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Battle over Power
Wit and Politeness in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*

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ABSTRACT

Tutkielmani aineisto on Jane Austenin romaani *Pride and Prejudice* (1993), ja tutkielmani kohteena kirjan naispuolinen päähenkilö, Elizabeth Bennet. Analysoin päähenkilön keskusteluja muiden kirjan henkilöiden kanssa ja kiinnitän huomiota siihen, miten hän pyrkii dominoimaan keskusteluja nokkelien sanankäänteiden avulla, ja miten hän yrityksissään onnistuu. Tutkielman johdannossa käsittelen naisten asemaa 1800-luvulla, ja sitä miten se näyttäytyi Jane Austenin kirjallisuudessa.

Päähenkilö Elizabeth Bennetin keskustelut muiden kanssa saavat usein muodon, joka muistuttaa vahvasti kilpailua, sillä niissä jokaisessa on aina voittaja sekä häviäjä. Tutkielmassani keskitynkin siihen, millä tavoilla Elizabeth pyrkii voittamaan nämä keskustelut. Kohteliaisuus on keskeisessä osassa, sillä 1800-luvulla naisilta odotettiin tietynlaista käyttäytymistä ja sosiaalisen etiketin noudattamista. Nokkelat ja älykkäät sanankäänteet ovat Elizabethin keino pyrkiä hallitsemaan keskustelua, ja hän käyttää usein sarkasmia ja ironiaa saadakseen mielipiteensä kuuluviin. Tutkin Elizabethin keskusteluja kirjan miespuolisen päähenkilön kanssa, ja sitä kuinka Elizabeth onnistuu nousemaan aina vähintäänkin tasa-arvoiseen asemaan tämän kanssa huolimatta siitä että miesten katsottiin olevan ylempiarvoisessa asemassa naisiin verrattuna. Samoin Elizabethin keskustelut ylempään luokkaan kuuluvien naisten kanssa kääntyvät usein Elizabethin eduksi, sillä hänen onnistuu osoittaa kielellinen ylivertaisuutensa, ja kääntää tämä ennalta määrätty sosiaalinen hierarkia päälaelleen. Tutkin siis sekä stereotyyppisiä sukupuolirooleja, että sosiaalista luokkajakoa, ja pyrin osoittamaan että Elizabeth onnistuu lähtökohdistaan huolimatta hallitsemaan keskustelua kielellisin keinoin.

KEYWORDS: Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, language, wit, politeness, humour, battle, power

1 INTRODUCTION

Jane Austen (1775-1817) was an English novelist whose work still today is widely read and appraised. Her books are read in schools around the world, and one of her best known works is *Pride and Prejudice* which was first published in 1813. *Pride and Prejudice* is a story about a young woman named Elizabeth Bennet and her life in the early 19th century England. The novel is filled with wordplay and witty conversations, and this is partly what makes the novel so appealing to readers. Humour is an important part of Austen's literature, and it is especially tangible in *Pride and Prejudice*. The conversations between Elizabeth and Mr Darcy are especially interesting as both of them are very intelligent people and quick at repartee, and due to this their conversations often quickly evolve into battles where the two fight with words. Elizabeth rebels against the norms the society has set for women when it comes to social interactions, and this shows not only in her discussions with Mr Darcy, but in her conversations with other women as well. Elizabeth's verbal battles over superiority are the subject of my thesis.

As stated above, humour plays an important part in Jane Austen's literature. Jane Austen is a great satirist, and many of her heroines are very witty, using irony as well as raillery as a way to get their opinions heard. Miss Elizabeth Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice* is a woman of great intelligence, and her conversations with other people confirm this claim. Elizabeth Bennet acts differently with different people, being a tease when interacting with her sister and Mr Darcy, and letting her attitudes, values and views be known by subtly letting her opinions be heard through raillery and witty comments. In many situations politeness and correct behaviour is required and expected, and in many situations Elizabeth tries to push these boundaries and break the norms. According to Patricia Howell Michaelson (2002: 69), "[…] Elizabeth's playfulness borders on impropriety". And this indeed is sometimes the case, as I will later show when analysing her conversations with others. Claudia L. Johnson (1988: 76) makes the same remark in her book *Jane Austen: Women, Politics and the Novel*: "Elizabeth's wit is occasionally marked by an unabashed rusticity bordering on the vulgar", and as an example of this she gives a glimpse from the scene where Elizabeth

is looking out of the window to the garden to see to whom all the voices belong: "I expected at least that the pigs were got into the garden, and here is nothing but Lady Catherine and her daughter" (Austen 1813: 158). I will analyse three types of conversations in my thesis. Firstly, I will take a closer look at the conversations between Elizabeth and Mr Darcy. Secondly, I will analyse conversations between middle class and upper class, this entailing Elizabeth's conversations with those of a higher social rank compared to hers. Thirdly I analyse conversations between Elizabeth and her loved ones. I have categorised these conversations according to their purpose and nature, so they are not in a chronological order. From here on, I will be referring to my primary source, Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* as P&P, to make distinction between the novel and the secondary sources, and to avoid unnecessary repetition.

1.1 Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*

Jane Austen's work is famous for its humour, irony and social criticism, and these are some factors that have made her one of the best known female writers in the history of English literature. Her novels reflect the social situation of women in the early 19th century, and give us a glimpse of what life was like for young women at that time. In Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, the female protagonist Elizabeth is the second eldest of five sisters, living with their mother and father in Longbourn, Meryton, which is a fictional place situated near London. In the beginning of the novel a gentleman called Mr Bingley moves to Netherfield close to Elizabeth's home in Longbourn. Elizabeth gets acquainted with the gentleman at an assembly, and there she also meets Mr Darcy, the closest friend of Mr Bingley's, for the very first time. Mr Darcy appears to be a rather proud and vain man, and as Elizabeth overhears Mr Darcy criticising her appearance to Mr Bingley she is convinced that Mr Darcy indeed is a man that would never interest her. Mr Bingley, however, has shown particular interest towards Elizabeth older sister Jane, and the feelings of admiration are mutual. Mr Bingley's feelings towards Jane strengthen with every meeting, and Jane falls in love with him. Mr Darcy, however, does not think this would be a suitable match as Jane is not upper class, and he manages to convince Mr Bingley that Jane has no feelings for him, making him give up

his hopes about marrying her. Elizabeth finds out that Mr Darcy has had his share on the matter, and her feelings towards him begin to turn towards hatred. Mr Darcy's feelings towards Elizabeth, however, have turned into quite the opposite direction. Mr Darcy has begun to fall in love with Elizabeth.

When Elizabeth's little sister Lydia elopes with Mr Wickham, the reputation of the Bennet family is at stake. Wickham is a man who Elizabeth herself had at one point feelings for, but later found out that his character is not at all as pleasing as it appears. Wickham is the villain of the story as he does not care about what is right or wrong as long as it serves his own purposes. He tells Elizabeth that Mr Darcy had once mistreated him gravely, but later on it turns out that the situation is the other way around. Elizabeth, however, does not share this information with anyone else but her older sister Jane, as it was told to her in confidence by Mr Darcy. Mr Darcy's little sister Georgiana was once the target of Wickham's admiration, as Georgiana is also very wealthy, and by seducing her he would undoubtedly have gotten his fair share of her money. Mr Darcy was lucky enough to prevent this from happening, but there is nothing anyone can do as Lydia elopes with Wickham. It turns out that Wickham has had no intention in marrying Lydia, and Elizabeth shares the shocking news with Mr Darcy, who then takes action in order to salvage the reputation of the Bennets. Mr Darcy arranges Wickham and Lydia to be married in London, and pays Wickham a large amount of money to make this happen. However, Mr Darcy does not want anyone to know about his chivalrous act, and makes Elizabeth's uncle take all the credit. Elizabeth does find out later on that it is all due to Mr Darcy as Lydia lets the secret slip while taking a walk with her sisters. This is an important turning point in the relationship between Elizabeth and Mr Darcy.

When it comes to Mr Darcy's dealings with the relationship between Mr Bingley and Jane, in the end Darcy does see the mistake he has made in separating the two lovers, and he tells Mr Bingley the truth about Jane's feelings. Mr Bingley comes to ask for Jane's hand in marriage, and the two are finally united. Mr Darcy and Elizabeth fall in love with each other and marry in the end as well, but the journey from the assemblies in Netherfield to living together in Pemberley has not been easy.

1.2 Social situation of women in the 19th century England

As women of that period were expected to marry, and as their position was to be somebody's wife, they had practically no chance to speak their mind, let alone influence their future. The social situation was oppressing and limiting. Women were powerless, as the inheritance laws favoured men, and formal education was out of the question. As Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar point out in their book *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979) in *Pride and Prejudice* Austen clearly visualises how hard and damaging it has been for women of that time to live in a culture that was created only for and by men. Gilbert and Gubar (1979: 136) point out how Austen examines in her novels all these flaws, including "the psychological vulnerability of the heiress or widow, the exploited dependency of the spinster, the boredom of the lady provided with no vocation". It was a man's world, and women were to act their part – never to cross the line of politeness and expected decorum.

Man is the head of the house, and when Jane Austen begins her novel by saying "It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of good fortune, must be in want of a wife" (P&P: 1), she might as well be saying that every woman in possession of less good fortune must be in want of a man. Women of that period had very little room for choice, as it was either to marry, preferably into a higher society, or to live the rest of their lives as spinsters. For Austen and her characters, the domestic confinement of women was not just a metaphor; it was a fact of life (Gilbert&Gubar 1979:124). In *Northanger Abbey* (1994: 65) it is clearly stated by Mr Tilney, that "In marriage, the man is supposed to provide for the support of the woman; the woman to make the home agreeable to the man; he is to purvey and she is to smile". This gives the reader an apt description of the situation married women found themselves in. The rules of etiquette determined the actions of women, starting from such trivial things as "morning calls". Morning calls were visits made in the afternoon, and they followed a certain strict etiquette. The visitor was to leave her card to the servant at the door, who then took the calling card to the master or mistress of the house. The master or mistress could then decide whether to accept the guest or not. There were also strict rules about how a woman was expected to dress for a morning call, and which activities they were

allowed to take part in. For example needlework was only allowed if the guest was not of high importance, for example a close friend, and the woman could take part in conversation despite her handicrafts. (Laura Boyle 2011) This shows the social hierarchy and strict etiquettes that people in the 19th century were to obey, and gives us a framework for visits and discussions that take place in *Pride and Prejudice*.

Gilbert and Gubar (1979: 125) suggest that women married to escape from home, to get away from the confinement of their childhood residences. In these cases it might as well be a case of seeking security and comfort in men, but in this novel, however, this does not always apply. For example Elizabeth Bennet seems to be quite content and comfortable living in her childhood home with her family. Of course she dreams of finding a man that would be worthy of her love, but her situation is a great deal better compared to, for example Lady Catherine de Bourgh's sickly daughter who has never really been loved, not even by her dominant mother. However, it was necessary for women of that period to seek financial security in men, especially when they came from a lower class family. Their mothers could not support them, and the men of the families were the only ones to inherit after the owner of the estate passed away. Gilbert and Gubar (1979: 127) also state that in Jane Austen's novels, as well as in her time, marriage was crucial because it was the only way for women to define themselves. It was an absolute value. Elizabeth, however, disagrees with this. She could never imagine marrying someone she despises, only to secure her own future and gain a rank, and for this reason she turns down Mr Collins's offer of marriage. Mr Collins is a pompous priest who takes a shine to Elizabeth, but only after his first choice Jane, Elizabeth´s older sister, has been declared by Mrs Bennet soon to be engaged to another man. Mrs Bennet is furious when she hears that Elizabeth has turned down Collins's offer of marriage, as it would have been a financially good match and saved the family from a possible eviction once the ownership of the estate passes to Mr Collins. Elizabeth tries to break the norms, and will not be oppressed by society, and this is exactly the reason why she makes such an interesting character.

1.3 Marriage in Pride and Prejudice

As stated earlier, in the early 19th century it was important for girls to get married, preferably to a wealthy and respectable man from higher society, as they were in no position to inherit. Once the man of the house was deceased, all the land and possessions were to go to the closest male relative. Marriage is to be expected from Elizabeth as well as there are only five girls and no boys to inherit the estate. She does get a proposal for marriage from her father's cousin, who is to inherit their estate once her father passes away, but she refuses to marry a man she has no feelings for. Elizabeth does of course find love in the end and marries Mr Darcy. Her journey from her home in Longbourn to being the mistress of Pemberley is what this novel tells about. It is not love at first sight for these two characters, and this is in fact one of the things that makes their relationship fascinating. Their relationship begins with occasional conversations at dances and dinners, and neither of them seems to care too much for the other. Their conversations are clever and mischievous, and they hide their contempt for each other in irony and sarcasm. It is almost as a power struggle between these two, but Elizabeth is not left speechless in the company of others either. In the 19th century, social hierarchy was very important, and people were to act according to their social status. Elizabeth and her family are considered as middle class, as they do not work or have as many servants as those higher up in the social hierarchy. Their wealth is not excessive enough for them to be seen as upper class. They socialize however, with the upper class, and Elizabeth's mother's, Mrs Bennet's objective is to get her daughters to marry into this society.

Elizabeth Bennet refuses two marriage proposals, one of Mr Collins's and one of Mr Darcy's, so it can be stated that she definitely resists the decorum and what society expects of her. She does what she sees as the right thing, although there will be consequences, even ones that affect her and her family financially. Her father, however, does not criticize her for this decision on turning down Mr Collins's proposal, but rather supports her refusal. When Mrs Bennet tries to appeal to Mr Bennet to talk some sense to Elizabeth and make her marry Mr Collins, Mr Bennet simply points out to Elizabeth

that she is to be a stranger to one of her parents from now on: her mother if she will not accept the proposal, and her father if she does (P&P: 97).

She also gives a third refusal, "a refusal in reverse", as Hazel Jones (2009: 29) calls it. As Lady Catherine De Bourgh comes to meet Elizabeth to make sure that Elizabeth has no intention of marrying her nephew Mr Darcy, even though he has not yet proposed to her, she refuses to admit it to Lady Catherine. Instead, Elizabeth teases her. Lady Catherine makes it clear to Elizabeth that if she is to marry her nephew, she will be despised by higher societies, and her name will be never again mentioned by her or her acquaintances. This, however, seems only to amuse Elizabeth, as she sarcastically only says to Lady Catherine: "These are heavy misfortunes – But the wife of Mr Darcy must have such extraordinary sources of happiness necessarily attached to her situation, that she could, upon the whole, have no cause to repine" (P&P: 298). This enrages Lady Catherine as she is determined to keep Elizabeth away from her nephew. Her attempts on this, however, are brought to naught by Elizabeth. As Lady Catherine continues her battle by insulting Elizabeth's youngest sister who eloped with Mr Wickham, Elizabeth puts an end to the discussion by saying that Lady Catherine cannot possible have anything more to say to her, as she has already insulted Elizabeth in every possible way. Lady Catherine insults Elizabeth one more time as they return from their walk back to the house, but Elizabeth ignores this, and without saying goodbye, returns to the house. This action gives hope to Mr Darcy, who later hears about this incident, and he returns to propose Elizabeth for second time. This time, Elizabeth accepts the proposal. This encounter between Elizabeth and Lady Catherine shows Elizabeth's verbal superiority, and gives the reader a better understanding of her character.

An interesting contrast to the character of Elizabeth Bennet is her friend Charlotte Lucas. Charlotte is 27 years old, and a senior to Elizabeth. She is not described in the book as a beautiful woman, quite the opposite, as Mrs Bennet puts it: "[…] Lucases are very good sort of girls, I assure you. It is a pity they are not handsome! Not that *I* think Charlotte so *very* plain − but then she is our particular friend." (P&P: 40-41) Charlotte is, however, a dear friend of Elizabeth's, and she enjoys her company immensely.

Charlotte is a very reasonable young woman, and as she herself says to the astonished Elizabeth after admitting she accepted a marriage proposal from Mr Collins:

> ‘I see what you are feeling’ replied Charlotte. ‘You must be surprised, very much surprised–so lately as Mr. Collins was wishing to marry you. But when you have had time to think it over, I hope you will be satisfied with what I have done. I am not romantic, you know; I never was. I ask only a comfortable home; and considering Mr. Collins’s character, connection, and situation in life, I am convinced that my chance of happiness with him is as fair as most people can boast on entering the marriage state.’ (Austen 1813:108)

Charlotte says she is not “romantic”, and that she will be ever so content with marrying Mr Collins. This is hard for Elizabeth to understand, as she could not think of marrying anyone she was not in love with, and taking into account the unpleasant character of Mr Collins, she cannot think that anyone would be likely to marry him – let alone her best friend. Elizabeth, however, wishes all the happiness in the world to her friend, despite her own doubts on the matter. The marriage of Charlotte Lucas and Mr Collins is quite the opposite to the one of Elizabeth and Mr Darcy, as it is entirely based on reason rather than love.

2 WIT AND BATTLE OVER POWER

Wittiness involves many aspects, as I later on will explain, and two of the most predominant ones are sarcasm and irony which are well present in *Pride and Prejudice*. Elizabeth Bennet is very fond of wordplay, and her remarks often have an ironic or sarcastic tone to them. According to Dustin Griffin (1994: 93) "irony enables the satirist to avoid committing himself, it creates a field of play in which the ironic satirist can revel at will", and this is also the case when taking a closer look at Elizabeth Bennet and her satire. Griffin also cites A.E. Dyson, who has called irony a "battle of wits" and a "civilized game" (Griffin 1994:93). Conversations between Mr Darcy and Elizabeth Bennet could well be described as "battles of wits", and it is indeed a sort of "civilized game" as they take turns in cleverly criticising and teasing each other. Examples of these conversations will be presented later in my thesis.

I will be concentrating on Jane Austen's novel *Pride and Prejudice*, and on the *wittyness* of Miss Elizabeth Bennet. She is a clever, talkative, satirical figure, and has great linguistic talent. Elizabeth often gets the upper hand in a conversation due to her talent of hiding her opinions cleverly with witty remarks and wordplay. The emphasis is on the situations where she is being, or is trying to be *witty*, and on the outcome of her efforts. I will study the ways in which she aims to bend the rules of polite conversation, with a focus on the linguistic aspect. As I will later point out, the important question often is "Who wins?" as the conversations often have a battle-like form to them. There are three types of battles I will concentrate on in my thesis, including male-female, upper class – middle class and lastly, good-natured battles between Elizabeth and her loved ones.

2.1 Wit

The concept of being *witty* could be explained in many ways, but I would like to define it as a person showing their linguistic and intelligent superiority through a conversation, and it is also very common that these types of *witty* conversations have an aspect of

humour in them. This is the kind of *wit* I will discuss in my thesis. Wit has many aspects in it, as so called *wittysisms* can include, inter alia; sarcasm, irony, raillery as well as hyperboles, but what is crucial to my study, it has almost always something to do with *teasing with words*. All these terms and concepts I am using, I will explain and define later.

Carefully chosen words have a crucial role in *Pride and Prejudice*, as many characters take shape through conversations. Elizabeth and Darcy get to know each other through these witty, and sometimes slightly heated conversations. Darcy learns to understand Elizabeth's character through Elizabeth's words, gets over his prejudices and falls in love with her. For example in the conversation where Mr Darcy and Elizabeth debate over the concept of an "accomplished woman" (P&P 35), Elizabeth shows Mr Darcy that even though she may not possess all the qualities that in Mr Darcy's opinion every accomplished woman should possess, she still manages to show him that when it comes to liveliness and intelligence, she can easily outshine even a more accomplished woman.

Wit is a word that has existed for centuries, but its meaning, however, has changed within the times. C.S. Lewis (1960) writes about the semantic development of the word, from its early history to the year 1960. The word *wit* has Anglo-Saxon roots. The early definition of wit was "mind", "reason", "intelligence". When a man was insane, it was said that "his wit´s diseased". (Lewis 1960: 87)

Chaucer used the word *wit* in the following way: "For tendre *wittes* wenen al be wyle. Theras they can nat pleynly understande." In this he speaks of people of "tender mind" (Lewis 1960:88). He indicates with this to one's ability to comprehend and understand, and through this – one's intelligence. And as Lewis puts it, one possible way to determine *wit* would be to say that it is a very close translation of the word *ingenium*. (Lewis 1960: 89) Ingenium could be roughly translated as "innate intelligence", and it is closely linked to the word *ingenious*, which comes from the Latin *ingeniosus*, meaning "of good capacity, full of intellect; clever, gifted with genius" (Douglas Harper 2014). This is what Lewis calls the *old sense* of wit. Lewis writes that the way *wit* was

interpreted in the 1960s was "that sort of mental agility or gymnastic which uses language as the principal equipment of its gymnasium" (Lewis 1960: 97). With this he basically means that the language is used with its full potential by an able user. He also writes that "pun, half pun, assonance, epigram (in the modern sense) and distorted proverb or quotation, are all *witty*" (Lewis 1960: 97) and this is more the kind of *wit* I will be studying in my thesis. This is what Lewis calls the *dangerous sense* of wit.

Patricia Howell Michaelson (2002: 67) points out that the term *wit* was a great deal debated in the eighteenth century. The writers of the Restoration had favoured it, but it soon became a term that was considered hostile or cynical. Stuart M. Tave (Michaelson 2002:67) has stated that "biting wit was replaced by "amiable humour", which substituted good nature for the hostility barely concealed in raillery". Michaelson (2002:67) writes that *wit* nearly always involves an attitude that is judgemental, and that this attitude is in conflict with the "modesty prescribed for bourgeois women of this period". She also cites Henry Kett and Hester Chapone, according to whom raillery was often allowed as long as it was "delicate", and what this means is that a woman is allowed to tell stories and laugh at folly as long as "she never endeavours to do so at the expense of benevolence or decorum" and never forgets "the tenderness that may be due to another´s feelings" (Michaelson 2002: 69). Michaelson cites Hester Chapone:

> Delicate and good-natured raillery amongst equal friends, if pointed out only against such trifling errors as the owner can heartily join to laugh at, or such qualities as they do not pique themselves upon, is both agreeable and useful; but then it must be offered in perfect kindness and sincere good humour; if tinctured with the least degree of malice, its sting becomes venomous and detestable…. (Chapone 1774: 108)

This kind of delicate raillery is well represented in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. (Michaelson 2002: 67-69) Even though Elizabeth's raillery can sometimes be fairly malicious, she hides it well in kindness and sincerity. Michaelson (2002: 69) also notes that the humorist's gender plays an important part, as whatever humour there is embedded in the words, it is always being reflected to the gender of the speaker. Here we again get to the hierarchy aspect, which is consistent throughout the whole novel. It is important for the woman to know her place in the social hierarchy and adjust her humour accordingly. Elizabeth however, tries to fight this stereotype.

2.2 Politeness

The word *polite* derives from the Latin word *politus* which means "refined, elegant," and "accomplished". It was first used in English ca.1500 to mean "elegant" or "cultured", and later in 1748 its definition changed closer to the meaning of "behaving courteously" (Douglas Harper 2014). Richard J. Watts (2003: 11) describes politeness as a set of rules and regulations that a group of people in a certain culture have agreed upon. Watts (2003: 22) says that politeness enables structured and organized conversation with other people, and that it is an innate need within the members of a certain group to be able to converse with other people in a tactful, correct way. According to him, it provides a framework for people on how to act in social situations, for example how one is supposed to act when meeting people: how to greet, to make introductions, how to converse, and how to end a conversation. (Watts 2003: 23)

Watts also compares politeness to a "velvet glove" used to soften the blow (Watts 2003:47). This often comes true with Elizabeth, as she cleverly disguises her insults and raillery within this "velvet glove", making the situation more agreeable but still managing to let her attitudes be known. Watts (2003: 47) compares politeness to a mask, with which one can avoid possible conflict or to prevent possible aggression. Watts (2003: 47) also states that we often do not even recognize politeness until someone breaks the form of consideration, in other words until someone is acting rudely and impolitely. In Jane Austen's novels it is crucial for young women, and for women in general, to be polite and act pleasingly. This, however, does not always come true, sometimes due to the character´s lack of understanding of the social norms and expected decorum (for example Mrs Bennet), or sometimes because of the characters conscious choice (Elizabeth).

The main dilemma in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* seems to be, how to be polite yet true to one's feelings at the same time. Especially Elizabeth seems to struggle to keep her thoughts to herself, as she is a strong character, and she sometimes has great

difficulties in acting civil when other people offend her or her family. Politeness, however, is expected in all social intercourse. Elizabeth often cleverly uses sarcasm and irony to express her true feelings, and to get her thoughts heard, without actually being impolite. She manages to do this because sometimes the people she is talking to do not understand her sarcasm, but take her words as she presents them. However, those who can detect the sarcastic tone in her voice are usually the ones she actually wants to address.

2.3 Humour

The word *humour* derives from the mid-14th century, and was first used to mean fluid from a plant or an animal. It comes from the French word *humour,* and also from Latin *umor,* which basically means body fluids. It was thought in ancient and medieval physiology that the human body consisted of four main fluids, and the fluctuating amount of these fluids in one's body was the reason for a man to feel himself depressed, happy, sad etc. This led to mean "mood, temporary state of mind", and the first records of this are from the 1520's. It later shifted its meaning closer to the one of "amusing quality, funniness", the first records of this being from the 1680's. (Douglas Harper 2014) It is not quite clear, however, how the word got its current meaning. In Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English it is defined as follows: "1. the ability or tendency to think that things are funny, or funny things you say that show you have this ability 2.the quality in something that makes it funny and makes people laugh" (Longman 2005:797), but it is this new definition of the word *humour* that I study in my thesis.

Humour has a central role in *Pride and Prejudice*. Simon Critchley (2002: 2-3) uses John Morreall's three theories of humour to define the word humour. The first theory, to put it short, is a theory according to which "we laugh from feelings of superiority over other people". The second theory, "the relief theory", explains laughter to be a "release of pent-up nervous energy", that "the energy that is relieved and discharged in laughter provides pleasure because it allegedly economizes upon energy that would ordinarily be used to contain or repress psychic activity". The third one, "the incongruity theory",

explains humour to be produced "by the experience of a felt incongruity between what we know or expect to be the case, and what actually takes place in the joke, gag, jest or blague…." (Critchley 2002: 2-3) So in this case humour is based on the element of surprise. The first theory, however, is closest to the kind of humour that can be found in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, as the main function of the witty wordplay and funny encounters of the book is to generate laughter.

Part of the charm of *Pride and Prejudice* is in its witty characters and the spirited conversations between them. Large quantity of the humour in Jane Austen's novels is based on wordplay. This wordplay contains *sarcarm, irony, raillery, hyperboles, puns* as well as *distorted quotations*. These concepts have been explained to some extent earlier on in my thesis, but for a better understanding I will explain their meaning in the context of my thesis. *Sarcasm* is ones way of expressing discontent or annoyance by saying one thing but actually meaning the exact opposite. According to Merriam Webster (2014) sarcasm can be used to insult someone, show irritation or to be humorous. It derives either from the French word *sarcasme* or the Late Latin word *sarcasmos*, meaning "a sneer, jest, taunt, mockery" (Harper 2014). *Irony* is very close to *sarcasm*, but it can also be applied to situations where something is expected to happen, and yet the opposite occurs. Irony is used mainly in order to be funny, or to make something appear amusing. Elizabeth uses sarcasm and irony quite often when discussing with other people, may it be with her family, friends or other acquaintances. Sarcasm and irony are an important part of discussions between Elizabeth and Mr Darcy. *Raillery*, as earlier mentioned, is good-natured, friendly joking about someone (Longman 2005). Raillery is the type of witty humour often favoured by Elizabeth when talking to her sister Jane, but it can also be seen in conversations between Elizabeth and Mr Darcy. *Hyperboles* are exaggerations. It is also a form of verbal acrobatics used by Elizabeth, and an example of this is the earlier mentioned scene where Elizabeth compares the rattle caused by their arriving visitors to the noises of pigs running loose in the garden (P&P: 158). *Puns* are also very closely linked to sarcasm and irony, as they are a form of wordplay, where a word or a phrase with two possible meanings is being applied. *Distorted quotations* or *proverbs* mean something someone else has once said, that has been then taken out of the original context to change its meaning. It is a

case of twisting the words to change the meaning of the original sentence, or to take up a quotation in a different context, which alone can sometimes be enough to change the meaning of the original word or sentence completely. Elizabeth often twists Mr Darcy's words to suit her own purposes. Elizabeth even on one occasion uses a *proverb*, an old saying; "Keep your breath to cool your porridge – and I shall keep mine to swell my song" (P&P 22) to subtly suggest that Mr Darcy should perhaps hold his tongue, and quite frankly to be quiet. This all happens at a soirée in Netherfield, quite at the beginning of the novel, where Elizabeth is being induced by her friend Charlotte to sing a song with her.

3 WIT, GENDER AND POLITENESS

As for the male characters in *Pride and Prejudice*, politeness is not as clear a concept as it is for the female characters. Michaelson (2002: 60-61) presents a conflict between civility and sincerity, which she claims to be an important component of the conversations between men, and also of the conflict between Frank Churchill and Mr. Knightley in Jane Austen's *Emma* (1816). For men, conversation is a matter of social hierarchy. Mr. Knightley's speech is "rather bourgeois", and he uses this kind of speech usually with men "a notch below him" such as like Robert Martin. (Michaelson 2002: 60) Mr. Knightley considers this kind of speech to be manly, and he thinks of Frank Churchill's language less masculine. Austen highlights Emma's sensitivity to the class, and to the way in which conversational interactions reflect it. In Emma, there are both "plain sincerity" and "polite civility", but neither of these is "an absolute good". They can both be used for good, and for evil. (Michaelson 2002: 60-61) Janet Holmes (1995: 2) points out in her book *Women, Men and Politeness* that for women language is something they use to "establish, nurture and develop personal relationships" whilst for men it is more of "a tool for obtaining and conveying information. They see talk as a means to an end". This is also one of the reasons why women are in general seen as the more polite sex.

Martin Price (1975: 267) writes that while manners can be a self-sufficient code, "more a game than a system of signifiers", their most important function is still to make feelings, beliefs and the moral attitudes known. He also writes that "manners allow us to negotiate our claims with others, they become a system of behaviour that restrains force and turns aggression into wit, or some other gamelike form of combat". (Price 1975:267) Price's way of describing *wit* as a "gamelike form of combat", is very apt. For Elizabeth Bennet, for instance, *wit* is often an important part of conversations. These conversations already in themselves have a great resemblance to games, as they seem always to have their winners and losers, and it is in these very conversations where Elizabeth battles with her wit. It is a question of power. The one who wins the battle, has got the power. This "combat" Martin Price talks about, is also a good description of the conversations between Elizabeth and Mr Darcy, as Elizabeth Bennet,

amongst many other characters of Austen, has a sharp tongue and a quick wit, she will make her sharp and often unsuitable thoughts known to her opponent by covering them in politeness.

3.1 Wit and Gender in Jane Austen´s Novels

In Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice,* the main character, Miss Elizabeth Bennet, is a clever and witty woman, with a response ready for almost every occasion and accusation. Elizabeth Bennet has learned from her father to laugh at peoples absurdities and to find pleasure in doing so. She defends the ridicule of "follies and nonsense, whims and inconsistencies" (P&P 51). As Michaelson (2002: 69) also points out, Elizabeth's defence may be seen in conversations between her and the serious, obstinate and proud Mr. Darcy, as she also defends the ridicule of "vanity and pride" (P&P 57). Elizabeth's playfulness almost always borders on the line of what is acceptable. Her father's raillery is allowed to be cruel and straightforward due to his status and sex, but Elizabeth's, however, must be softened by sweet smiles and delicate sensitivity to the feelings of others.

This relationship (or conflict) between wit and gender is being well presented in other works of Jane Austen. In *Northanger Abbey* (1818) Henry Tilney is always in control of the conversation, but he does not use commands in controlling the situation. Instead, he uses wit. The case, however, is quite different when it comes to the female characters of Jane Austen. In *Mansfield Park* (1814) it is Miss Mary Crawford whose witty speech borders on impropriety. Fanny and Edward think good of her nature, but as Edwards says "she does not think evil, but she speaks it – speaks it in playfulness – and though I know it to be playfulness, it grieves me to the soul" (Austen 1994: 269). Edward is appalled by Mary's way of speaking so freely about her uncle, and especially "at her witty acceptance of his immoral behaviour" (Michaelson 2002: 70). There are several passages in the book where Miss Crawford's wittiness works as a disadvantage to her, rather than gives her the appreciation or acknowledgement she desires. The outcome of her witty remarks is what differentiates this character from the one of Elizabet Bennet's.

Elizabeth aims to win her conversations by her witty comments and observations, and she often succeeds in this, whereas Mary's intellectual abilities inhibit her from accomplishing the same outcome.

3.2 Politeness in Jane Austen's Novels

Politeness is closely intertwined with power and class. Not only are the lower class people less educated, hence lacking the decorum and often being oblivious to the rules of the etiquette, but they are also less powerful. As Roger D. Sell (1992: 111) states in his text *Literary texts and diachronic aspects of politeness* "politeness [is] now regularly being perceived as a mask of means, and associated with callous selfishness". Here again, we see the concept of hiding ones true intentions behind a veil of politeness. Politeness has a very important role in all the conversations in *Pride and Prejudice*, as politeness gives the characters the shade they need to get their true thoughts heard. It is fundamentally a battle of power, and not only between Elizabeth Bennet and Mr Darcy.

Michaelson (2002: 59) takes an example from *Northanger Abbey* and presents Isabella Thorpe – a woman who speaks in exclamations and has a tendency to exaggerate. Her speaking manners imply that she is a hypocrite, that she does not always mean what she says. In fact, she often means quite the opposite. Michaelson (2002: 59) points out that a woman's language can also be a sign of character's inferiority. Isabella Thorpe often controls the conversation with the novel's heroine Catherine Morland with her exaggerations and exclamations, leaving Catherine baffled and confused. Here, again, language is closely linked to social status and gender, and when it comes to the question "who wins?" the answer is Isabella Thorpe. It is a battle over power, and Catherine is left defenceless.

As an opposition for this type of exaggeration and extreme of language, Michaelson discusses *Emma* (1816). According to Michaelson (2002: 60), the gendered sociolects are particularly relevant to the action of Emma, who herself is very skilled in obeying the rules of politeness in conversations. She is good at making everyone feel

comfortable and welcome, and is skilled at avoiding possible conflicts by steering the conversation away from any uncomfortable subjects. As Michaelson (2002: 60) points out, Emma frequently changes the topic of conversation "feeling [the old one] to be an unsafe subject" (Austen 1994: 101). Mr. Knightley's vexation "made Emma immediately talk of something else" (Austen 1994: 150) and in an uncomfortable moment she was "always putting forward to prevent Harriet's being obliged to say a word (Austen 1994: 156)". Emma's politeness is well accepted and never criticized, as it is motivated by kindness and generosity, and it is suitable for her position and her sex (Michaelson 2002: 60). Emma plays her part in this social group without offending anyone or threatening their status in the social hierarchy. She, unlike Elizabeth, obeys the rules, and does not try to break them.

3.3 Humour and Wit in Pride and Prejudice

When we are talking about wittiness, we are talking about sarcasm, irony, humour and intelligence. Elizabeth's comment and remarks are often very humouristic, especially when she is talking with her sister, and teasing her with love. Elizabeth Bennet takes great pleasure in raillery. Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (2005) defines raillery as follows: "friendly joking about someone: affectionate raillery". This is exactly the kind of friendly and affectionate teasing that takes place in the conversations between Elizabeth and her sister Jane. Elizabeth's humour is delicate, and presented in a way that is almost concealed hidden one might say from those not witty enough to understand it. She tends to tease people, and is very accomplished in disguising this kind of raillery in smiles and politeness. Simon Critchley (2002: 81) writes about raillery and its social acceptability and says that "raillery can be justified as it makes conversations agreeable but also, more importantly, because it encourages the use of reason". According to Crichley (2002: 81) "raillery and ridicule can be defended insofar as they enable instruction in reason by making its use pleasurable". This statement is true when Elizabeth discusses with her sister, as her raillery is good-natured and loving. Despite the good-natured tone of the conversation, in these conversations Elizabeth

shows her linguistic superiority to her older sister through raillery and teasing and addressing her in a somewhat patronizing style.

3.4 Gender and Politeness

Sara Mills writes in *Gender and Politeness* (2003: 203) that if looking at the stereotypical level, politeness is often thought to be a woman's concern, more than a man's. This can be applied to some of Jane Austen's novels as well, for example to *Emma*, as I earlier mentioned Frank Churchill's rather bourgeois and impolite way of discussing with Mr Knightley. In this case, establishing and highlighting one's social status triumphs over politeness. Mills (2003: 203) says that it is often characteristic for women to avoid conflicts and try to enhance co-operation through their linguistic skills. With men this is less common, and masculinity is indeed often associated with aggression and candour (Mills 2003: 204). She also points out that this characterisation of women aspiring to co-operation is based on the supposition that women are powerless, and that through language they show this weakness (Mills 2003: 203). If looking at the situation from the somewhat stereotypical point of view, it could be said that women are already in much weaker position compared to men, even though the conversation has not yet begun.

Mills (2003: 204) also points out that politeness seems to be closely linked to social status. The higher a person's rank in the social hierarchy is, the more important role politeness has in their lives. This has clearly been the case throughout the ages, and is evident in Jane Austen's novels as well. Mills (2003: 205) says that as women's linguistic behaviour is seen as powerlessness, it is often being characterized as "hesitant and unassertive", due to their immoderate use of deference and defence. This is not, however, the case with the female protagonist of *Pride and Prejudice*. Elizabeth Bennet could hardly be described as hesitant or unassertive; neither can her linguistic behaviour be seen as powerlessness. Quite on the contrary – and this shows that she indeed battles with her words, and strives to be the one controlling the conversation.

Mills (2003: 208) also points out that as women cannot gain status through their employment or earnings, they gain eminence by their appearance and linguistic skills. This was the case also in 19th century England, and can be seen in the books of Jane Austen. Women were to take care of their appearance, and converse in a way that was regarded as suitable for ladies. They were not to argue with men or those in a higher position in the society. This is also a rule that Elizabeth breaks, more than once during the novel. Mills (2003: 208) also says that the way in which women speak is often more evaluated than what they actually speak. This might also be one of the reasons why Elizabeth often gets away with her pungent opinions. The way women speak to different people show their relationship to them, and here again politeness is of great significance.

3.4.1 Compliments

Holmes (1995: 131) lists the objects of compliments as follows: "ironic, sarcastic, flattery, patronising, expressive of solidarity, praise, envy or admiration". Elizabeth Bennet uses these in a very clever way, for example when taking a stroll down the garden path with Mrs Hurst, Miss Bingley and Mr Darcy, and saying that they are so charmingly grouped, that she wishes not to spoil the picturesque by joining them. This might be seen as flattery, but knowing her disposition, the reader immediately knows it is a question of sarcasm and irony. These compliments are an important part of Elizabeth's repertoire of hidden insults.

When looking at the male characters of the novel, one that is particularly interesting in terms of politeness is Mr Collins. Mr Collins takes great pride in his ability to pay compliments to ladies, in which he, however, does not always succeed. Whilst dining with the Bennet family, he compliments himself on his ability to "offer those little delicate compliments which are always acceptable for ladies" (P&P 59), as he himself puts it. Mr Bennet mischievously asks him, whether these compliments are the outcome of an impulse of the moment, or whether he has practised giving these compliments, these "pleasing attentions" as he puts it, and Mr Collins, oblivious to the sarcasm behind Mr Bennet's compliment, answers: "They arise chiefly from what is passing at the time,

and thought I sometimes amuse myself with suggesting and arranging such little elegant compliments as may be adapted to ordinary occasions, I always wish to give them as unstudied air as possible" (P&P 59). By this Mr Collins means, that he does rehearse these compliments in advance, but tries to present them in a manner that suggests that he has just come up with them. Mr Bennet exchanges meaningful looks with Elizabeth, but does not continue discussing the matter further. This type of humour is very common in *Pride and Prejudice*, and it is often based on Elizabeth's (and her father's) ability to laugh at other people's absurdities. Here we see that behind Mr Bennet's compliment is actually sarcasm, but Mr Collins cannot see this, as he thinks quite highly of himself, and accepts the compliment accordingly. One example on where Mr Collins's attempted flattery does not quite get interpreted in the right way is when he visits Mrs Philips house, and complements her on her apartment by comparing it to the small summer parlour in Rosing's Park, which is the grand estate of Mr Collins's patronage Lady Catherine. Mrs Philips is not very pleased with this at first, but once she hears how expensive and grand Rosing's Park is, she accepts Mr Collins's compliment as flattery.

It is more common for women to pay compliments to each other than for men. Men rarely give compliments to each other, and when they do, it is often a case of complimenting one's possessions rather than appearance. (Holmes 1995: 131) However, it is more common for men to compliment women, and this we may also see in *Pride and Prejudice*. The outcome of one's compliment towards another, however, is strongly bound to the sex and social status of the receiver, as in Mr Darcy's feeble attempt to compliment Elizabeth when he proposes to her for the first time: "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" (P&P 161). He tries to tell Elizabeth how he has fallen deeply in love with her, but his choice of words ends up hurting Elizabeth's feelings. Darcy is proud and well aware of his higher social status, and as he says that he has fallen in love with Elizabeth against his will and reason, knowing her to be from a lower class to his, it makes his words hurtful and cruel, even though this hardly is his intention.

4 WIT AND RAILLERY IN JANE AUSTEN'S PRIDE AND PREJUDICE

The three types of conversations analysed here differentiate from each other by the means with which Elizabeth Bennet strives to dominate the conversation. My supposition is that the outcome of the conversations, however, stays the same as Elizabeth tends to win her verbal battles. Conversations have been categorized as follows: Battle between the sexes, Power struggle of the classes and Teasing with love. In the first category I will study how Elizabeth aims to control the conversations between herself and Mr Darcy, and in the second one how she strives to obtain power in conversations that take place between herself and those of a higher social status, and finally how she takes the role of the senior when talking to her loved ones, her sister Jane, her friend Charlotte and her mother Mrs Bennet. The main emphasis is on the conversations between Elizabeth and Mr Darcy; hence I have included more of these conversations, and divided all of them into two subcategories due to the nature of the conversation. These categories are Aggression and Wit and Wit and Raillery.

4.1 Battle between the Sexes

In the following chapters I analyse the ways in which Elizabeth aims to dominate the conversations between herself and Mr Darcy and the outcome of her efforts. As stated previously, the conversations between these two characters could be compared to a game with winners and losers. In the beginning of the novel, Elizabeth is insulted by Mr Darcy, when she hears him say to his friend Mr Bingley that Elizabeth 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" (P&P 13). This offends Elizabeth and affects her impression of him. Their relationship does not seem to have the best possible beginning, but at this point, Elizabeth does not quite feel that strongly about him, as she neither hates him nor loves him. She, however, does not really appreciate his character either. This is why the conversations in the first half of the novel have a different tone to them compared with the ones that take place at the

latter half. The conversations between Elizabeth and Mr Darcy start off as being quite wry, witty and polite, hiding the aggression beneath politeness, or merely using raillery as part of their social intercourse. The conversations evolve during the novel, as do the characters, and become more heated and aggressive later on. This is the point where wit turns into aggression. After Elizabeth has heard Wickham's account of his dealings with Mr Darcy, she begins to despise him. When she finds out that Mr Darcy has been the sole obstacle on the way of her sister Jane's happiness, her feelings take a turn towards hatred. In the end of the novel, once the right side of things has been brought up and Elizabeth and Mr Darcy have overcome their pride and prejudices, they fall in love. Everett Zimmerman (1968: 65) calls these recurring themes of pride and prejudice in Jane Austen's novels as "limitations of human vision", and it is a very apt description when studying the relationship between Elizabeth and Mr Darcy. The two characters often fail to see the right side of the affairs as they are blinded by their own pride and prejudice. In what follows, conversations are not presented in a chronological order.

4.1.1 Aggression and Wit

The following conversation takes place in Netherfield, when Elizabeth is staying as a guest in Mr Bingley's house. The party consisting of Elizabeth, Mr Darcy, Mr Bingley, Mrs Hurst and Miss Bingley is seated in a parlour. Mr Darcy tells the party what, in his opinion, the definition for an accomplished woman is. Elizabeth, however, does not agree with his definition, and lets Darcy know this by veiling her irritation and sharp opinions behind politeness and witty words. She remembers him criticizing her at the ball in Hertfordshire, where he was discussing with Mr Bingley and expressing his dissatisfaction with her appearance and making it clear that if other men were to avoid her company, he would most certainly follow their example. Mr Bingley is paying a compliment to young women in general by saying they are all very accomplished, as he says he knows no woman who could not thrive in handicrafts. Mr Bingley obviously extends his compliments to Elizabeth as well as the other ladies in the room, but Mr Darcy protests, saying that not all young women can be accomplished, and that accomplishment is not being measured by one's ability to do handicrafts. Elizabeth has not forgotten Mr Darcy's earlier insult at the ball, and this makes her even more eager to

take part in the conversation. She is quite determined to overrule Mr Darcy's definition of an accomplished woman. A list has been presented by Miss Bingley of those qualities which an accomplished woman must possess, and this includes: knowledge of music, the ability to sing and dance, the skill of drawing, speaking different foreign languages and in addition to this: "she must possess a certain something in her air and manner of walking, the tone of her voice, her address and expressions, or the word will be but half deserved" (P&P 35). Mr Darcy comments on this by saying that indeed all of this must an accomplished woman possess, and in addition to this she must "yet add something more substantial, in the improvement of her mind by extensive reading" (P&P 35). Elizabeth says to this:

> 'I am no longer surprised at your knowing only six accomplished women. I rather wonder now at your knowing any.'
> 'Are you so severe upon your own sex as to doubt the possibility of all this?'
> 'I never saw such a woman. I never saw such capacity, and taste, and application, and elegance, as you describe, united.'
> Mrs. Hurst and Miss Bingley both cried out against the injustice of her implied doubt, and were both protesting that they knew many women
> who answered this description, when Mr. Hurst called them to order,
> with bitter complaints of their inattention to what was going forward. As
> all conversation was thereby at an end, Elizabeth soon afterwards left the room. (P&P 35)

Elizabeth makes fun of Darcy's idealistic picture of an accomplished woman. As Darcy states that when it comes to accomplished women, he "cannot boast of knowing more than half a dozen, in the whole range of my acquaintance, that are really accomplished" (P&P 35). Elizabeth wonders how it is possible for him to know any at all. After the comprehensive list presented by Miss Bingley, and then complemented by Mr Darcy, of those qualities that an accomplished woman should have, Elizabeth expresses her wonder at how Darcy could know so many accomplished women, as she herself does not know anyone who would be "accomplished enough" to please Mr Darcy. In this conversation she quite explicitly states, that no woman could ever please Mr Darcy because his expectations exceed what is considered possible.

She makes fun of Mr Darcy, and through sarcasm she tries to show his ideals unrealistic. She manages to get her opinion heard, but in a polite enough manner not to seriously offend anyone. Her tone is humorous, and this is one of the reasons why the

ladies in the party do not take her seriously. Mr Darcy however, sees Elizabeth's point behind her words. There might be some resentment in her words, as she formerly has been so harshly scrutinised by this very gentleman. As formerly mentioned, Price has described the functions of this type of witty conversation very well in his study stating that it is in fact these manners, this politeness, that enables people to discuss their opinions and claims with others without offence, but it also often turns the discussion into a battle; a "combat" (Price 1975: 267). This is exactly the case here, as the discussion between Elizabeth and Mr Darcy becomes a form of competition. The aggression is often converted into witty remarks, as happens here when Elizabeth ironically criticizes Mr Darcy's judgement on the matter. Mr Darcy tries to turn the situation into his own favour by suggesting that Elizabeth is even harder a judge for her own sex as he is, but she simply states that it is impossible for any woman to live up to Mr Darcy's high expectations. By saying this, she overrules Darcy's conclusion on her, and merely strengthens her point on Darcy being too demanding, and suggesting that it is impossible for him to ever find a woman with whom he would be satisfied with. The opinions of Mrs Hurst and Miss Bingley plays no particularly important role in this scene, as the conversation between Elizabeth and Mr Darcy has already come to an end, and Elizabeth has got the last word in it.

The following conversation between Elizabeth and Mr Darcy takes place at a ball in Netherfield. Elizabeth has met Wickham some time before the ball, and heard his story about how he has been once harshly mistreated by Mr Darcy. Wickham has told Elizabeth that Mr Darcy has deprived him from his inheritance which was once ordained to him by Mr Darcy's late father. Wickham says that this is the reason why he is not in friendly terms with Darcy. Elizabeth believes Wickham, and her feelings of dislike towards Mr Darcy start to gain momentum. She cannot understand how someone could have treated Wickham in such an ill manner. Mr Darcy however, does not know what piece of information Elizabeth has just received. Elizabeth tries to search for Mr Wickham at the ball but cannot find him, and is soon to be informed that important errands have made Wickham to leave town. Elizabeth knows that his absence is because of Mr Darcy. Elizabeth is discussing with her friend Charlotte, when Mr Darcy suddenly comes to ask Elizabeth for a dance. She is surprised by this and cannot think

of an excuse quickly enough and says yes. The following conversation takes place when Elizabeth and Mr Darcy are dancing. Mr Darcy has been silent for quite some time, and even though Elizabeth has tried to make conversation with him, she has not yet sufficiently exceeded on this.

> After a pause of some minutes, she addressed him a second time with: -- 'It is *your* turn to say something now, Mr. Darcy. I talked about the dance, and *you* ought to make some sort of remark on the size of the room, or the number of couples.'
> He smiled, and assured her that whatever she wished him to say should be said.
> 'Very well. That reply will do for the present. Perhaps by and by I may observe that private balls are much pleasanter than public ones. But *now* we may be silent.'
> 'Do you talk by rule, then, while you are dancing?'
> 'Sometimes. One must speak a little, you know. It would look odd to be entirely silent for half an hour together; and yet for the advantage of *some*, conversation ought to be so arranged, as that they may have the trouble of saying as little as possible.'
> 'Are you consulting your own feelings in the present case, or do you imagine that you are gratifying mine?'
> 'Both,' replied Elizabeth archly; 'for I have always seen a great similarity in the turn of our minds. We are each of an unsocial, taciturn disposition, unwilling to speak, unless we expect to say something that will amaze the whole room, and be handed down to posterity with all the éclat of a proverb.' (P&P 79)

Despite Elizabeth's negative feelings towards Mr Darcy, she is quite determined that they must both act civil, and have a conversation while dancing. Elizabeth is teasing Mr Darcy by putting words in his mouth, but Mr Darcy is not left defenceless. When Elizabeth tells him that she expects him to have a civilized conversation with her, even though they have difficulties in getting along, Mr Darcy merely smiles at her, and assures her that "whatever she wished him to say should be said". Mr Darcy is amused by Elizabeth's determination and decorum, and does not quite detect the aggression behind her words. He teases her by asking her whether she "talks by a rule" when she is dancing. Elizabeth expresses her opinion about how it is important to talk, even if just a little, because it would look odd to other people if they were to spend a half an hour together in complete silence. Polite conversation is expected in situations like this and by pointing this out she ridicules the social etiquette as well as the awkward situation Elizabeth and Mr Darcy now find themselves in.

When Elizabeth replies "archly" to Mr Darcy as he is asking her whether she is consulting her own feelings or gratifying his in the present situation, it can already be seen from the choice of the adverb that it is a question of raillery. She is being sarcastic when she says that they are both of "an unsocial, taciturn disposition, unwilling to speak, unless we expect to say something that will amaze the whole room, and be handed down to posterity with all the éclat of a proverb" (P&P 79). By this, of course, she means only Mr Darcy, as Elizabeth herself is in fact a very social and loquacious individual, and all but unwilling to speak. Here it is a clear case of irony. She implies that Mr Darcy only speaks when what he has to say is something so amazing it will be discussed years afterwards, and will be granted the respected position of a proverb. She appeals again to Mr Darcy's pride and vanity, and does this in a witty enough manner. Mr Darcy replies to her: "This is no very striking resemblance of your own character, I am sure," said he. "How near it may be to mine, I cannot pretend to say. – You think it a faithful portrait undoubtedly" (P&P 79). To this Elizabeth merely says that she cannot be the judge of that, putting an end to this conversation, and again – getting the last word. After spending a moment in silence, Mr Darcy asks if Elizabeth and her sisters often walk to Meryton. Elizabeth says this to be the case, and also brings up the subject of Mr Wickham, by saying that they made a new acquaintance on their trip there. Mr Darcy knows exactly who she means as he was there himself to witness their encounter with Mr Wickham. After composing himself, Mr Darcy says: "Mr Wickham is blessed with such happy manners as may ensure his *making* friends – whether he may be equally capable of *retaining* them, is less certain." To this Elizabeth replies: "He has been so unlucky as to lose *your* friendship" putting careful emphasis on her words, and then continues: "and in a manner which he is likely to suffer from all his life" (P&P 79). Mr Darcy makes no reply; neither does he seem willing to do so. They are at that moment interrupted by Sir William Lucas, and the matter is not discussed any further. What might for an outsider seem as a compliment was in fact a sarcastic remark, showing Elizabeth's disapproval for Mr Darcy's actions. This is one of the functions of compliments listed by Holmes (1995: 131), as previously has been shown. In this scene, Elizabeth has silenced Mr Darcy through her sarcastic tone, hidden her reproach and won the conversation.

In the following example Elizabeth is a guest in Lady Catherine Debourgh's house in Rosings Park. Lady Catherine and her daughter Anne, Mr Collins, Mrs Collins and Maria Lucas are all seated in the drawing room while Elizabeth and Colonel Fitzwilliam move to sit by the piano forte, farther away from the rest of the party. Mr Darcy soon joins them. Elizabeth is having a conversation with Colonel Fitzwilliam while she is playing the piano. She tells him about the ball they had been in at Hertfordshire, the one in which she met Mr Darcy for the very first time. This was of course, the time she overheard Mr Darcy criticizing her to Mr Bingley. Before this conversation took place, Mr Darcy had accompanied Elizabeth and Fitzwilliam by the piano, and Elizabeth had expressed her determination on not letting herself to be intimidated by Mr Darcy's presence and his critical eye for her musical performance. Mr Darcy says that he has grown to know her character by now, hinting that she could not really mean what she says, as she cannot be intimated, and has a habit of presenting opinions that are not her own. Elizabeth laughs at this picture of herself, and turns to Fitzwilliam, sarcastically saying that she has been so unfortunate as to make acquaintance to the only person who can see her real character. As Mr Darcy has taken her credibility by so implying that her word cannot be trusted, she says that this leaves her no other choice but to avenge. She threatens now to tell Fitzwilliam something shocking about the character of Mr Darcy, but Darcy merely smiles and expresses his lack of fear for her. Colonel Fitzwilliam is very eager to hear Elizabeth's accusations, and he expresses his wish to know how Mr Darcy behaves among other people. Elizabeth then inclines to Fitzwilliam's requests:

> 'You shall hear then -- but prepare yourself for something very dreadful. The first time of my ever seeing him in Hertfordshire, you must know, was at a ball -- and at this ball, what do you think he did? He danced only four dances! I am sorry to pain you -- but so it was. He danced only four dances, though gentlemen were scarce; and, to my certain knowledge, more than one young lady was sitting down in want of a partner. Mr. Darcy, you cannot deny the fact.'
>
> 'I had not at that time the honour of knowing any lady in the assembly beyond my own party.'
>
> 'True; and nobody can ever be introduced in a ball room. Well, Colonel Fitzwilliam, what do I play next? My fingers wait your orders.' (P&P 150)

Here Elizabeth is exaggerating the "crime" of Mr Darcy, as he danced only four dances, even though there were plenty of ladies present and in want of a partner. Elizabeth uses hyperboles to emphasize her statement. She teases Mr Darcy by having a conversation

with Colonel Fitzwilliam, and conversing with Mr Darcy mainly through his cousin, telling him about this "dreadful" first meeting between her and Mr Darcy. As Mr Darcy tries to defend himself by saying that he did not know any of the ladies present, apart from his own party, Elizabeth sarcastically answers: "True; and nobody can ever be introduced in a ball room" (P&P 150), referring to Darcy's incompetence, or unwillingness, to introduce himself to the ladies, and after saying that, Elizabeth quickly changes the subject back to her playing. Mr Darcy however, continues the conversation:

> 'Perhaps,' said Darcy, 'I should have judged better, had I sought an introduction, but I am ill qualified to recommend myself to strangers.' 'Shall we ask your cousin the reason of this?' said Elizabeth, still addressing Colonel Fitzwilliam. 'Shall we ask him why a man of sense and education, and who has lived in the world, is ill qualified to recommend himself to strangers?' (P&P 150)

Here Elizabeth wittily quotes Mr Darcy, and by doing so makes his statement lose its power. It is a case of distorted quotation, and by taking this quotation to another context, she makes Mr Darcy appear quite silly. It is a case of raillery, as Elizabeth only discusses with Mr Darcy through Colonel Fitzwilliam, and describes Mr Darcy as "a man of sense and education, and who has lived in the world" before quoting him. This description in itself overrules Darcy's claim of being so incompetent in social situations, as certainly an intelligent man with good education and experience in travelling knows how to introduce himself to strangers. She implies that in fact he should be able to do this rather easily, never hesitating in what is the polite and correct manner to introduce oneself. Fitzwilliam then says that he can answer the question for Mr Darcy, and states that it is because Mr Darcy "will not give himself the trouble". Darcy then defends himself by saying:

> 'I certainly have not the talent which some people possess,' said Darcy,
> 'of conversing easily with those I have never seen before. I cannot catch their tone of conversation, or appear interested in their concerns, as I often see done.'
> 'My fingers,' said Elizabeth, 'do not move over this instrument in the masterly manner which I see so many women's do. They have not the same force or rapidity, and do not produce the same expression. But then I have always supposed it to be my own fault -- because I would not take the trouble of practising. It is not that I do not believe my fingers as capable as any other woman's of superior execution.'

> Darcy smiled, and said, 'You are perfectly right. You have employed your time much better. No one admitted to the privilege of hearing you, can think anything wanting. We neither of us perform to strangers.' (P&P 150-151)

Colonel Fitzwilliam implies that Mr Darcy does not do so because he does not want to take the trouble. Mr Darcy defends himself by saying that he finds it difficult to converse with strangers in a pleasurable manner, as he knows so little about them, and cannot immediately find the right way to converse with them. Mr Darcy tries to draw a parallel between himself and Elizabeth by saying that neither of them performs to strangers. Elizabeth however, disagrees. She remarks on Mr Darcy's supposed lack of talent in the matter by stating that it is nothing but a matter of will and practise. She draws a clever comparison between Mr Darcy's incompetence in social situations and her lack of talent in playing the piano. She lets Mr Darcy know that in her opinion it is only a matter of practise. She says that she does not think that she is worse than other women "of superior execution" just because she might not master the instrument as well as they do. She points out that she has neglected her practice, hence it is her own fault she does not play the instrument as well as some women. Here she also implies to the image presented earlier by Mr Darcy of an accomplished woman, and to her level of accomplishment, which has been earlier so harshly scrutinised by Mr Darcy.

Mr Darcy comments on this with a smile, and admits that Elizabeth is actually quite right. He also remarks that it is good that Elizabeth has employed her time better than to use it all in practicing to play the piano. He also mischievously implies that anyone who has ever had the privilege to hear her play would not disagree with him. By saying that "neither of us perform to strangers" he is being witty. With this statement he refers to his unwillingness to introduce himself to strangers, and compares it directly to Elizabeth's unwillingness to play the piano. He says exactly the same thing that Elizabeth has stated earlier, and makes the score even by doing so. Both of them are constantly being scrutinised by other people, and certain expectations are constantly built for both of them. However, as Mr Darcy points out, they *both* sometimes fail to meet the expectations. This conversation seems to end in a tie, as they are interrupted by Lady Catherine and her comments on Elizabeth's playing.

4.1.2 Wit and Raillery

The following conversation takes place as Elizabeth is sitting in the drawing-room in Netherfield with Miss Bingley, Mr Bingley, Mrs Hurst and Mr Darcy. Miss Bingley has been teasing Mr Darcy on his writing and his pen, as he is trying to write a letter to her sister. After Darcy has finished his letter, he asks for Miss Bingley and Elizabeth to play some music for the party. Mrs Hurst sings with Miss Bingley, and Elizabeth observes the frequency in which Mr Darcy's eyes are fixed to hers while she is turning over some music books that lie on the piano forte. After they have been playing for a while, Mr Darcy draws himself near Elizabeth and asks her whether she would like to "seize an opportunity of a dancing reel". Elizabeth merely smiles, and does not answer his question. Mr Darcy, being surprised at her silence, repeats his question. Elizabeth then answers:

> 'Oh!' said she, 'I heard you before; but I could not immediately determine what to say in reply. You wanted me, I know, to say "Yes," that you might have the pleasure of despising my taste; but I always delight in overthrowing those kind of schemes, and cheating a person of their premeditated contempt. I have therefore made up my mind to tell you, that I do not want to dance a reel at all – and now despise me if you dare.'
> 'Indeed I do not dare.' (P&P 47)

Elizabeth expects that Mr Darcy will challenge her, but to her amazement he does not. He acts in a very gallant manner, and this surprises Elizabeth. Elizabeth converses with Mr Darcy very politely, as "there was a mixture of sweetness and archness in her manner, which made it difficult for her to affront anybody" (P&P 47). Elizabeth teases Mr Darcy by letting him wait for her reply. She puts herself in a higher position by making him repeat his question. She then wittily steers the conversation, by predicting what the outcome of her positive answer would be. Elizabeth is putting words in Mr Darcy´s mouth, and after doing so encourages him to criticise her. Mr Darcy surrenders by saying that he does not dare to do as she advised. Here again, Elizabeth escapes a situation she does not want to get into by wittily using her words as a form of weapon, and attacking Mr Darcy before he can take any pleasure in teasing her. Here, it is more a question of raillery, a good-natured teasing with words. Elizabeth's sweet yet mischievous style of expressing herself makes it impossible for Mr Darcy to be

offended; quite the contrary: he is mesmerized. However, this proactive way in which Elizabeth acts makes her the dominant party of the conversation, and this time Darcy quite willingly surrenders.

The following conversation takes place in the drawing room of Netherfield, as Elizabeth is accompanied with Miss Bingley, Mr Bingley, Mr Hurst, Mrs Hurst and Mr Darcy. Miss Bingley has persuaded Elizabeth to take a walk about the room with her, and this has immediately got Darcy's full attention, and he closes his book to observe them. Miss Bingley asks him to join them, but he declines. She wants to know the reason for this, as Mr Darcy only says that their turn about the room might be only because of two things. Elizabeth comments that Mr Darcy only wishes to criticize them, and it would be best for them not to ask for his reasons. Miss Bingley, however, wants to know exactly what Darcy means by his comments. Mr Darcy does not object, and explains to the two ladies that he means by these two things that either they take a walk together because they have secrets to discuss, or because they are well aware of their charm and how their walking makes their figures appear more appealing. He says that if he would join them, he would spoil the charming sight of these two ladies walking about the room and if they indeed have secrets to discuss, he would ruin their plans altogether. Whatever the reason might have been that got the two ladies walking, he says that he still has a much better view from where he is sitting now. Miss Bingley exclaims this to be shocking, and asks Elizabeth how they could punish him for being so mischievous. Elizabeth says that it is very easy, that they should in turn tease him and laugh at him. She also implies that as Miss Bingley is very close to Mr Darcy, she would know how best to do this. Miss Bingley insists that she has not learned how to do that, even though she has known him for quite some time. She continues that it is impossible to "tease calmness of manner and presence of mind" (P&P 51). Miss Bingley says that they should not put themselves into an awkward position by trying to ridicule and laugh at something that does not exist. Elizabeth comments on this:

> 'Mr. Darcy is not to be laughed at!' cried Elizabeth. 'That is an uncommon advantage, and uncommon I hope it will continue, for it would be a great loss to *me* to have many such acquaintances. I dearly love a laugh.'

> ‘Miss Bingley,’ said he ‘has given me more credit than can be. The wisest and the best of men -- nay, the wisest and best of their actions -- may be rendered ridiculous by a person whose first object in life is a joke.’
> ‘Certainly,’ replied Elizabeth – ‘there are such people, but I hope I am not one of *them.* I hope I never ridicule what is wise and good. Follies and nonsense, whims and inconsistencies, *do* divert me, I own, and I laugh at them whenever I can. But these, I suppose, are precisely what you are without.’ (P&P 51)

Elizabeth is pointing out Mr Darcy’s flaws, and she is doing it in a very articulate and clever way. Mr Darcy and Elizabeth are both very clever and witty people; however Elizabeth uses raillery more often than Mr Darcy. Mr Darcy tends to be more formal, and he presents his thoughts in a more composed manner. Elizabeth is suggesting that they ridicule Mr Darcy and implies that Miss Bingley would certainly know how it could be done, as they are close acquaintances. Miss Bingley, however, denies that she would have such knowledge, and says that Mr Darcy cannot be laughed at. She says that there is nothing they can do that would not make them look like fools themselves. Elizabeth expresses her regret on not being able to laugh at Mr Darcy, and mischievously implies that she hopes this is not a permanent state, because she loves a good laugh. Mr Darcy taunts Elizabeth by saying that surely she can find something to laugh at, no matter how accomplished the man is, as joking and laughter are of great priority to Elizabeth. Elizabeth defends herself by saying that she does not laugh at what is wise and good, but at the absurdities and silly ideas of people. She also adds that these absurdities and silliness are something that Mr Darcy entirely lacks. Darcy points out that those are what he considers to be weaknesses, and this is why he has always tried to avoid them. Elizabeth makes a suggestion of other weaknesses he wishes to eschew:

> ‘Such as vanity and pride.’
> ‘Yes, vanity is a weakness indeed. But pride -- where there is a real superiority of mind, pride will be always under good regulation’
> Elizabeth turned away to hide a smile.
> ‘Your examination of Mr. Darcy is over, I presume,’ said Miss Bingley; -- ‘and pray what is the result?’
> ‘I am perfectly convinced by it that Mr. Darcy has no defect. He owns it himself without disguise.’ (P&P 52)

Here Elizabeth is being sarcastic, as she thinks that Darcy is a very proud and vain man, and this has been her opinion ever since she first met him. Mr Darcy admits vanity to be

a weakness, but does not agree on pride as being one. As Miss Bingley asks for the result of Elizabeth's analysis over the character of Mr Darcy, she simply states that Mr Darcy considers himself to be the perfect man – a man without fault. Mr Darcy denies this and says to Elizabeth that he has said no such thing, and that he as well as anyone does have his faults. He also continues by saying that he cannot forget the absurdities of others, or their offences against himself. He says that his "temper would be perhaps called resentful" (P&P 52). Elizabeth says that that is a fault indeed, but she cannot laught at it: "You are safe from me" (P&P 52). Mr Darcy continues the conversation:

> 'There is, I believe, in every disposition a tendency to some particular evil, a natural defect, which not even the best education can overcome.'
> 'And your defect is a propensity to hate everybody.'
> 'And yours,' he replied with a smile, 'is wilfully to misunderstand them.' (P&P 52)

Their conversation is then interrupted by Miss Bingley, who is now quite bored in listening a conversation she can no longer take part in, and suggests they will play some music. Elizabeth is clearly the more dominant party in this conversation, and manages to get Darcy on the defensive. Even though Mr Darcy gets the last word in this conversation, Elizabeth's witty comments on Mr Darcy's character have already gained her the win. This conversation is a good example of the game-like element that so often is present in the conversations between these two characters. Elizabeth and Mr Darcy take turns commenting on each other's words, with each on their own turn trying to get the upper hand in the conversation. This is an example of wit, and especially this "gamelike form of combat" of wit that Price (1975: 267) mentions.

Mr Darcy and Elizabeth's conversations do often seem to have this aspect of competition of who gets to say the last word, and who gets to win the debate. Raillery is often in a dominant role, as their conversations very rarely get hostile or impolite. As stated earlier, Simon Critchley (2002: 81) has defended raillery, as it can, according to him, make conversations more pleasant, but also encourage one to use his or her intelligence. This is very apt as regards the conversations between Elizabeth and Mr Darcy. Elizabeth's wit does make the conversations more agreeable, as she hides her animosity behind her witty remarks instead of being straight-forward and breaking the rules of polite conversation. Darcy often uses raillery as means to express his affections

towards Elizabeth, so in this sense their use of raillery differs from each other especially in the first half of the novel.

The next example is a conversation that takes place at the very end of the novel when Elizabeth and Mr Darcy have fallen in love with each other, and are engaged to be married. Elizabeth teases Mr Darcy by asking him when exactly he fell in love with her, and how it happened. Mr Darcy replies that he cannot give her an exact date or time, or point out the first words of hers that got him to fall for her, as it was such a long time ago. He says that he cannot point out the beginning, as he was already madly in love with her before he himself came to realize it. Elizabeth replies:

> 'My beauty you had early withstood, and as for my manners -- my behaviour to you was at least always bordering on the uncivil, and I never spoke to you without rather wishing to give you pain than not. Now be sincere; did you admire me for my impertinence?' (P&P 318)

Elizabeth teases Mr Darcy, as they both very well know that when they first met, Mr Darcy criticized Elizabeth on her plain looks, and made it perfectly clear that such a woman would never interest him enough to make further acquaintance. Elizabeth admits that her behaviour was indeed rather mischievous and almost uncivil and vulgar. She then asks whether her raillery and mischievousness were the reason why he got interested in the first place. Mr Darcy replies to this:

> 'You may as well call it impertinence at once. It was very little less. The fact is, that you were sick of civility, of deference, of officious attention. You were disgusted with the women who were always speaking, and looking, and thinking for your approbation alone. I roused, and interested you, because I was so unlike them. Had you not been really amiable, you would have hated me for it; but in spite of the pains you took to disguise yourself, your feelings were always noble and just; and in your heart, you thoroughly despised the persons who so assiduously courted you. There -- I have saved you the trouble of accounting for it; and really, all things considered, I begin to think it perfectly reasonable. To be sure, you knew no actual good of me -- but nobody thinks of that when they fall in love.' (P&P 318)

Here Mr Darcy quite aptly sums up the character of Elizabeth. Mr Darcy admits that Elizabeth was mischievous, and this was one part in her character that made her so appealing to him. He also admires Elizabeth for her candour and determination. It is his turn to tease Elizabeth, but she is not lost for words. When Mr Darcy implies that

Elizabeth saw no good in him, she then remarks that he was very good to her sister Jane when she was ill in Netherfield. They then discuss the fact why neither of them made any sort of effort in showing their true feelings towards each other earlier. They both appealed to embarrassment and lack of courage. Mr Darcy then confesses that Lady Catherine's trip to Longbourne was in fact the action that gave him the courage to approach Elizabeth for the second time. They then joke about their gratitude to Lady Catherine, and Elizabeth mischievously asks Mr Darcy, whether he will have the courage to inform Lady Catherine about their plans to get married. Mr Darcy then says that he does not lack in courage, but would have wanted a little more time before he wrote to his aunt. Elizabeth then says: "And if I had not a letter to write myself, I might sit by you and admire the evenness of your writing, as another young lady once did. But I have an aunt, too, who must not be longer neglected" (P&P 319). Here again she teases Mr Darcy, by sarcastically referring to his handwriting that was once commented on by Miss Bingley. By saying this, she finishes the conversation, and they both begin to write their letters. Elizabeth has got the final word in the conversation, and even though they are now considered equals, she still manages to win the witty battle. This is a perfect example of good-intended raillery between lovers, and it gives closure to the battle that has been ongoing throughout the whole novel.

4.2 Power Struggle of the Classes

Judging from these three conversations, it is clear that Elizabeth changes the power hierarchy by wittily answering back to people that are of higher social status. These conversations include those with Mrs Hurst, Miss Bingley, Mr Darcy and Lady Catherine. I will analyse the way in which Elizabeth tries to dominate the conversation and change the social hierarchy, and how she succeeds in her efforts.

4.2.1 Elizabeth, Mrs Hurst, Miss Bingley and Mr Darcy

The next example is a conversation that takes place in the gardens of Netherfield. Miss Bingley and Mr Darcy are walking in the garden, and the former tries her best to tease Mr Darcy and make Elizabeth seem less appealing to him by taking up the subject of her relatives who are in positions less valued by the higher societies. Miss Bingley and Mr Darcy are interrupted, however, by Mrs Hurst and Elizabeth, who are also taking a walk in the garden. This comes as a surprise for both parties, as neither of them knows that the others are also planning on coming out for a walk. Mrs Hurst positions herself to walk beside Mr Darcy and Miss Bingley, and it is clear that the path is only wide enough for the three of them.

> Mr. Darcy felt their rudeness, and immediately said:
> 'This walk is not wide enough for our party. We had better go into the avenue.'
> But Elizabeth, who had not the least inclination to remain with them, laughingly answered:
> 'No, no; stay where you are. You are charmingly grouped, and appear to uncommon advantage. The picturesque would be spoilt by admitting a fourth. Good-bye.' (P&P 48)

Here Elizabeth gets away from awkward and unpleasant company by wittily suggesting that she would "spoil the picturesque" if she joined them. She manages to make a statement by politely suggesting that it would be to their benefit if she did not join them. She presents the matter in such way that it is clear for a more perceptive person that what she really means is to avoid a possibly unpleasant situation, and she manages to do so without offending anyone. Again Elizabeth uses compliments as a way to hide her true feelings about this group, and does so in a way that seems extremely polite, but in fact is actually ironic in nature, and means quite the opposite.

Elizabeth finds the company of Mrs Hurst, Miss Bingley and Mr Darcy especially unpleasant, as these people are in her opinion proud and vain and they only seem to be interested in their own well-being. The way in which they "charmingly group" (P&P 48) themselves in the path, omitting Elizabeth from their company, only supports this image. Mr Darcy, however, follows the decorum and tries to make room for Elizabeth, but Elizabeth saves him the trouble by "gaily running off"(P&P 48), leaving Mrs Hurst, Miss Bingley and Mr Darcy to enjoy each other's company. Mr Darcy is at this point,

beginning to grow very fond of Elizabeth, and by no doubt this is one of the reasons why he tries to make room for her as well. Elizabeth gets her way in the end, as she manages to avoid undesired company, and does this in a manner which actually lifts her above these people who otherwise are considered to be of a higher social rank. While these women of superior status show clear signs of impoliteness, Elizabeth has no trouble in taking the moral high ground simply by answering impoliteness with politeness. As mentioned above, politeness connects with one's position in the social hierarchy, and that those of higher rank are more likely to be polite, and it is also more likely to be expected of them than of those of lower social status (Mills 2003: 204). Simply by making this impolite gesture, Mrs Hurst and Miss Bingley lower themselves from their high status, making it possible for Elizabeth to outdo them.

4.2.2 Elizabeth and Miss Bingley

Miss Bingley has come to gloat as she has found out that Elizabeth has developed feelings for George Wickham, whom Miss Bingley knows to be the villain of the story when it comes to his dealings with Mr Darcy. Elizabeth, however, is still oblivious to Wickham's malicious nature, as she has only heard his side of the story. Elizabeth becomes quite angry when Miss Bingley suggests that it is a pity for Elizabeth that the onject of her emotions is so faulty. Elizabeth does not believe this, but answers back to Miss Bingley:

> 'His guilt and his descend appear by your account to be the same' said Elizabeth angrily; 'for I have heard you accuse him of nothing worse than of being the son of Mr Darcy´s steward, and of *that*, I can assure you, he informed me himself'.
> 'I beg your pardon,' replied Miss Bingley, turning away with a sneer. 'Excuse my interference. – It was kindly meant.' (P&P 83)

Here Elizabeth wins the battle with her social superior even though she later finds out that she has been wrong about Wickham all along. This is again a case where Elizabeth ignores the rules of social intercourse, and with her cutting words she dominates the conversation. Miss Bingley apologizes even though she is not sincere with this action. Apologising is also a part of being polite, and according to Holmes (1995: 174), it is more common to apologise to those who are in a superior position and considered to be

more powerful. Even though this is not a sincere apology, it still shows that Miss Bingley herself lifts Elizabeth into a higher position compared to her own when she begs her pardon.

The following conversation takes place in Mr Darcy's estate in Pemberley. Miss Bingley tries to insult Elizabeth and throw her off balance in front of Mr Darcy by referring to her former dealings with Wickham. Also Georgiana, Darcy's little sister is present, but Miss Bingley does not know that she also has had her fair share of misfortune with Mr Wickham, and by addressing Elizabeth of the matter, she also brings back painful memories for Georgiana. However, Elizabeth is well aware of this, as Mr Darcy had confided to her in his letter, and she is very diplomatic with her answer.

> 'Pray, Miss Eliza, are not the ----shire militia removed from Meryton? They must be a great loss to your family.'
> In Darcy's presence she dared not mention Wickham's name; but Elizabeth instantly comprehended that he was uppermost in her thoughts; and the various recollections connected with him gave her a moment's distress; but, exerting herself vigorously to repel the ill-natured attack, she presently answered the question in a tolerably disengaged tone. (P&P 225)

Elizabeth manages to get the upper hand in the conversation by simply answering to the question in a very casual and indifferent manner. This angers Miss Bingley, but she does not discuss the matter any further. This conversation differs from the other ones studied above in the way that it is not particularly humorous, at least from Elizabeth's point of view. Miss Bingley, on the other hand, finds herself extremely witty, trying to remind Elizabeth of her errors and misjudgements, as well as reminding Mr Darcy of Elizabeth's unfortunate connections "of all the follies and absurdities by which some part of her family were connected with that corps" (P&P 225). Miss Bingley is very jealous of all the attention Elizabeth is getting from Mr Darcy and uses every possible opportunity she gets to try to make Elizabeth's character appear less appealing to him. She tries several times to diminish Elizabeth's charm, either by commenting on her appearance in a less positive manner when alone with Mr Darcy, or by bringing up her unfortunate relations in public. This attempt to put Elizabeth to shame by bringing up the subject of Mr Wickham, however, is brought to naught by Elizabeth's well

composed and polite answer. Elizabeth manages to win this conversation, causing disappointment to Miss Bingley.

4.2.3 Elizabeth and Lady Catherine De Bourgh

In this scene, Elizabeth and her party are at Rosing's Park to visit Lady Catherine De Bourgh. Lady Catherine is described as a "tall, large woman, with strongly marked features, which might once have been handsome." (P&P 138) She is also described as a severe and rather unkind woman who treats her inferiors with appropriate condescend. In this conversation Lady Catherine asks Elizabeth whether any of her younger sisters are "out", this meaning that they have been introduced in the society and taken to balls amongst other social occasions. Elizabeth answers to Lady Catherine, telling her that all of her sisters are already out. Lady Catherine is astonished by this, and exclaims that it is very odd that all the younger ones should be out before the oldest sisters have been married. She then enquires after the age of Elizabeth´s youngest sisters. Elizabeth answers her question but also expresses her opinion on the matter, even though Lady Catherine does not ask to hear it:

> 'Yes, my youngest is not sixteen. Perhaps she is full young to be much in company. But really, ma'am, I think it would be very hard upon younger sisters, that they should not have their share of society and amusement, because the elder may not have the means or inclination to marry early. The last-born has as good a right to the pleasures of youth as the first. And to be kept back on such a motive! I think it would not be very likely to promote sisterly affection or delicacy of mind.'
>
> 'Upon my word,' said her ladyship, 'you give your opinion very decidedly for so young a person. Pray, what is your age?'
>
> 'With three younger sisters grown up,' replied Elizabeth smiling, 'your ladyship can hardly expect me to own it.'
>
> Lady Catherine seemed quite astonished at not receiving a direct answer; and Elizabeth suspected herself to be the first creature who had ever dared to trifle with so much dignified impertinence. (P&P 140)

Lady Catherine thinks very highly of herself, and is well aware of her position in the social hierarchy. She is astonished that all the younger sisters of Elizabeth are already out before the eldest sisters have been married. She takes great pride in always following the etiquette, and this breach in decorum surprises her. Lady Catherine's manners are seemingly polite, as they should be for a woman at her rank, but she

condescends to those below her in the social hierarchy. Mr Collins is always very eager to pay her one of his carefully measured compliments, and this is the kind of treatment Lady Catherine expects from everyone, especially from those in a lower position. She is astonished when she realizes that Elizabeth Bennet does not quite follow her rules of proper conduct, but instead lets her opinions to be known in such a forceful way, declining at first to reveal her age. Lady Catherine is both older than Elizabeth, and also in a higher social position compared to her, and these are the main reasons for her utter astonishment. Elizabeth answers back wittily and decisively and teases Lady Catherine by not giving her a direct answer. Elizabeth is ignoring the social hierarchy, leaving Lady Catherine astounded, and as this happens, it is clear that Elizabeth has already taken control over the conversation.

This type of rebel against the social norms is typical for Elizabeth's character, as she is determined not to bow for those who she does not seem worthy of her deference. Elizabeth manages to be a tease without offending anyone, but still makes her status known by verbally outdoing Lady Catherine. Here again, it is a case of the "velvet glove" mentioned earlier. However, in the following conversation, the situation is quite different. It is a heated conversation between Lady Catherine and Elizabeth, as the former has come to make sure that Elizabeth has no intention on marrying Mr Darcy, Lady Catherine's nephew. Lady Catherine insists that Elizabeth will not accept if an offer of marriage is to be presented to her by Mr Darcy, but at the same time she stresses how impossible it could be that such an offer was ever to be made. Elizabeth addresses this by saying:

> 'If you believed it impossible to be true,' said Elizabeth, colouring with astonishment and disdain, 'I wonder you took the trouble of coming so far. What could your ladyship propose by it?'
> 'At once to insist upon having such a report universally contradicted.'
> 'Your coming to Longbourn, to see me and my family,' said Elizabeth coolly, 'will be rather a confirmation of it; if, indeed, such a report is in existence.' (P&P 296)

Elizabeth sarcastically remarks that Lady Catherine's arrival only seems to confirm that she actually believes this rumour to be true. Lady Catherine then asks whether Elizabeth could indeed be that ignorant that she would not know these rumours were spreading

around, as she was certain that this matter had been discussed also between the members of the Bennet family. Elizabeth plays ignorant, and says that she had no idea that such a rumour was moving about. Lady Catherine then tries again to make Elizabeth to declare that the rumour is groundless, but Elizabeth wittily avoids a direct answer, and merely says: "I do not pretend to possess equal frankness with your ladyship. You may ask questions which I shall not choose to answer." This angers Lady Catherine, and she asks Elizabeth directly, whether her nephew has made her an offer of marriage. Elizabeth again avoids direct answer by saying that Lady Catherine has just announced it to be impossible. Lady Catherine continues that it should be so, if her nephew has acted upon his reason, but she also says that Elizabeth may have charmed him – seduced him, by her "arts and allurements" (P&P 296). Elizabeth then replies, that if this would be the case, then she would be the last person to admit it. Lady Catherine loses her temper, and asks Elizabeth:

> 'Miss Bennet, do you know who I am? I have not been accustomed to such language as this. I am almost the nearest relation he has in the world, and am entitled to know all his dearest concerns.'
> 'But you are not entitled to know mine; nor will such behaviour as this, ever induce me to be explicit.'
> 'Let me be rightly understood. This match, to which you have the presumption to aspire, can never take place. No, never. Mr. Darcy is engaged to my daughter. Now what have you to say?'
> 'Only this; that if he is so, you can have no reason to suppose he will make an offer to me.' (P&P 296)

Lady Catherine is enraged by Elizabeth's boldness and her lack of respect for her. Lady Catherine is not used to being resisted, and she will not accept Elizabeth's negative answer. She tries to pressure Elizabeth into saying that no offer of marriage has been made to her by Mr Darcy, but Elizabeth considers it to be none of her business, and quite explicitly states this as well. Lady Catherine changes her tactics by trying to make Elizabeth promise that if such an unfortunate offer was ever to be made to her, she would decline. Elizabeth does not promise to do this either, but instead asks for reasons why she should not marry him, if she was to be proposed, and this infuriates Lady Catherine even more. Lady Catherine states, that it is a question of honour and decorum (P&P 298). When all her endeavours so far have been without effect, Lady Catherine then threatens Elizabeth, that if she was to accept such an offer, her name would never

me mentioned again by Lady Catherine and her acquaintances and she would be avoided and despised by all of Mr Darcy's acquaintances as well. This, however, does not scare Elizabeth, and she continues to dominate the conversation, as Lady Catherine's requests and threats have no effect on her. Elizabeth finally admits, though, that she is not engaged to be married to Mr Darcy, but this does not entirely satisfy Lady Catherine who then moves on to criticize Elizabeth's family, and especially her youngest sister Lydia who was very close to ruin the family's reputation for good. By this she tries to re-establish her position and humiliate Elizabeth, but Elizabeth decides that their conversation has come to an end, and without saying goodbye, she returns to the house.

Lady Catherine is in a lower position already when the conversation begins, as she would never have gone to Longbourne if she had not expected that there was indeed a certain commitment between Elizabeth and Mr Darcy. She makes herself appear weak by threatening Elizabeth, who wittily informs her that she is not to be intimidated. As Lady Catherine loses her cool composition, she loses the conversation. Even though she later on tries to re-establish her position, she has already lost the battle.

4.3 Teasing with Love

In this sub chapter I concentrate on the conversations between Elizabeth Bennet and her loved ones, Jane Bennet, Charlotte Lucas and Mrs Bennet, who are all in a superior position to her. Jane is superior because she is the oldest of the five sisters, Charlotte because she is a senior to Elizabeth, and Mrs Bennet of course, as she is her mother. Elizabeth uses wittiness as her means to tease the people who are near and dear to her. These means consist mainly of raillery and sarcasm, but I have also included conversations in which she uses other aspects of wittiness, such as hyperboles and irony. These conversations, although few, are of importance because they represent different sides of wittiness, and also tell us a great deal about the character of Elizabeth.

4.3.1 Elizabeth and Jane Bennet

In the following conversation Jane and Elizabeth are discussing the character of Mr Bingley. This takes place at the very beginning of the novel, as the two sisters have just met the gentleman, and Jane is expressing her admiration for the handsome young man. Elizabeth teases her sister, and takes the role of big sister by ridiculing Jane. It is, however, a case of good-natured and well-intended raillery between the two sisters. Elizabeth and Jane are alone, and Jane is telling her sister how much she admires Mr Bingley:

> 'He is just what a young man ought to be,' said she, 'sensible, good-humoured, lively; and I never saw such happy manners! -- so much ease, with such perfect good breeding!'
> 'He is also handsome,' replied Elizabeth, 'which a young man ought likewise to be, if he possibly can. His character is thereby complete.'
> 'I was very much flattered by his asking me to dance a second time. I did not expect such a compliment.'
> 'Did not you? I did for you. But that is one great difference between us. Compliments always take *you* by surprise, and *me* never. What could be more natural than his asking you again? He could not help seeing that you were about five times as pretty as every other woman in the room. No thanks to his gallantry for that. Well, he certainly is very agreeable, and I give you leave to like him. You have liked many a stupider person.' (P&P 14)

Elizabeth teases Jane and at the same time shows her sister that she approves of her opinion. Raillery is present in their conversation, as Elizabeth says to Jane "You have liked many a stupider person". By this she is referring to Jane's tendency to think good of everyone, to easily like people who not always turn out to be worthy of her good opinion. Elizabeth's teasing is exactly what Hester Chapone (1774: 108) means by well-intended and kind joking between friends, as Elizabeth points out Jane's trivial flaws in thinking good about everyone, but does it in a manner that amuses them both, and by doing so she does not offend Jane.

Mutual love and respect are well present in Jane and Elizabeth's relationship, and show in their conversations as well. Elizabeth does not try to offend Jane by her comments; she merely teases her, and this seems only to strengthen their relationship. It is an interesting setting, as Jane is older than Elizabeth, and yet her little sister tends to give

her advice. Usually the setting is the opposite as the older sister is supposed to look after the younger one. Here, it is once again a question of hierarchy, as Elizabeth, being the younger, battles her superior in years with words. In this conversation, Elizabeth even gives Jane her approval of her choice in Mr Bingley, hence putting herself in a higher position.

When Elizabeth finds out how Wickham has fooled her with his story and comes to grasp how badly she has misjudged the character of Mr Darcy's, she discusses the matter with her sister Jane. Jane, as always, tries to see the good in both men, and thinks of an explanation that would make both characters appear in a more positive light. Elizabeth, however, says to Jane:

> 'This will not do,' said Elizabeth. 'You never will be able to make both of them good for anything. Take your choice, but you must be satisfied with only one. There is but such a quantity of merit between them; just enough to make one good sort of man; and of late it has been shifting about pretty much. For my part, I am inclined to believe it all Mr. Darcy's, but you shall do as you choose.' (P&P 190)

After some time, Jane smiles and says that she has never been more shocked. Jane can hardly believe that Mr Wickham could indeed be so foul. She feels sorry for Mr Darcy, as his character has been so badly misunderstood. Jane shows sympathy towards Darcy, and wonders how it must have felt to have Elizabeth's scorn upon him as well, as if it had not been bad enough that such an evil man as Wickham had once been connected to his sister. Jane expresses her distress on the matter, and says that Elizabeth must be feeling the same way, but Elizabeth answers:

> 'Oh! no, my regret and compassion are all done away by seeing you so full of both. I know you will do him such ample justice, that I am growing every moment more unconcerned and indifferent. Your profusion makes me saving; and if you lament over him much longer, my heart will be as light as a feather.' (P&P 190)

Jane is truly sorry for how things have turned out, and participates in Elizabeth's regret and sorrow. She is implying that Elizabeth must be devastated after hearing such news. Elizabeth replies to this by ridiculing Jane's strong reaction to the matter by saying that Jane herself is so overly concerned and worried that if she continues this way, Elizabeth's own concerns will vanish entirely, as if to keep the balance. This, of course,

would not happen, as Elizabeth feels bad for treating Mr Darcy in such an ill manner and blames herself for being so prejudiced. Simultaneously by saying this, she teases Jane who has a habit of sometimes being too compassionate and emphatic. Elizabeth teases Jane as a big sister would, and this results in a change of the roles of the older and younger sister.

The following scene takes place after Mr Bingley and Mr Darcy have visited the Bennet's, and Jane comes to tell Elizabeth how she is now in terms with the fact that she and Mr Bingley are friends, and will never be anything more than that.

> 'Now,' said she, 'that this first meeting is over, I feel perfectly easy. I know my own strength, and I shall never be embarrassed again by his coming. I am glad he dines here on Tuesday. It will then be publicly seen that, on both sides, we meet only as common and indifferent acquaintance.'
> 'Yes, very indifferent indeed,' said Elizabeth, laughingly. 'Oh, Jane, take care.'
> 'My dear Lizzy, you cannot think me so weak, as to be in danger now?'
> 'I think you are in very great danger of making him as much in love with you as ever.' (P&P 281)

Elizabeth knows that this is not the whole truth, as Jane's feelings towards Mr Bingley were very strong, and feelings of that calibre cannot easily be erased entirely. Elizabeth laughs at Jane and questions her statement. She plays the part of the big sister by being this attentive towards her, telling her to "take care". Jane sees this and asks Elizabeth whether she actually thinks that she is so weak that she cannot suffocate her emotions and treat Mr Bingley as just a friend. Elizabeth turns the situation the other way around and suggests that Jane might as well be safe when it comes to her feelings, but Mr Bingley is the one that is in danger to fall even more in love with Jane. Elizabeth plays with words here, as Jane asks her whether she is in danger, and Elizabeth states that indeed she is – but only in danger to make a man fall madly in love with her. Elizabeth is very protective over Jane, as we may again see in this conversation. What makes the relationship between these two characters so interesting is the way in which Elizabeth talks to her sister: she is very protective over her, sometimes sounding almost patronizing.

The following conversation takes place a little while after Jane and Elizabeth's last meeting with the two gentlemen Mr Bingley and Mr Darcy. The sisters are having a

conversation about Mr Bingley. Earlier, Jane has expressed her contentment with just being friends with him. Now they have met him for the first time after the two gentleman visited them in Longbourn, and Jane is talking to her sister about the evening. Jane declares that it has been a "very agreeable day" (P&P 285), and that the people in the assembly have been very charming and getting on very well with each other. She then expresses a wish to see them quite often in the future. Elizabeth smiles to this notion, and Jane continues:

> 'Lizzy, you must not do so. You must not suspect me. It mortifies me. I assure you that I have now learnt to enjoy his conversation as an agreeable and sensible young man, without having a wish beyond it. I am perfectly satisfied, from what his manners now are, that he never had any design of engaging my affection. It is only that he is blessed with greater sweetness of address, and a stronger desire of generally pleasing, than any other man.'
> 'You are very cruel,' said her sister, 'you will not let me smile, and are provoking me to it every moment.'
> 'How hard it is in some cases to be believed!'
> 'And how impossible in others!' (P&P 285)

Elizabeth does not need to say anything; her smile is quite enough for Jane to understand her thoughts. Jane gets defensive, and tries to convince Elizabeth for the second time that she does not have feelings for Mr Bingley, even though she still very much likes his character. Elizabeth does not believe this, and teases Jane by saying that it is indeed very cruel of her to make such a funny statement and not expect her to take pleasure from it. Jane exclaims how it is so very hard to make Elizabeth convinced, and Elizabeth mischievously states that it is indeed in this case impossible. Jane asks Elizabeth: "But why should you wish to persuade me that I feel more than I acknowledge?", and Elizabeth replies that it is a question she does not really know how to answer. She continues by saying that "we all love to instruct, though we can teach only what is not worth knowing" (P&P 285). Elizabeth means that she likes to instruct her older sister, even though her instructions may not be always agreeable to her. She also states that whether Jane does not want to hear her opinions on the matter, she should not confide to her.

Here Elizabeth is once again teasing Jane, as she is well aware of her feelings towards Mr Bingley, and also has a hunch that Mr Bingley has equal feelings towards Jane. She implies that Jane should know her well enough to understand that such raillery is only to

be expected of her. This is also the case, as Jane is never offended by Elizabeth's teasing – on the contrary, she seems to have a high respect for Elizabeth and her witty words, as otherwise she would not discuss these matters with her. Elizabeth's irony is always well intended, and part of the dynamics of the relationship between the two sisters. Even though Jane exclaims that she is mortified by being so questioned by Elizabeth, she is undoubtedly pleased as Elizabeth's words give her hope and strengthen their already strong relationship.

The following example is a conversation where Jane is expressing her joy on being finally engaged to Mr Bingley. She tells Elizabeth that she must be the world's happiest person as she of all people has been singled out and blessed with such joy. She expresses her wish for Elizabeth to find equal happiness by saying: "If I could but see you as happy! If there were but such another man for you!" (P&P 292) Elizabeth teases Jane by saying:

> 'If you were to give me forty such men, I never could be so happy as you. Till I have your disposition, your goodness, I never can have your happiness. No, no, let me shift for myself; and, perhaps, if I have very good luck, I may meet with another Mr. Collins in time.' (P&P292)

Elizabeth uses raillery and irony to let Jane know that she could never be happier than her sister is now. Elizabeth is truly happy for her sister, and tells her that even with 40 Mr Bingleys, she could not be as happy as Jane must be now. Elizabeth also ironically states that if she might be really lucky, she might meet another Mr Collins in the future. This makes the conversation especially humorous, as they both are aware of Mr Collins's repugnant character, and as stated earlier, Elizabeth would never marry such a man. Elizabeth is joking and adding to Jane's pleasure and happiness by doing so. Elizabeth is proud of her older sister, and expresses her feelings through raillery. Elizabeth's way to express her joy, however, shows again how she takes the role of the older sister.

The following conversation takes place in the very end of the novel. Elizabeth is telling Jane that she has fallen in love, and they are discussing her engagement to Mr Darcy. At first, Jane cannot believe what her sister is telling her, as she has made it quite clear

earlier how much she dislikes the man. Elizabeth says to this that it might have been the case at the beginning, but her feelings have changed. She advises Jane to forget all about the past, just as she herself will be doing now. Jane congratulates Elizabeth, but asks her whether she is absolutely sure that she will be happy with Mr Darcy. Elizabeth says that they have already settled their differences and are very much in love with each other. Elizabeth asks Jane whether she will happy to have Mr Darcy in the family, and she replies that nothing could please her and Mr Bingley more. She still asks whether Elizabeth truly loves Mr Darcy, and Elizabeth replies:

> 'Oh, yes! You will only think I feel more than I ought to do, when I tell you all.'
> 'What do you mean?'
> 'Why, I must confess that I love him better than I do Bingley. I am afraid you will be angry.'
> 'My dearest sister, now *be* serious. I want to talk very seriously. Let me know everything that I am to know, without delay. Will you tell me how long you have loved him?'
> 'It has been coming on so gradually, that I hardly know when it began. But I believe I must date it from my first seeing his beautiful grounds at Pemberley.' (P&P 312-313)

Jane asks her again to be serious, and Elizabeth does her best to assure Jane that she is earnest in her attachment to Mr Darcy. Once Jane is convinced, the subject can be laid to rest.

Here Elizabeth discusses the engagement between her and Mr Darcy with her sister Jane. Elizabeth is once again teasing Jane, first by joking about the fact that she loves Mr Darcy more than Jane's fiancé Mr Bingley, and then by saying that she fell in love with Darcy after seeing his handsome estate at Pemberley. Jane is amused by this, but she still asks Elizabeth to be serious and stop joking about a matter she finds serious. Elizabeth expresses the wittiness of her character when she uses raillery to tease her older sister. It is a humorous conversation, as Elizabeth first makes an apparent note that she loves Mr Darcy more than she does Mr Bingley, and after this she implies that Mr Darcy's money and wealth have made him appear more appealing to her. Elizabeth is being mischievous and witty, and only after Jane has asked her twice to take the matter seriously, and to give her an honest answer, does she tell her how she really feels about Mr Darcy. The discussion finally gets its desired closure as Jane gets her answer. This is

a good example of "delicate and good-natured raillery amongst equal friends" as mentioned earlier by Chapone (1774: 108). It is interesting how Elizabeth again takes the role of the older sister teasing the younger one, even though Jane is the oldest of the sisters. Even though this could be seen as joking between two equals, Elizabeth's witty wording changes the hierarchy between these two.

4.3.2 Elizabeth and Charlotte Lucas

Elizabeth and Charlotte Lucas have a very special relationship that is based on mutual respect for each other. Elizabeth, however, changes the dynamics of their relationship by often teasing Charlotte with words. Charlotte is older than Elizabeth, but this does not stop Elizabeth from acting as the older one. In this scene, Elizabeth and Charlotte are discussing the relationship between Jane and Mr Bingley, and Charlotte is expressing how she wishes Jane all the best in the world, and says that in her opinion it does not matter whether Jane and Mr Bingley would have known each other only for a few days or a year before they got married, as in her opinion, Jane has in both cases equal chances of happiness. According to Charlotte, happiness in marriage is "entirely a matter of chance" (P&P 21). Charlotte says that in her opinion, it does not matter how well a couple knows each other before they get married – in fact, the less they know the better. Elizabeth replies to this: "You make me laugh, Charlotte; but it is not sound. You know it is not sound, and that you would never act in this way yourself." (P&P 21) Elizabeth expresses her amusement and doubt on Charlotte's words, and by doing this, she changes their roles. Elizabeth is often treating Charlotte as if she was younger than herself, and ridiculing her words and questioning her judgement are a great part of this. Charlotte, however, is not offended by Elizabeth's teasing, as it simply is part of the dynamics of their relationship.

In the following conversation, Charlotte teases Elizabeth, but she quickly answers back to her friend and takes the role of the senior. Elizabeth has been teasing Mr Darcy, and Charlotte teases Elizabeth in her turn by saying that it is soon Elizabeth's turn to sing – and to be teased:

> 'It will be her turn soon to be teased,' said Miss Lucas. 'I am going to open the instrument, Eliza, and you know what follows.'

> ‘You are a very strange creature by way of a friend!–always wanting me to play and sing before anybody and everybody! If my vanity had taken a musical turn, you would have been invaluable; but as it is, I would really rather not sit down before those who must be in the habit of hearing the very best performers.’ On Miss Lucas’s persevering, however, she added, ‘Very well, if it must be so, it must.’ (P&P 22)

Charlotte refers to Elizabeth’s somewhat feeble talents on singing and playing the piano, and does this in a friendly way, using raillery. Elizabeth answers back by criticizing Charlotte, saying that she is a strange friend to so put her in the spotlight against her will. She teases Charlotte and changes the hierarchy between them two by doing so. She agrees then to participate and join her by the piano, but not without first commenting on Charlotte’s character. Mr Darcy is still with them when the conversation comes to an end, and before getting up and walking to the piano forte, she wittily quotes a proverb and says to Mr Darcy: “Keep your breath to cool your porridge – and I shall keep mine to swell my song” (P&P 22). As stated previously, by this she tells Mr Darcy to hold his tongue: to be quiet while she goes to perform. It might be seen as a deterrent, an order not to criticize her once she performs. Elizabeth handles the situation with skill, teasing both Charlotte and Mr Darcy without breaking the decorum.

4.3.3 Witty Discussions with Friends and Family

In the following sub chapter, I will take a closer look on how Elizabeth interacts with different people. I have included conversations that take place between Elizabeth and Maria Lucas, Elizabeth and Mrs Bennet and Elizabeth and Mrs Gardiner. These conversations show Elizabeth’s witty side in an even broader sense and give a better view on her linguistic talents. I have included these conversations because they show different types of wittiness, and strengthen the framework for all the conversations Elizabeth participates in throughout the novel.

In the following scene, Elizabeth is talking with Charlotte Lucas’s little sister Maria. Maria has called Elizabeth to quickly come to the window, as Mrs Jenkinson has arrived with Lady Catherine’s daughter Miss De Bourgh to visit the Lucas Lodge, the home of Mr and Mrs Collins. Maria calls for Elizabeth in such a hurried manner, that Elizabeth

expects it to be something serious: “And is this all?” cried Elizabeth. “I expected at least that the pigs were got into the garden, and here is nothing but Lady Catherine and her daughter!” (P&P 135) Elizabeth is using a hyperbole, making the situation humorous by this witty notion. Maria corrects, that it is not Lady Catherine but Mrs Jenkinson and Miss De Bourgh. Maria marvels at Lady Catherine’s daughter, and how she appears to be such a very thin and small, delicate young woman. Elizabeth makes remarks of Miss De Bourgh’s appearance as well. Miss De Bourgh is indeed described as a pale, sick-looking young woman, and she is ordained to be married to Mr Darcy, as Lady Catherine herself has stated. Mr and Mrs Collins have gone outside to greet Mrs Jenkinson and her daughter. Elizabeth criticizes the party:

> ‘She is abominably rude to keep Charlotte out of doors in all this wind. Why does she not come in?’
> ‘Oh! Charlotte says, she hardly ever does. It is the greatest of favours when Miss De Bourgh comes in.’
> ‘I like her appearance,’ said Elizabeth, struck with other ideas. ‘She looks sickly and cross. - Yes, she will do for him very well. She will make him a very proper wife.’ (P&P 136)

In this conversation Elizabeth remarks on the appearance of Miss De Bourgh. She says that Miss De Bourgh looks “sickly and cross” and expresses her opinion on this woman’s suitability for Mr Darcy’s wife. This thought does not come to her mind without any justification, as it is known that Lady Catherine De Bourgh is planning her daughter to marry Mr Darcy, as this would be, in her opinion, a very sensible and profitable marriage. Elizabeth is being witty with her remarks, but at the same time she also sounds slightly disappointed and bitter. It seems that already at this point her opinion on Mr Darcy has started to shift towards more pleasant feelings.

She generally dislikes Mr Darcy and Miss De Bourgh, and expresses her feelings of delight when thinking such thoughts as to see Darcy and Miss De Bourgh married. This “sickly and cross” creature would be, in Elizabeth’s opinion, well suited to live together with Mr Darcy, whom she finds very proud and vain. Mr Darcy would never choose such a woman to be his wife if he had the choice, and this is exactly the reason why Elizabeth would enjoy seeing this scenario actually come true. This again is a case of Elizabeth hiding her aggression and disappointment behind her witty and sarcastic

remarks. If Mr Darcy were indifferent to her, she would not have reacted this strongly when seeing Miss De Bourgh. This is one of the points that make this conversation interesting and significant, as it shows the development of Elizabeth's feelings and has an impact on the conversations between herself and Mr Darcy.

In the following scene, Elizabeth is having a conversation with Mrs Gardiner. They are discussing Wickham's engagement to Miss King, who is a very wealthy young woman, and this is the reason why Wickham has been drawn to her. Elizabeth is apparently disappointed, as she herself has had feelings for Mr Wickham, and would gladly have married him. Mrs Gardiner says that she should not think ill of a man that has lived so long in Derbyshire, but Elizabeth retorts:

> 'Oh! if that is all, I have a very poor opinion of young men who live in Derbyshire; and their intimate friends who live in Hertfordshire are not much better. I am sick of them all. Thank Heaven! I am going tomorrow where I shall find a man who has not one agreeable quality, who has neither manner nor sense to recommend him. Stupid men are the only ones worth knowing, after all.' (P&P 130)

Mrs Gardiner responds to this: "Take care, Lizzy; that speech savours strongly of disappointment" (P&P 130). Elizabeth's statement is cold and harsh, and it well represents her disappointment with men, Mr Wickham, Mr Darcy and Mr Bingley. Elizabeth is being ironic, twisting the truth and making it sound bitter: "Stupid men are the only ones worth knowing, after all" (P&P 130). By this she means that if you do not have much to expect from a man, you cannot be too badly disappointed in him either.

Elizabeth has been disappointed by Mr Wickham, whom she thought to be an intelligent and respectable man, and whom her father Mr Bennet would gladly have taken as his son-in-law before the true nature of Mr Wickham's character came out in public. Mr Bingley was also a disappointment, not for Elizabeth, but for her sister Jane, as he left and went to live in London, making it very clear that he had no intention of getting engaged to Miss Jane Bennet. Elizabeth regards this as the result of Mr Darcy's contribution to the matter by advising Mr Bingley not to marry Jane, and as a result her feelings of dislike and contempt towards Mr Darcy can only strengthen. Elizabeth expresses herself in an intelligent way, using sarcasm and irony to conceal her

disappointment, but at the same time bringing the element of humour and wittiness into the conversation.

The following conversation is between Elizabeth and her mother, Mrs Bennet. It takes place at the very beginning of the book, after Mr Darcy has criticized Elizabeth's appearance and stated that only the eldest of the daughters is worthy of attention. Mrs Bennet is criticizing Mr Darcy and his rude and arrogant composition. When Charlotte says that she wished that Mr Darcy would have danced with Elizabeth, Mrs Bennet merely says: "Another time, Lizzy – I would not dance with *him*, if I were you". Elizabeth ironically responds to this that: "I believe, Ma´am, I may safely promise you *never* to dance with him." (P&P 19) This type of raillery is typical for Elizabeth, and she often teases her mother with her sarcastic remarks.

Elizabeth is clearly more intelligent than her mother who often fails to follow the decorum, and who is not very skilled in hiding her opinions behind witty wording. As Mary Crawford (1995: 69) points out in her book *Talking Difference: On Gender and Language*, the person who does not master the skill of indirectness, is often seen as a person who is somewhat lacking in competence. This is the case with Mrs Bennet, and her lack of social skills leads to her often managing to embarrass Elizabeth, as also happens in Netherfield when she is visiting Jane who is gravely ill after riding to Netherfield in heavy rain. Mrs Bennet quite explicitly criticizes Mr Darcy and his proud and displeasing composition. Elizabeth tries to divert Mrs Bennet into another subject, but does not completely succeed in doing so. Mrs Bennet could be considered a rather vulgar woman, with very ill manners and little understanding of the codes of conduct. Once Elizabeth has tried to change the topic of the conversation by asking about Miss Lucas and her family, her mother begins to comment on Miss Lucas's appearance and complement her own daughter Jane's. Mrs Bennet says that when Jane was only 15 years old, there was a gentleman who admired her a great deal, and it was even expected for him to propose to Jane. This did not happen however, but Mrs Bennet compliments the poems that the gentleman used to write to Jane. Elizabeth tries to end the awkward conversation by saying: "And so ended his affection—There has been many a one, I fancy, overcome in the same way. I wonder who first discovered the efficacy of poetry

in driving away love!" (P&P 41) Elizabeth is being humorous and witty, and she tries to lighten the mood. She also strives to dominate the conversation and silence her mother, succeeding in both.

Elizabeth has no trouble in teasing her mother, as we may also see in the scene in which Mrs Bennet tries to convince Elizabeth to marry Mr Collins but Elizabeth "sometimes with real earnestness and sometimes with playful gaiety replied to her attacks" (P&P 97). She resists her mother, and by doing this, achieves supremacy. Mrs Bennet is a colourful character who often lacks decorum and speaks out of turn, and this makes her a humorous figure. Elizabeth and her father often ridicule her, but this is all done with love and affection. In the very end of the novel, Mrs Bennet, however, seems to have improved her conduct, as she is very careful with her words when discussing with Mr Darcy. (P&P 316) Her newly developed respect for this gentleman has made her very careful with her words, and this suits Elizabeth very well, as she will soon marry Mr Darcy, who will then become part of the family. Elizabeth is pleased that her mother has improved her manners as it will make it easier for Elizabeth (and Mr Darcy) to get along with her, and Elizabeth can fully concentrate on her relationship with Mr Darcy.

5 CONCLUSIONS

The protagonist of *Pride and Prejudice*, Elizabeth Bennet, is a young woman with strong opinions and beliefs, and a strong will and desire to let these opinions to be heard. When it comes to the women in the 19th century England, it was expected for ladies to act according to their position, which was often to act pleasingly and always be polite, never to question those who are in a higher position compared to theirs. "He is to purvey and she is to smile" as stated in *Northanger Abbey* (1994: 65), quite well sums up the composition between men and women – men were to provide for the women, and women were to be grateful for this. This is one of the stereotypical pictures also presented in *Pride and Prejudice*, and also one that Elizabeth protests against. Elizabeth tries to fight the stereotypical gender roles, and succeeds in this, as we may see from her conversations with Mr Darcy. Elizabeth does not resign herself to this stereotypical role of women of that time, but strives to show that she can be at least equal, if not superior, to men. She battles with her words, and tends to win. She breaks the rules set to women by verbally establishing herself to a position that makes her appear superior to the opposite sex. Men were allowed to be more frank and straight-forward in their speech, whereas women were expected to discuss pleasingly and avoid conflicts. As Michaelson states it, women´s speech does not usually show any signs of authority, but quite on the contrary; "it has been vilified as the cackling of hens" (Michaelson 2002: 6). Women´s speech was considered to be meaningless and insignificant, and this stereotype is the one Elizabeth proves to be wrong.

When it comes to conversations between people of the same sex, it is a battle over power. Elizabeth does not belong to the upper class, but does not let this stand in her way when she believes that she has been mistreated. As we saw in the conversations between Elizabeth and Miss Bingley, she is ready to fight back when she feels injustice has occurred. Even though Miss Bingley is in a higher position and because of this she should be referred to accordingly, Elizabeth is not afraid to let her opinions be known. Because of her verbal talent, she manages to dominate these conversations. Elizabeth will not be oppressed, and even Lady Catherine sees this when she tries to intimidate her into acting according to her will. Elizabeth is a strong character, and her sarcastic

remarks and wry wording help her to change the hierarchy when conversing with people of higher social rank. Elizabeth manages to gain supremacy in these encounters with for example Miss Bingley and Lady Catherine, sometimes by using politeness as a way to disguise her contempt, sometimes sarcasm and irony to serve the same purpose.

Elizabeth's raillery is often presented in a very polite manner, and due to this, it rarely seriously offends anyone. Raillery in conversations between Elizabeth and her older sister Jane is always friendly, and it has a certain sense of warmth in it. This type of raillery only seems to only strengthen their already very strong relationship. The conversations between Elizabeth and Mr Darcy in the beginning of the novel however, have a very different tone to them. Their mutual dislike for each other shows in the way they speak with each other. Elizabeth hides her aggression behind her witty remarks, and shows her contempt through raillery. Mr Darcy tends to be more formal and to present his thoughts in a more composed manner, as showed earlier. In some occasions, however, Darcy also uses raillery as a means to answer back to Elizabeth. Conversations between these two have, as previously stated, a game-like feeling to them. They are both accomplished and intelligent people, and even though their social statuses are different, their conversations are filled with witty remarks and cleverly hidden offences towards each other. They are always seemingly very polite, as it is a demand set by the society, but still they manage (on several occasions) to criticize each other. The nature of these conversations evolves over time, and aggression becomes less common as their feelings for each other start to grow towards love. As may be seen in the very last conversation between Mr Darcy and Elizabeth that I included in my analysis, the aggression has died out and their witty wording has turned into good-natured raillery. But even in the very last conversation, Elizabeth gets the last word. Even though their conversation has now gotten this warm and loving form, she still manages to be the one to dominate the conversation, and outdo Darcy with her witty words.

Elizabeth loves her older sister Jane very much, and teases her often with her words. They have a strong relationship that can endure such raillery. Elizabeth's witty and sarcastic remarks show her affection towards Jane, but also change the dynamics in their

relationship. Jane is the eldest of the five sisters, but Elizabeth continuously takes her role as the older sister by being very attentive to her sister, and often questioning her judgement. Jane tries to respond to Elizabeth's raillery, but rarely succeeds in this. Elizabeth shows her love by teasing, as we may also see in the last conversation between herself and Mr Darcy. In these conversations that take place between Elizabeth and Jane, Elizabeth and Mrs Bennet or Elizabeth and Mr Darcy, it is not a case of malicious bullying, but a case of teasing with love.

Elizabeth and Charlotte Lucas are very close friends, and also in their conversations raillery is a factor that strengthens their relationship. Charlotte being seven years older than Elizabeth plays no role in their friendship, as Elizabeth often tends to act as the senior, by questioning Charlotte's choices (for example her marriage to Mr Collins) and teasing her with words. Their conversation at Netherfield is a great example of the kind of witty wording that can be expected of these two friends. Charlotte tries to tease Elizabeth by making her come with her and sing, but Elizabeth is quick to reply and get the last word in the conversation. Elizabeth's concern for Charlotte shows how she takes the role of the senior, and her teasing Charlotte only strengthens this position. Even though Charlotte is to be a married woman, and also in this sense is in a higher position to Elizabeth, it still does not stop Elizabeth from expressing her concern on her friend's future.

Elizabeth uses wit sometimes to get her attitudes known, and sometimes to escape an unpleasant situation (as in conversation between Elizabeth, Mrs Hurst, Miss Bingley and Mr Darcy). She shows her contempt towards other people by being sarcastic or ironic, as seen in the conversation between her and Mary Lucas, and also in her conversation with Mrs Gardiner. Society has set strict behavioural rules for women, as they are expected rather to be quiet and obedient than to speak their minds. It is expected of women to always be polite and act pleasantly, and for them to criticize or show contempt towards other people is considered vulgar. This being the case, women have to hide their opinions, and as Elizabeth is a very intelligent and self-assured young lady, she refuses to be silenced, and uses her wit to let her opinions to be known: sometimes through delicate raillery, sometimes through sarcasm or irony. Michaelson

(2002:69) makes a notion of this disparity in her book: “while her father’s raillery can be cruel, her own must always be sweetened by smiles and sensitivity to the feelings of others”. Elizabeth takes other people’s feelings into account when conversing with them, and often softens the blow with politeness. It is very apt to talk about a “velvet glove” or a “veil” (Watts 2003: 47), as discussed earlier, because it was important to pay attention to the decorum. Elizabeth is very skilled in displaying her thoughts in such a manner, that it might for an outsider to seem like a completely normal polite conversation, but for the opponent the situation may look quite different.

Miss Elizabeth Bennet is an intelligent, impertinent and quick-witted young lady, who shines with her wit in conversations. She has a sharp tongue, and her way of making quick judgements of other people sometimes leads her astray, as seen in the case of Mr Darcy. However, she is a clever woman, and she is well able to learn from her mistakes. Elizabeth could be called an early feminist, as she refuses to fully obey the rules society has set for women. As may be seen in her refusal to marry Mr Collins, she is guided by her own sense of what is right, and will not let the oppressing society influence her decisions. Elizabeth strives to dominate conversations, and win her battles with words. She succeeds in this in all the conversations presented earlier, except for one that can be seen to end up in a tie. In my opinion, this proves my supposition to be correct, as Elizabeth does win the battle of the sexes as well as the battle over power. Also her conversations with her loved ones end in her favour, as she manages to take the position of the superior in all the conversations, whether it was a conversation between Elizabeth and Jane, Elizabeth and Charlotte, or Elizabeth and her mother.

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