portrays the idea that sexual difference, as the difference that

women make, must be constructed, and it is the task of feminine discourse

to set in motion the conditions which will make this possibility a truth.

Rose Braidotti states, "The feminine text, a separatist's space, is essential if

women are to speak their desires and shatter the silence about the

exploitation they have undergone. It is the theoretical and political

building site for forms of expression and multiple struggles" (249). The

ultimate aim of feminine discourse is to invoke the conditions of

possibility of in-depth transformations, which themselves stem from a

collective effort among all women.

Michel Foucault, in *The History of Sexuality*, describes how

confession, "one of the West's most highly valued techniques for

producing truth," bestows on the recipient of the confession a measure of

power over the one who confesses: "the agency of domination does not

reside in the one who speaks (for it is he who is constrained), but in the

one who listens and says nothing; not in the one who knows and answers, but in the one who questions and is not supposed to know" (21). In *Pride and Prejudice*, Darcy is grateful and gracious and states, "Elizabeth! What do I owe you! You taught me a lesson, hard indeed at first, but most advantageous. By you, I was properly humbled" (Austen 282). By performing the confessional act, Sarah S. G. Franz explains that Austen's hero is "challenging the traditional power dynamics of the heterosexual love relationship" (158). Franz states that by insisting that the hero confess to his heroine, Austen is conferring on the heroine the traditionally masculine authorities of "certainty, validation, acceptance, and reconciliation, and establishes for the reader the concept that the hero not only can change, but that he must change in order to deserve the heroine" (158). For Elizabeth, respect and love have been earned, just as Austen would have it; for Mr. Darcy, the realization that privilege and wealth do not preclude kindness and grace brings about a sharing of common desires between Austen's two main characters. In this beautiful progression of feeling between Austen's two main characters, from "dislike" to "respect" to "esteem" to "gratitude" (282) and a real interest in each others welfare, each sentiment is defined by Austen in her revolutionary and visionary model of feminine writing.

The accepted image of the hegemonic male involves dominance over women, in social, as well as private relations, and over other men, in the occupational world. But being the "master" has its liabilities. Jack Sawyer states, "It is not really possible for two persons to have a free relationship when one holds the balance of power over the other . . . Persons bent on dominance are inhibited from developing themselves" (171). But the problem in being authoritarian in one situation means subscribing to a system in which the oppressor is subordinated in another situation (171). A different and better alternative would be a system in which men share, among themselves and with women, rather than attempting a dominant role.

Discourse cannot be separated from political practice; together they form the core of the struggle to reject and overturn the culture's anti-woman structures. Rosi Braidotti states:

> Women's coming into writing, and therefore, the expression of specifically feminine speech in the text, is not a historical give which has already been achieved in the current context; no more is it a guaranteed future triumph, the glorious return of the repressed, but rather, an event which rests on a certain number of preconditions, in particular, the development of women's socio-political struggles. (250)

"If woman has always been outside the economy of the *logos*," as Braidotti claims, it is because "she is in herself an excess, a too much which cannot find its place in traditional discourses" (249). The mystery she represents

in a culture which claims to interpret and catalog everything in terms of unanimity and individuality recognizes woman as "neither one nor two" (Irigaray 26); she is not the subject, but the object. This myth of difference which is concealed by the façade of gender guides feminist writers in search of women's "unexplored possibilities and potentialities" (Braidotti 251). Their aim is to denounce the implicit link between reason and masculinity which has brought about the radical transformation in our understanding of subjectivity and rendered women's experience visible. This deconstruction of the classical system of representation constitutes the most significant and explicitly feminist phase in the re-reading of the history of Western philosophy.

When women want to break free from exploitation, they do not simply destroy a few prejudices; they call into question all existing thought and language, since these are controlled by men alone. Women confront the very foundation of our social and cultural order, whose organization has been constructed by a patriarchal system. The oppression of women is both real and symbolic; that is, its foundation lies as much in the material structures of repression as on philosophical presuppositions. The basis of masculine logic in its entirety can be explained in what Irigaray calls sexual "in-difference" (29) and in its propensity to reduce everything to the same, to the one, the masculine.

Irigaray states, "This domination of the philosophical logos stems in large part from its power to reduce all others to the economy of the Same." It is always a "teleological, constructive project" of the diversion and reduction of the "other", of woman. Thus, we discover the necessity of "reopening the figures of philosophical discourse . . . in order to pry out . . . what they have borrowed that is feminine, from the feminine" (74).

In other words, the historical phenomenon that is the annulment of the classical subject of representation could lead us to reveal the possibility of a new non-logocentric way of thinking. This premise, according to Braidotti, is the "philosophy of sexual difference" (252). It is not enough to denounce the fanatical narcissism of philosophical reason; it is more a matter of making a different discursive space available for the "female feminine" (Irigaray 29).

The premise of Western philosophy rests on "primacy according to Reason" (Braidotti 253). This principle is analyzed as the "natural" light which allegedly illuminates all truth, but it essentially functions at the expense of the woman's body. The "material body, [the] matrix of being" is renounced and devalued in the "self-affirmation" of the masculine logos, which uses pure Reason as its excuse (253). Reduced to unconsciousness, or rather, to the negative of masculine consciousness, woman embodies the void of nothingness. The historical notion of the

philosophical subject was strictly conjecture, yet it weighed profoundly on

the destiny of women. It was not until the twentieth-century that the idea

was scientifically refuted. Women speaking and writing has crumbled not

only the "master's" house, but Western Reason as well.

In understanding the lived experience of masculinity, we need to

understand more about the relationship between social experience and the

structures which define that experience. The process of what Tolson

refers to as "consciousness-raising" (18), which is a first step in gender

transformation, seems to support the Marxist theory that within a social

formation (determined by relations of production, class, and gender) there

are two kinds of defining structure: not only social institutions, such as

schools and the legal system, but also "general ideologies" (Tolson 140),

which are located in types of ritual and language. Social consciousness is

as much constructed by the codes of a "general ideological discourse", as

it is by institutional prescripts and limitations. Patriarchy, as a "general

ideology" (140), is largely encouraged by systems of speech and by

inherited customs and practices. Through language, patriarchy remains a

powerful source of identification for men, even when the primary

institution in which it is located—the family—has lost much of its former

importance due to the expansion of capitalism. Tolson states that the

language of patriarchy is a rational language that makes definitions and

connections; it is the "language of abstraction" that ultimately "enshrines" the power of men. It is the "social language of which 'man', as such, is the subject" (140).   It is in the silences of this language, as Jane Austen illustrates, that a repressed masculinity is imprisoned. Austen's inscribes Fitzwilliam Darcy with the desire to be a more sentient, willing, and sincere male. Through the self-conscious act of writing against received tradition, Austen provides us with the possibility of a world less unfeeling and narrow-minded.

Becoming conscious of masculinity not only involves transforming social institutions, but also understanding the words of the powerful. Historically, a revolutionary movement is required to break the hold of the dominant group over social theory; this movement has to structure its own associations. Learning new ways of speaking and writing as experienced in the inscription of the feminine voice must accompany the deconstruction of masculinity and, thus, the establishment of a non-sexist, collective society.

In a brilliant display of classic rhetorical invention, Austen employs convention in order to subvert it by imbuing her female protagonists with the ancient philosophical male representational quality of *Reason*. Austen's novels take the power out of the cliché that men are

"rational" and "logical," while women are "emotional" and variable. The

real cultural distinction is that men are encouraged to say their emotions,

to be confident that they will be validated by the term "logical;" that is,

their emotions will be treated as if they reflect reality. This is the

definition of the term "rational." But women's emotions are condemned

as different from that, as private and personal. The climactic scene of the

novel where Elizabeth arrives at a distinctly different view of Darcy is a

reasoned judgment of character that Ruben Brower states is reached

through a lengthy familiarity and a deliberate weighing of probabilities so

that the "certainty is an achieved certainty" (*Fields* 174). The seemingly

insignificant dialogues in *Pride and Prejudice* are constantly being

underscored by Austen's interest in human beings and their behavior, her

awareness that character is expressed by what people say and do, and in

the possibility of forming sensible judgments. The idea that more

reasonable interpretations of words and actions are attainable provides for

the movement toward a decisive change in relationships that can

deconstruct and recast pervasive, stereotypical attitudes and associations.

Elizabeth demonstrates that the whole division between reason and

feeling is false, so that we cannot deceive ourselves into believing that

sensibility is a woman's trait, and sense a man's. In general, states

Kneedler, "women and men . . . have both emotions and needs which we

try to validate through logical processes" (22). Austen writes, in a dialog

between Mr. Wickham and Elizabeth:

> I dare not hope, he continued in a lower and more serious tone,
> that he is improved in essentials.
> Oh, no! said Elizabeth. In essentials, I believe, he is very much
> what he ever was.
> When I said that he improved on acquaintance, I did not mean
> that either his mind or manners were in a state of improvement,
> but that from knowing him better, his disposition was better
> understood. (179)

This process of judgment fits exactly the duality of Darcy's character and

the picture of Elizabeth as "a rational creature speaking the truth from her

heart" (Austen 83).

Charlotte Lucas's hardheaded views on love and marriage reveal a

strong propensity toward Reason in Austen's novel. She is described by

Austen in a passage introducing the Lucas family:

> Lady Lucas was a very good kind of woman, not too clever to be
> a valuable neighbor to Mrs. Bennet.—They had several children.
> They had several children. The eldest of them a sensible,
> intelligent young woman, about twenty-seven, was Elizabeth's
> intimate friend." (12)

Charlotte states her opinion on Bingley and Jane Bennet's relationship.

The prudent young woman takes the position that Jane risks losing

Bingley unless she shows her feelings more openly. She states:

> We can all *begin* freely—a slight preference is natural enough;
> but there are very few of us who have heart enough to be really
> in love without encouragement. In nine cases out of ten, a
> woman had better shew *more* affection than she feels.
> (Austen, *Pride* 12)

Charlotte start out in *Pride and* Prejudice as a visibly independent thinker

who rejects the culture's formulations of courtship and marriage. But she

ends up, as Susan Kneedler explains, "absorbed into the identity of the

person she marries, who says, 'My dear Charlotte and I have but one

mind and one way of thinking'" (Austen, *Pride* 165). Charlotte's rationale

overrules any emotion that might dissuade her from doing just what she

has been taught: to marry a man who will make use of her.

Kneedler states that Austen demonstrates to us, in *Pride and*

Prejudice that women need to assert their individualism and self-rule (43).

"We can not only reject the culture's stereotypes, we must refuse to judge

our lives by them" (43). Women must develop new ways of thinking

about themselves, and about love. Men, as Austen's Mr. Darcy ultimately

demonstrates, must learn to question masculine sexual and linguistic

modes of behavior and step out of their hegemonic roles in order to adopt

a more open and honest approach to gender relations. The rhythmic and

unifying language of Austen's feminine writing posits just such a

possibility.

Notes

1. Quotes from J. L. Chirol's *Enquiry Into the best System of Female Education* was taken from Michèle Cohen's *Fashioning Masculinity: National Identity and Language in the Eighteenth Century*. New York: Routledge, 1996. 79-97. It was not possible to view the original work by Chirol, since the text is housed at only three known libraries, according to a search on WorldCat. An attempt was made to secure a copy of the text by the Interlibrary Loan department at the Max Chambers Library on the campus of the University of Central Oklahoma; however, the these libraries declined the request due to the scarcity of available copies.

2. For the purposes of this thesis, I have re-defined misogyny as a cluster of discourses circulating within the culture directed against all women everywhere, and as a set of codes to be taken up for various aims at different moments in history. Gender relations are thoroughly entrenched within semiotic and cultural codes, which in turn define the consciousness of the individual and the ways in which we perceive and represent reality.

Conclusion

In writing *Pride and Prejudice*, Jane Austen nurtures and develops

what is most innovative and subversive in women's thought, while

avoiding the classic trappings which await the feminine: mimicry

dependency, denigration, hysteria, aporia. Austen employs her writing as

a means to speak, think, and create within structures that are misogynistic

and which attempt to gain power and dominance through the exclusion

and appropriation of the feminine. Austen's repossesses and recovers the

positivity of the feminine in the deconstruction of Fitzwilliam Darcy. Mr.

Darcy's behavior and attitudes in the first chapters of *Pride and Prejudice*

reflect deeply ingrained and socially constructed ideologies consistent

with the often perverse and oppressive dictates of a patriarchal culture.

Darcy, instructed from birth to act within the strictly prescribed

boundaries of a hegemonic masculinity is oblivious to Elizabeth's

humanity. Upon their first meeting, Darcy rejects Elizabeth as

unattractive; he assumes that he has only to speak to her later to appease

her bruised sensibilities. In the later chapters of Austen's novel, Darcy is

changed from imagining that he is doing Elizabeth a favor by subjecting

himself to the "degradation" of marrying her, to being earnestly grateful

that she could love him (Austen 146). Darcy learns that money, property,

and social position are unimportant compared to the happiness he

experiences when he realizes Elizabeth cares for him.

Austen addresses the question of how a woman can be a conceptual

thinker and not be contaminated by the dominant masculine nature of

theoretical thought. Austen adopts a series of rhetorical tactics in tackling

the socio-cultural issues concerning women of her time period. By writing

the feminine text, Austen transforms Darcy's hegemonic attitudes and

actions into a new kind of masculinity that rejects the oppressive,

hierarchal roles that are constructed and perpetuated in a patriarchal

society. For it is the disjunction in value between men and women which

allows and derives from a structure organized for the benefit and

empowerment of men. Austen's novel locates blame where it belongs, not

in women or men, but in the culture, in its social structures as exemplified

in gender bias and class prejudice, and in its myths, which construct us all,

both women and men, to venerate men and disparage women. Jane

Austen declares her belief, not in men as the creators of order, but in the

individual's freedom to create within a given order that is equal and

mutually beneficial to all so that we may witness the end of inequality and

the demise of the sovereignty of the father.

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