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A Comparative Study of Plato's and Jane Austen's Concept of Love in *Pride and Prejudice*

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ABSTRACT

Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* demonstrates the encounter of the two ruling faculties of human beings: reason and passion. The characters of this novel who are mostly young people are involved in the matters of heart and mind, seeking love and affection from their beloved ones while simultaneously burdened by the codes of manners and mannerisms of their society. Although many studies have been conducted on the subject of marriage and love on Austen's novels, the nature of this love has not been given its proper attention. A comparative study of Plato's concept of love and that envisaged in Jane Austen's novel clarifies a lot of things among which we can refer to their difference in the extent of realism as the former depicts love in its ideal form and the latter in its practical sense. Serving as a means to deepen the readers' understanding, this essay introduces a new perspective to Austen studies by examining Platonic concepts of love in *Pride and Prejudice* in the light of the information gleaned from Plato's two famous works that directly deal with the concept of love: *Phaedrus* and *Symposium*. The study shows that despite being Platonic in her approach to love, Austen differs from Plato in that she tries to confine love to decorum under the veil of social relationships which bespeaks of the fact that Austen's time in early Victorian period gives priority to the practice of love in a real context over intellectual concern for what it might mean or might not.

Key words: Jane Austen, Platonic Love, *Pride and Prejudice*, Comparative Study, Reason, Passion

INTRODUCTION

Literature and philosophy have always had common subjects to deal with. One of these subjects, which are of particular interest to both philosophers and literary figures due to its dazzling complexity and elegant simplicity, is love. Plato honors love as the oldest of the gods declaring that "First Chaos came, and then broad-bosomed Earth, the everlasting seat of all that is, and love" (*Symposium*). Human love came into existence with the creation of Adam. Without love, a human being lacks the passion for life. Consequently, he looks for it everywhere and at all times. In search of the lost love, and in an attempt to know and define it, he investigates both the world and himself. The result is the discovery of varied feelings and perceptions that have been a storehouse to hundreds and thousands of literary and philosophical works.

Among many effective philosophers and literary figures who have been highly concerned about defining and determining love, Plato owns the first rank both in terms of precedence and influence. His *Symposium* and *Phaedrus* are the two works that specifically address the question of love. The number of the people who are influenced by Plato's ideas either directly or indirectly is countless. In all regions, at all periods and cultures, there are plenty of thinkers and artists who are indebted to Plato's ingenious way of examining concepts and ideas that are universal. Love being one of the important ones has been the concern of many such thinkers and artists who follow in temperament and temporality Plato's lead. Among the English female authors of the early nineteenth century, which is the age of sense and sensibility, Jane Austen is the forerunner of all those who plunge themselves in the thoughts about love and marriage. Her *Pride and Prejudice*, *Emma*, *Sense and Sensibility*, as well as her other novels, all deal with the question of love and marriage.

After reading any of Austen's novels, her readers will agree that nothing concerns her more than the relationship between individuals in a class conscious society where people esteem social rules and conventions. Love has been an obviously detectable theme in all Austen's novels, especially in *Pride and Prejudice*. In this novel, what she highlights and goes through in details is the romantic courtship. She depicts her opinion of what true love is by making her characters fall in love and then explore and reveal their minds and hearts. Throughout the novel, she intertwines the heroes and the heroines in a romantic relationship through which they attempt to know and experience love.

As far as relationships are concerned, what apparently interests Austen most is the traditional morality which has dominated the English social atmosphere since the Renaissance and has its roots in Greek and Roman philosophy, more specifically in the philosophy of Plato. Austen is a real-

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ist whose "lack of idealism not only enabled her to deliver a real world but to restore to it a zest and bloom that rationalism had all but bleached away" (Knox-Show 242). Eventually, in her works, she has a glimpse at ideals and tries to trace their manifestation in the real world through ascribing them to the characters' conduct. Her idealism is accentuated in her heroines' and heroes' romantic relationships in a highly conventional society where they have to keep a balance between their emotional needs and social claims.

What is intended to be analyzed in this study is to delve into the nature of love existing between lovers in Austen's novels. It seems that love, in spite of its essential role in bringing the lovers together and preserving their union, has received less attention compared to other subjects. Considering romantic relationships, almost all of the works done on Jane Austen's novels concentrate more or less on their social cause and context. A precise and careful delving into her novels will expose a certain philosophy of love, a philosophy congenial to that of Plato, concealed under the veil of social relationships. Thus, the present study aims to remove the veils and reveal the sort of philosophy of love that she pursues in *Pride and Prejudice* by finding the answer of this question: How much is Austen concerned with love? What are her ideals of love? Does she observe certain philosophy in defining love in her fiction? How far does she succeed in portraying the reality of love in her time? Are the happy romantic relationships in the novel real or are something of her imagination that she has artfully been able to exalt to the level of ideality? The current study is an attempt to provide proper answers for it by making a comparison between Austen's concept of love and that of Plato.

It is hoped that this paper would contribute to Austen's studies by examining Jane Austen's novels in light of Plato, which can bring about a lot of interesting results because Plato juxtaposes reason and passion in his definition of love and Austen emphasizes the sovereignty of reason in romantic relationships in a society where social conventions are highly valued. As a less observed subject matter, such a comparative study between philosophy and literature in general and between Plato and Austen specifically can be quite enlightening and might answer some important questions about Austen's art.

Before discussing the nature of love in Austen's novels, it seems necessary to familiarize oneself with different conceptions and definitions of love. For instance, St. Augustine defines what true love is and how we should love sincerely. He emphasizes that the one "who loves aright believes rightly, who doesn't love believes in vain, even if what he believes in is true" (78). He concludes that "that which is not loved for itself is not loved at all" (37) as love is greater than faith and hope. To him, love is to achieve happiness and happiness is the matter of having what people want without the fear of losing it. Plato sets forth his ideas about love in *Lysis*, *Symposium*, and *Phaedrus*. The very claim Plato has in *Symposium* when he says, "I know not any greater blessing to a young man who is beginning life than a virtuous lover, or to the lover than a beloved youth" (*Symposium*) depicts the importance of the matter. Love, Plato declares, is a quest for the everlasting possession of the good that is the beautiful, and since "love is of the everlasting possession of the good, all men will necessarily desire immortality together with good" (*Symposium*).

Pride and Prejudice, which is considered by many as Austen's most popular novel, is deeply concerned with love. Different aspects of love are depicted through different types of characters. Michael Giffin in *Jane Austen and Religion*, while emphasizing that the "primary theme in an Austen novel is social being and social becoming" (7), explains that this social being has been built on Greek, or more specifically on platonic" myth. Giffin believes that "Austen's dichotomy of reason and feelings. has its origin in the platonic model of person and in the ancient Greek myths of rationality and irrationality" (8). Giffin proves the need for reason as a mediator to control the feelings from going astray. Christopher Brooke has put love without the knowledge of oneself and that of one's beloved under consideration. He concludes that love without understanding is doomed to fail. Stuart M. Tave in his "What Are Men to Rocks and Mountains?" declares that being in love does not guarantee a happy union of the lovers. He believes that in *Pride and Prejudice* "we are presented with two sets of young lovers who have problems which must be worked out, and here too are those who try to direct their lives for them" (7). Anne Crippen Ruderman considers the novel as the study of lovers dealing with love and the obstacles on their way in society. She believes that "Jane Austen's stories of courtship and marriage are particularly revealing because they are not only an account of human passion and feelings but also of the intellect and reason (1). Michael Kramp in his *Disciplining love: Austen and the modern man* treats "the issues of sexuality, sexual desire, and love within Austen's texts not as natural instincts that must be either satisfied or repressed, but as matters of social conduct and cultural consciousness that are crafted, maintained, and adjusted" (2). He is eager to approve that love and sexuality for Austen's men is not only a personal issue. It is also a "part of their larger civic duty" (2). It is something that determines the extent and the mode of their participation in social relationships. Allen regards the novel as "an anatomy of a particular species of desire" but at the same time, it lacks these qualities. According to Allen, although *Pride and Prejudice* is a novel of romantic attachments, the lovers are not willing to admit their love for each other. As Allen puts it, "the novel contains little direct discussion of sexual passion, and Austen attempts to discount the potential irrationalities of romantic love"(425). Bernard J. Paris claims that although Darcy and Elizabeth union is "less romantically gratified, it establishes a new society... to assure Elizabeth of a substantial and lasting happiness (100). He considers Darcy-Elizabeth match a prosperous one "because it is based upon a real understanding of themselves and each other (100). They are happy together because they are interested in improving their pride and inspiring their self-esteem. Patricia Menon, in *Austen, Eliot, Charlotte Brontë and Mentor-Lover*, investigates the relationship of passion and judgment and the role of "the figure of the mentor-lover" (1) and "the nature of the attributes of the mentor-power, judgment and moral

authority" (1) in Austen's novel. Menon assumes that Austen is interested in the role of the mentor-lover, however she is not obsessed with it. Menon claims that Austen believes that lovers need to learn from each other but this does not happen unless they keep their passion and their judgment balanced. Richard Simpson holds the opinion that Austen has the potential to consider love as platonic. He argues that "Austen seems to be saturated with the Platonic idea that the giving and receiving of knowledge, the active formation of another's character, is the truest and strongest foundation of love" (244). He believes that in Austen's opinion the hero, as he is depicted in her novels, is the heroine's adviser who "is often a man sufficiently her elder to have been her guide and mentor in many of the most difficult crises of her youth" (244). Robert P. Irvine approves that that "It is *gratitude* that forms the foundation of Elizabeth Bennet's *love* for Fitzwilliam Darcy (65). Seeing the evidence of Darcy's social power creates a sense of appreciation she has never felt for anybody else. Irvine attests that "Elizabeth's desire for Darcy does not happen *despite* the difference in their social situation: it is *produced* by that difference" (65). In spite of the social discomfort created by their different social status, Darcy's power allows him to do good. The result is Elizabeth's happy consent for marrying him.

Some critics believe that Jane Austen's novels, in spite of their devising love stories, lack romance. A slight change in our perspective helps us to come to a new reading of her fiction. What is aimed here is, therefore, a delving into her works to reevaluate that claim. By matching Austen's works with Plato's concept of love as manifested in *Phaedrus* and *Symposium*, it is hoped to show Austen's philosophical and/or platonic concern about love, and to depict the quality of love Austen pursues. The argument would shed light on the notion that in spite of the fact that Austen's approach to love is Platonic, she pays more attention to decorum under the veil of social relationship and confines love in this very way.

LOVE AND AUSTEN'S FRAME OF SOCIAL RULES

By fostering social conduct and cultural consciousness, Victorian society was the forerunner of stablishing rules and standards of individual and social dealings and transactions. The conduct books, which were popular in the era, "operated to create and regulate conceptions of desirable masculinity in the same way that female conducts literature sought to create ideals of desirable femininity" (Ailwood 44). Austen's society ingrained social conduct and morality with sexual repression. Open articulation and practice of passion was not acceptable. People did not talk about sexuality since it might put young people in danger of getting passionate and losing their rationality. "Explicit novels, sensuous pictures, and exciting dances were repressed because they might awaken sexual desire in young women and young men who were not yet mature enough to take on its responsibilities" (Mitchell 269). It was in such society that Austen's heroes and heroines lived and loved.

Pride and Prejudice displays a kind of love that is compatible with the convention of a polite society. Austen was undoubtedly aware of the moral etiquettes of courtship in her time:

> Among the respectable middle and upper classes, all courtship was essentially conducted in public... Private conversations were brief, and usually in the open air. There was no dating—young people from respectable families did not go places together except in the company of other people. In the nineteenth century, *making love* meant "flirting." A *lover* was a suitor or admirer. This was all perfectly respectable; no sexual activity was involved (Mitchell 159).

The novel, *Pride and Prejudice*, "seems concerned to restrict the scope of desire. The novel contains little direct discussion of sexual passion, and Austen attempts to discount the potential irrationalities of romantic love" (Allen 426). There are no such wildly-in-love heroes and heroines who are unable of taming their passion when restraint is required; otherwise, they would be condemned and censured by the society.

In spite of the anti-romantic atmosphere of Victorian society, love has always been the central theme of Austen's novels. Although, in *Pride and Prejudice*, she carefully observes the strict rules of courtship of her society, Austen "does not fail to portray passion. In addition, she makes a case for moderation... She argues even for deep romantic fulfillment that can come from a sense of restraint" (Ruderman 2). The lovers, in spite of their strong feelings, reserve expressing their emotions as long as possible in order to stick to propriety. For instance, in order to adhere to convention, Elizabeth and Jane repress their feelings to their lovers even after finding them strong and real. Charlotte Lucas, noticing such a concealment as a risk of losing their lovers, warns Elizabeth that

> It may perhaps be pleasant... to be able to impose on the public in such a case; but it is sometimes a disadvantage to be so very guarded. If a woman conceals her affection with the same skill from the object of it, she may lose the opportunity of fixing him... 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 show *more* affection than she feels. Bingley likes your sister undoubtedly; but he may never do more than like her, if she does not help him on (*Pride and Prejudice* 246).

But neither Jane nor Elizabeth give heed to such statements. They consider it to be men's function to realize whether a woman is in love with them. That is why throughout the novel they act accordingly. Elizabeth regards it to be improper of a woman to show her affection. She believes that "if a woman is partial to a man, and does not endeavor to conceal it, he must find it out" (Austen 246). Austen's characters restrain themselves from acting and behaving passionately in order to prevent themselves from violating propriety; otherwise, they will be disgraced as Lydia and Wickham who endanger their reputation and good name by their elopement.

DISCUSSION

In *Pride and Prejudice*, the characters who are connected in a net of social and romantic relationships provide the

opportunity for investigating love from platonic viewpoint. *Pride and Prejudice* is regarded as the most classic love story of all Austen's novels where lovers are conscious of their love and romantic appeal. Lovers who adhere to the bounds of social respectability experience an emotional and rational challenge in their courtship, while those who are loyal to their instincts and act upon their passion have to encounter a general disagreement. A comparison between Plato's concept of love and the kind of love experienced by some characters in *Pride and Prejudice* through examining their conduct, and delving into their hearts and minds sets aside the curtains of social rules and enlightens the quality of love practiced by the lovers.

Affectionate Love versus Passionate Love

As a representative of the nineteenth century polite society, Austen is concerned with courtship. This makes her "concentrated on how man and woman may best live in harmony with each other" (Tanner 66) and with society. She believes that true love and affection can harmonize men's and women's relationship and asks the very essential question and gives her crucial solution for being happy in marriage through Jane's and Elizabeth's sisterly chat: "And do you really love him quite well enough? Oh, Lizzy! do anything rather than marry without affection" (*Pride and Prejudice* 463). Here, Austen interchanges the words "affection" and "love" to distinguish them from passion which she calls "the expression of violently in love" (Austen 321), and to indicate that true love is growing and lasting feelings, "not work of a day" (Austen 465), not fleeting or blinding emotions that afflict the mind and lead the lovers to misconduct and indecency; but rather, enumerates with energy the lovers' good qualities (*Pride and Prejudice* 465). She explains that "the expression of 'violently in love' is … so doubtful, so indefinite... It is as often applied to feelings which arise from an half hour's acquaintance, as to a real, strong attachment" (Austen 321). Austen speaks of love and affection for couples' well-being while she knows that passion is within people.

Comparing her conception of love with Plato's reveals that he, too, considers true love as the harmonizer of dispositions and calls it "an agreement of disagreements" (*Symposium*). Plato affirms that love of body is not everlasting since the body itself is not stable and when the youth and beauty are away, the love fades away too; whereas the love of the "noble disposition" is everlasting (*Symposium*). Passion which results in "a hasty attachment is … dishonourable" (Plato, *Symposium*). As it is observed in Lydia's case, passion violates the social bounds of decency whereas affection, as in Elizabeth's case, trims men and women's relationship off excess, acting as a moderator of passion and harmonizer of dispositions.

Elizabeth, Austen's spokeswoman in the novel, rejects Darcy's first proposal because, stimulated by pure passion, it does not come along with the accepted rules of propriety and politeness. On his first proposal, Darcy, with an air of superiority, addresses himself to Elizabeth claiming that "In vain have I struggled. It will not do. My feelings will not be repressed. You must allow me to tell you how ardently I admire and love you" (Austen 350). He cannot be accepted until his ardent love changes to affection, until his passion is tempered by reason. Darcy's next proposal is very different in tone and temperament. With a gentle tone and better disposition, he repeats his offer claiming that "You are too generous to trifle with me. If your feelings are still what they were last April, tell me so at once. My affections and wishes are unchanged, but one word from you will silence me on this subject forever" (Austen 458). Now Elizabeth has no doubts that "his affection was not the work of a day, but had stood the test of many months' suspense" (Austen 465). She accepts a man whose love has stood the test of time. She is confident that he truly loves her. Now that he has moderated his passion by a sense of responsibility and orderliness, she cannot doubt his love to be growing an everlasting affection that corresponds with her disposition.

Unrestrained Passion, the Violator of Social Decency and Mutual Happiness

Plato claims that passion, despite being the stimulator of love, needs to be controlled and moderated by reason, otherwise it will exceed the limits. He explains that "There are two guiding and ruling principles which lead us. When opinion by the help of reason leads us to the best, the conquering principle is called temperance; but when desire, which is devoid of reason, rules in us and drags us to pleasure, that power of misrule is called excess" (*Phaedrus*). As it is derived from *Phaedrus*, reason distinguishes good from bad; therefore, it is capable of moderating passion. Reason and passion fabricate the same story in *Pride and Prejudice*.

Austen is suspicious of passion. Not only does she consider it to be insufficient for true love, but also she regards it as the violator of social rules, unless it is tamed and moderated by reason. According to Ruderman, Austen indicates "the most serious kind of love is that felt by a character with virtue and intelligence for a worthy object" (3). Austen manifests passion's inadequateness by depicting Lydia and Wickham's as well as Mr. and Mrs. Bennet's romantic relationship as abortive. Their engagement is not founded on the basis of true love, or the cooperation of passion and reason; therefore, it is feeble and enervating. Tanner believes that Lydia's devotion to Wickham "is seen a thoughtless and foolish and selfish, rather than a grand passion; while Mr. Bennet's premature captivation by Mrs. Bennet's youth and beauty is imprudence" (66). Allen also condemns Lydia's elopement claiming that it "is distressing because it suggests that desire can lead an individual to violate cultural rules, to leave willingly the bounds of society and respectability (438). Lydia's elopement with Wickham and Mr. Bennet's infatuation with Mrs. Bennet imply that unrestrained "desire has the potential to violate the logical foundation of her society" (Allen 439). Austen is suspicious of passion for its tendency and potentiality of violating moral and social rules. Thus, in order to prevent such a violation, passion should be superintended by reason.

In the novel, passion which is manifested in the lovers' captivation of and infatuation with physical beauty, when acting independently, not only violates the social rules but also

eclipses the lovers' happiness and felicity forever. Passion blinds the lovers to the truth and prevents them from knowing their beloveds as they ought to do. Lack of knowledge, according to Plato's *Symposium*, hinders the lovers from reaching the realm of true love, where everlasting beauty and goodness dwells, where passion and reason collaborate and culminate in perpetual satisfaction. Austen demonstrates the inadequateness of physical beauty in culminating mutual happiness by delineating Mr. and Mrs. Bennet's failed marriage. She considers Mr. Bennet's interest in his wife's comeliness and neglecting her mental and moral defects an eclipse to their happiness. Describing their imprudent match, she writes that Mr. Bennet,

> captivated by youth and beauty, and that appearance of good humour, which youth and beauty generally give, had married a woman whose weak understanding and illiberal mind, had very early in their marriage put an end to all real affection for her. Respect, esteem, and confidence, had vanished forever; and all his views of domestic happiness were overthrown (Austen 378).

Austen emphasizes her suspicion of bodily attractiveness more through Lydia's attachment to Wickham, depicting their relation as a silly act which is out of infatuation and selfishness. Lydia and Wickham share no compatibility, understanding, or even common taste. Lydia thinks that she adores Wickham heartily, whereas she is only infatuated with his fine appearance and pleasing manners (Paul 103). Wickham, on the other hand, wants to get rid of some gambling debts and seeks someone's company and Lydia is "an easy prey" (Austen 403). The consequence is that "His affection for her soon sunk into indifference; hers lasted little longer" (Austen 471). Wickham follows his instincts and seeks fleeting pleasure. He does not pursue a "noble disposition" (Plato, *Symposium*) that culminates in perpetual goodness and happiness. Lovers like Lydia and Wickham fall into Plato's category of "vulgar lovers. He asserts that "Evil is the vulgar lover who loves the body rather than the soul, inasmuch as he is not stable, because he loves a thing which is in itself unstable" (Plato, *Symposium*). They enjoy physical pleasure for a short while but do not experience true love. Lydia's devotion to Wickham and Mr. Bennet's infatuation with his wife implies that attachments which are constructed on unreasonable foundations not only do not guaranty mutual happiness but also destroy it.

Mere Rationality versus Ideal Love

As a marriage based on rationality and reasonable foundations, Austen gives the example of Charlotte's engagement to Mr. Collins which is the flip side of Lydia-Wickham attachment. The eldest and the most sensible daughter of the Lucas family, Charlotte is not ignorant of Mr. Collins' absurdity and imperiousness; but, the force of necessity and the economic burden make her accept his proposal. "Without thinking highly either of men or of matrimony, marriage had always been her object" (Austen 310). Mr. Collins, in spite of being nonsensical, offers her a shelter and Charlotte does not hesitate to accept it. In fact, she "accepted him solely from the pure and disinterested desire of an establishment" (Austen 310). Charlotte, as a girl who almost passes the suitable age of marriage, acts reasonably according to the demands of her society in which marriage "was the only honourable provision for well-educated young woman of small fortune, and however uncertain of giving happiness, must be their pleasant preservative from want" (Austen 310). She confesses to Elizabeth that she is not romantic. She never was. She asks only a comfortable home; and considering Mr. Collins's character, connections, and situation in life, she is convinced that her chance of happiness with him is as fair, as most people can boast on entering the marriage state (Austen 312). She chooses to yield to the calls of society and does not permit passion to interfere her decision by romanticizing and softening her reasonability. Charlotte acts according to a reasonable moderate way of life which would have been necessary to take for a woman of her situation at the time.

How logical Charlotte's reasons for marriage are, Elizabeth's "astonishment was consequently so great as to overcome at first the bounds of decorum, and she could not help crying out, 'Engaged to Mr. Collins! my dear Charlotte impossible!'" (Austen 312). This so great astonishment, cried out not from any other character but Elizabeth, Austen's spokeswoman, unveils how unsound and unconvincing Charlotte's marriage to Mr. Collins is to the author. Austen expresses her opinion of Charlotte's marriage specifically and of marrying merely for the sake of establishment and worldly comfort generally by exposing Elizabeth's mind to the readers relating that Elizabeth "had always felt that Charlotte's opinion of matrimony was not exactly like her own, but she could not have supposed it possible that when called into action, she would have sacrificed every better feelings to worldly advantage" (Austen 312). Accordingly, Austen implies her objection to Charlotte's marriage indicating that mere rationality and lack of affection, which she called "better feelings", is as destructive of happiness as mere passion in matrimony. By accepting Collins' company, Charlotte secures her fortune but sacrifices her mutual happiness she could experience with a sensible and loving man.

Collins and Charlotte, despite their different personalities, have one thing in common: both wish to have what they lack; Charlotte, having no fortune, looks for a home to secure her from poverty and spinsterhood, and Collins, having a suitable income, looks for a wife to accomplish his duty as a clergyman. But the point is that Charlotte has no choice; she is obliged to choose him whereas Collins can choose. Not being concerned with individuals, Collins will pick the first opportunity that comes to him. Any woman would satisfy him as long as she can serve him as a wife. He sets forth his reason for directing his offer to Longbourn explaining to Elizabeth that "as I am, to inherit this estate after the death of your honoured father, (who, however, may live many years longer,) I could not satisfy myself without resolving to choose a wife from among his daughters, that the loss to them might be as little as possible" (Austen 300). His consecutive proposals during his short stay in Longbourn do not break the bounds of social decency but they violate love. He does not marry for love. He marries to fulfill her patroness' wishes and carry out his duty as a churchman. He aims to marry, to who does not bother him.

Mr. Collins does not know how it feels to be in love. He neither loves nor chooses reasonably. He quickly directs his offer to another alternative once he fails the first one. He does not care or look for affection or understanding of his partner. He only needs motivations for marriage and supposes that he has a bunch of good ones, as he explains to Elizabeth,

> My reasons for marrying are, first, that I think it a right thing for every clergyman in easy circumstances (like myself) to set the example of matrimony in his parish. Secondly, that I am convinced it will add very greatly in my happiness; and thirdly—which perhaps I ought to have mentioned earlier, that it is the particular advice and recommendation of the very noble lady whom I have the honour of calling patroness (Austen 300).

These are his motives for matrimony. He primarily directs his address to Bennet's daughters. He does not retreat, nor becomes disappointed after knowing that his offer will not do with Jane whom he chooses because her "lovely face confirmed his views, and established all his strictest notions of what was due to seniority" (Austen 277). He switches his offer to Jane's younger sister. Austen describes his rushing from one case to another with a sarcastic tone, saying that he "had only to change from Jane to Elizabeth—and it was soon done—done while Mrs. Bennet was stirring the fire. Elizabeth, equally next to Jane in birth and beauty, succeeded her of course" (Austen 277). He proposes to Charlotte short after being rejected by Elizabeth.

As Austen demonstrates through the characterization of Charlotte and Lydia, neither passion nor reason alone can bring about perpetual happiness. However, she gives the credit to reason, and never trusts passion when it comes to choose one of them. Charlotte sacrifices her happiness by taking reason's side; however, she neither tarnishes her reputation nor violates social conventions. Contrary to Charlotte, Lydia destroys her happiness and nearly disgraces her family by taking passion's side and violating social rules. Austen tries to prove that "Lydia's elopement is distressing because it suggests that desire can lead an individual to violate cultural rules, to leave willingly the bounds of society and respectability" (Allen 438). Violating cultural rules is a fault Austen cannot excuse. Despite the fact that Charlotte's conformity to reason and adherence to convention perishes her happiness, Austen takes sides with her against passion. She prefers repressing passion when expressing it would violate the propriety and disregard the social rules.

Darcy-Elizabeth's Love: The Harmony of Reason and Passion

Through Charlotte-Collins and Lydia-Wickham relationships, Austen implies that going to extremes and total adherence to passion or reason will result in no good effect but in loss in one way or another. In showing Elizabeth-Darcy attachment, she tries to prove that the collaboration of passion and reason is the key to happiness. She is quite platonic in delineating romantic relationship of this couple. Plato believes that sensual desire by the help of mutual understanding and common sense guides lovers to true knowledge and everlasting happiness (*Symposium*). But happiness is not easy to gain.

From the very first meeting, Elizabeth and Darcy build up a conflict, Darcy through his pride and Elizabeth through her prejudice. They need to enter a series of adventures and confront different incidents to reach self-realization, and consequently come to mutual understanding and appreciate the value of their affection. They have to surmount different obstacles to achieve a deep comprehension of each other's disposition and sentiments:

> Elizabeth has to clear away a fog of illusion; she has to get on to the truth about what had happened between Wickham and Darcy. She has to visit Pemberley and read Mr. Darcy's confessional letter to find out his true personality. Mr. Darcy has to learn a deeper lesson. He has to learn to respect his future wife and everything about her; to see her family as she sees them; to acknowledge that in some aspects of mind and character she is his superior—in most ways they are equal (Brooke 36).

To make happiness their resident, Elizabeth and Darcy have to remove social barriers, grapple inner conflicts, reach self-realization and get insight to each other's disposition. It is a long and sometimes mortifying journey but the result is favorable.

The overall effect of society on its members is the first obstacles that should be overcome. Elizabeth gets prejudiced against Darcy which the society fortifies it. Darcy's reserved manner brings about a general dislike of him. The neighborhood has taken an instant dislike toward Darcy, regarding him proud and snobbish. Lina Widlund in "In Search of a Man" focuses on the community's effect on Elizabeth's mind:

> Hearing her friends and family discuss how dreadful Mr. Darcy is makes her opinion of him even stronger. Her resentment of him is really of the same nature as that of her mother. Elizabeth feels that her pride has been harmed by the pride of Mr. Darcy. Even when she gets closer to Darcy as a person she cannot let go of her prejudice, because almost every one of her acquaintance despises him. Elizabeth's contempt might be due partly to her difficulty in understanding him. (4)

Darcy's pride is also the product of a class conscious society. As Miss Lucas vocalizes, due to his social status and wealth, he has the right of being proud. She claims that "his pride … does not offend me so much as pride often does, because there is an excuse for it. One cannot wonder that so very fine a young man, with family, fortune, everything in his favor, should think highly of himself. If I may so express it, he has a right to be proud (Austen 245). Zimmerman believes that "both qualities, pride and prejudice, reserve in a severe limitation of human vision and are essentially selfish" (66). Therefore, to gain a better insight into each other's personality and have a fair understanding of one another, Darcy and Elizabeth should give up their pride and prejudice. But they will not get through it as long as their judgment is bound to that of their society.

Elizabeth and Darcy need to go through a long process to understand themselves and consequently one another.

Wilson, in *Pride and Prejudice by Jane Austen*, claims that Elizabeth and Darcy face no "external obstacle" in their courtship but rather an inner one. They possess intricate personalities that plunge them into misunderstanding although they correspond intellectually to each other (55). The first impression or "deceptiveness of appearance" as Wilson calls it, is one of those "external obstacle" that should be dealt with. Darcy insults Elizabeth on his first meeting at Netherfield Park: Bingley tries to convince Darcy to dance with Elizabeth but Darcy refuses rudely saying "she is tolerable; but not handsome enough to tempt me; and I am in no humour at present to give consequence to young ladies who are slighted by other men" (Austen 240). His remark is so rude and insulting that Elizabeth cannot help getting prejudiced against him. She would have forgiven his pride if he had not injured hers. The pride Darcy displays at Netherfield and the prejudice Elizabeth gets out of it are the main and initial causes of their misunderstanding which they have to get rid of. With the introduction of Wickham, an apparently charming lieutenant but malicious in truth, the relationship between Darcy and Elizabeth becomes more complicated. Consequently, things get worse.

While Elizabeth is adding to her dislike of Darcy, he is gradually getting interested in her. When he meets her at Rosings, he cannot help opening his heart admitting that he has struggled in vain. His feelings will not be repressed. She must allow him to tell her how ardently he admires and loves her (Austen 350). Darcy's tactless proposal to Elizabeth uncovers their feelings and opinions of each other. Elizabeth traces a sense of self-respect and superiority in the way Darcy proposes. She accuses him of arrogance, conceit and not behaving in a gentlemanly manner. Although ending up in quarrel and being declined, Darcy's proposal is a good excuse to open their heart and unveil their feelings.

The revelation of their apparently incompatible opinions and feelings creates a sense of disapproval but on a deeper level leads them to self-realization and knowing each other. Recollecting Elizabeth's comments on what he said, how he behaved and expressed himself torments him for many months. Plato regards this torment "the source of the greatest benefits" and a sign of love. Love benefits the lover by awakening the sense of honor in him (*Symposium*). The sense of honor acts as the mentor that leads the lover to virtue and prevents him from doing dishonorable acts. Plato explains that "a lover who is detected in doing any dishonourable act, or submitting through cowardice when any dishonour is done to him by another, will be more pained at being detected by his beloved than at being seen by anyone else;" the same feeling is true about the beloved (*Symposium*). Stuart M. Tave asserts that Elizabeth's rejecting Darcy has a humiliating effect on him. When Darcy's anger calms down and he becomes reasonable enough, he gets to perceive the justice of Elizabeth's accusations against him and realizes his pride and selfishness (29). Therefore, Darcy writes a letter to clarify himself and clear away the fog of misconception surrounding Elizabeth.

Darcy's letter has the same humiliating effect on Elizabeth as her rejecting his hand on him. His letter is garnished with dignity, self-independence, insight, self-importance, intelligence and sound feelings (Brooke 75). The impact of the letter is strong on Elizabeth. Kalil believes that in her reaction to the letter, Jane Austen sets Elizabeth out on a journey of self-realization and discovery. She realizes that till now she has been "blind, partial, prejudice and absurd" (Austen 361). She gains a moral insight about herself and her character evolves as she is able to know and analyze herself. She begins reading the letter while she still bears prejudice against Darcy. But after reading the letter several times, Darcy's statements strike her gradually as being true and instill in her a better sense of judgement. Darcy and Elizabeth start the self-realization process with contrasting characters and attributes. Step by step, they begin to moderate their flaws and reach mutual understanding, affection, and respect. Elizabeth helps Darcy to give up his snobbishness and to be a real gentleman. Darcy, on the other hand, acts generously and resolutely to win her affection. They owe their happiness to their benefactor, love.

Like Plato, Austen views the lovers as mentors who lead their beloveds to everlasting happiness. But unlike Plato, Austen holds love within a frame of social relationship and confines it within the bounds of social convention. However, she does not prevent her protagonists from acting upon their own judgement, and shaping their own character and conduct. In Austen's opinion, it is of fundamental importance that not only should the lovers behave properly themselves, but also they should guide their beloveds to be proper and well behaved, and help them live in harmony with each other and with society.

The role of mentorship is true about the beloved too. Menon declares that Austen depicts that the beloved "by making moral responsibility for oneself and others her primary concern, and by making no distinction between men and women in their duty to make principled decisions, demonstrates her belief that, in the sphere that matters most to her, women must not surrender their autonomy" (2-3). The witty Elizabeth is brought up in a family where the parents' relationship is eclipsed by misunderstanding and disparity of character which has a strong effect on the offspring. But she builds up her own character, makes her own judgment, and acts independently. She neither yields to her mother's insistence on accepting Mr. Collins for her family's sake, nor accepts Darcy's proposal, which he makes with no doubt of being accepted for his wealth, until he proves himself to be worthy of her love and undoubtedly it could not have happened without Elizabeth guidance. Elizabeth too would not be worthy of such impressive person unless he guides her on a journey of self-realization that leads her to a better understanding of both.

Austen perfectly knows the impact of society on the individuals. She "is acutely aware of the family's role in shaping conduct, principle, and ability to love. Austen also recognizes the strength and attraction of family ties" (Menon 2-3). She is not ignorant of the demands of one's community and the claims of society on people. But those who are not capable of judgment and are unable to decide for themselves, are undoubtedly incapable of guiding their beloveds. Therefore, they do not deserve love.

In Darcy-Elizabeth relationship, Austen emphasizes sense and sensibility, but she does not disregard physical at-

traction and passion. Passion and physical attraction, Menon observes, "may induce blindness, she also affirms that it is not necessary in conflict with judgement" (2). However, one should not suppose Austen, the advocate of virtuous love, to depict her hero and heroine's physical appearance explicitly. She is careful not to exceed the limits of convention and social rules of decency. Darcy is equally attracted by Elizabeth's wit and playfulness as he is attracted by "the beautiful expression of her dark eyes... Though he had detected with a critical eye more than one failure of perfect symmetry in her form, he was forced to acknowledge her figure to be light and pleasing" (Austen 247). As Menon argues "His repeated smiles... are one way Austen effectively captures the softening effect of Elizabeth's combination of wit and physical appeal on the self-sufficiency, even the hostility, of the unwilling lover" (32). In their relationship, physical attraction, as Austen displays, is not at odds with their rationality. Menon believes that "it is Elizabeth's personality that arouses his sexual interest and redefines his response to her physical appearance. His often-repeated attraction to her physical charms is inextricable from his fascination with her playfulness, wit and intelligence" (32). Although Menon climbs Plato's ladder the other way round, she does not distort the essence of his theory that physical love is not in conflict with rationality; rather it is in accordance with it.

Bingely-Jane Love: The Union of True Affection

Jane and Mr. Bingley, another happy couple, have a different story. Unlike Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy, they are lucky enough to scape some of the rungs of Plato's ladder. A natural agreement of taste and disposition brings them together; "Elizabeth really believed all his [Mr. Bingley's] expectations of felicity, to be rationally founded, because they had for basis the excellent understanding, and super-excellent disposition of Jane, and a general similarity of feeling and taste between her and himself (Austen 446). They do not confront that kind of misunderstanding and misimpression that Elizabeth and Darcy have to surmount. Paul believes that "Their relationship is based upon harmony arising out of similarity of nature" (91). Mr. Bennet acutely sums up their character in this way: "Your tempers are by no means unlike. You are each of you so complying, that nothing will ever resolved on; so easy, that servant will cheat you; and so generous, that you will always exceed your income" (Austen 446). Both Jane and Bingley are good-natured, easygoing, modest and disinterested. Jane never sees a fault in anyone. She likes people in general and does not deem them evil or immoral. Bingley is also lighthearted and affable, easily pleased and capable of pleasing easily. Nature has harmonized them very well.

Though Jane and Bingley sincerely love each other, they need to learn to be firm in their love and to trust their feelings. Their separation, planned by Mr. Darcy and Bingley's sisters, as bitter as it is, gives them the chance to realize the quality of their love. At the beginning of their courtship, Jane did not demonstrate her feelings. Her modesty and humility prevented her from giving encouragement to Bingley, considering "how great is the encouragement which all the world gives to the lover" (Plato, *Symposium*). Charlotte, representing Plato's idea that "open loves" are better than "secret ones" (*Symposium*), warns Elizabeth that "In nine cases out of ten, a woman had better show more affection than she feels. Bingley likes your sister undoubtedly; but he may never do more than like her, if she does not help him on" (Austen 246). Bingley is not faultless. He is passive and acted upon. He relies more on Mr. Darcy's counsel rather than on his own. Darcy encourages him to leave Netherfield for London once he finds out that Bingley's situation is in danger because of Jane's low social status and connections. Mr. Bingley does not object and leaves Netherfield. Jane and Bingley are equally blameworthy for their dereliction in love. But fortunately, the separation ends up in their favour. When destiny brings them together again, neither Jane nor Bingley doubt their feelings. Their separation, due to their sincere love, mutual understanding and respect, reinforces their feelings and appreciation for each other rather than estranging them.

CONCLUSION

At first glance, *Pride and Prejudice* concentrates more on social context of courtship than on love itself. However, in spite of Austen's modesty in exhibiting love, social decency is not her only concern. Once the social veils are removed the truth of love will be revealed. Austen emphasizes the cooperation of reason and passion in love. As depicted in Darcy-Elizabeth love, Austen accentuates the necessity of reason's mentorship over passion to help the lovers prevail over physical beauty and reach the realm of everlasting beauty and goodness. Initiated by sensual desire, reason illuminates the lovers' way to intellectual and spiritual beauty. Austen insists on the inference of reason in moderating and restraining passion because she believes that passion has the tendency to violate social rules of decency. Violating the rules of decency and propriety does not come to terms with the standards of Austen's polite and civilized society. Therefore, she urges her heroes and heroines to keep a balance between emotional needs and rationality to meet the social claims in their romantic relationships. Otherwise the immoderation of passion and rationality, as in Lydia-Wickham and Collins-Charlotte, would deprive the lovers of mutual everlasting happiness, violates the rules and social decency and brings about general disagreement. It is the conducts of lovers in their romantic relationships in a rational and highly civilized society that matters. Considering individuals' relationships, what concerns Austen most is morality and virtue. Austen accents "morality based on reason rather than revelation" (Lane 70).

Compared to Plato's concept of love, one finds many similarities between his and Austen's attitude towards love. For instance, both consider physical beauty as an obstacle to see the true nature of the person who is to be loved. Both consider virtue as an essential feature which promotes the true love between the lovers. Nevertheless, as the argument above shows, in spite of the fact that Austen's approach to love is Platonic, she pays more attention to decorum under the veil of social relationship and confines love in this very way. This is indicative of the fact that she acted according to the norms of her society at the time. Living in early Victorian

period, she prioritized the practice of love in a real context which mattered more at the time than relating it and putting it in a context where intellectual matters would be of more significance. That is why she delineates her characters' behavior in a society bounded by norms of decency and rational inclinations. They have to grapple with an inner challenge in order to satisfy their emotional need on one hand and keep the bounds of social decency untouched, on the other hand.

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