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**COURTSHIP, LOVE AND MARRIAGE IN JANE AUSTEN'S**  
**NOVELS**

**Bachelor Thesis**

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**UNIVERSITY OF ECONOMICS**  
**FACULTY OF APPLIED LANGUAGES**

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**Study programme:** Foreign Languages and Intercultural Communication  
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### **Affirmation**

I hereby solemnly and sincerely affirm that this bachelor thesis was written by myself and myself alone. All used references and resources are clearly indicated. All quotes and citations are properly referenced.

.....

signature

## **Acknowledgement**

I would like to convey my gratitude to PaedDr. Eva Stradiotová, PhD. for all her guidance and help during the process of writing of this thesis. My gratitude also belongs to all the respondents that took part in the survey for this thesis.

## ABSTRAKT

KRAJČOVIČOVÁ, Natália: *Dvoreníe, láska a manželstvo v románoch Jane Austenovej*. – Ekonomická univerzita v Bratislave. Fakulta aplikovaných jazykov; Katedra interkultúrnej komunikácie FAJ. – Vedúci záverečnej práce: PaedDr. Eva Stradiotová, PhD. Bratislava: FAJ, 2019, počet strán 49.

Hlavným cieľom tejto záverečnej bakalárskej práce je porovnať názory bežných ľudí na romány Jane Austenovej s profesionálnymi názormi a kritikou literárnych znalcov, so zreteľom na lásku, manželstvo a postavenie žien v spoločnosti na začiatku 19. storočia, a zistiť, či problematika, ktorou sa táto autorka zaoberala, sa stále dá aplikovať na spoločnosť aj v dnešnej dobe. Táto bakalárska práca je rozdelená do troch kapitol a obsahuje dva obrázky, tri grafy a jednu prílohu.

Prvá kapitola tejto bakalárskej práce sa sústreďuje na objasnenie tých najnákladnejších a najdôležitejších informácií o Jane Austenovej a o jej živote, nie len ako autorky ale aj ako ženy v ranom 19. storočí. V tejto časti sa kladie veľký dôraz na sociálne ako aj historické okolnosti, ktoré ozrejmuju prečo Jane Austenová používala taký štýl písania a metódy tvorby, aké používala.

V ďalšej časti sa bližšie a detailnejšie charakterizujú hlavné dejové linky románov Jane Austenovej, sprevádzané krátkou analýzou profesionálnych literárnych kritikov a citáciami z týchto diel.

Záverečná kapitola sa zaoberá praktickou časťou tejto bakalárskej práce. Dochádza tu k vyhodnoteniu dotazníka. Podľa výsledkov už vyššie spomenutého dotazníku, prichádza k porovnávaní názorov laickej verejnosti a odborníkov v danej oblasti na túto problematiku.

V konečnom dôsledku sa pomocou prieskumu, ktorý bol vykonaný ako súčasť tejto bakalárskej práce zistilo, že laickej verejnosti chýbajú informácie na vytvorenie informovaného názoru v oblasti danej problematiky.

**Kľúčové slová:** Jane Austen, láska, manželstvo, romantický román.

## **ABSTRACT**

KRAJČOVIČOVÁ, Natália: *Courtship, Love and Marriage in Jane Austen's Novels*. – University of Economics in Bratislava. Faculty of Applied Languages; Department of Intercultural Communication. - Supervisor of the bachelor thesis: PaedDr. Eva Stradiotová, PhD. Bratislava: EUBA FAJ, 2019, number of pages 49.

The main objective of this bachelor thesis is to compare the general public opinion on the novels of Jane Austen with the professional opinions and criticism of literary critics, with emphasis on love, marriage, and the standing of women in society in the early 19th century, and to determine whether the issues she focused on are still applicable to the contemporary society as well. This bachelor thesis is divided into three main chapters. It contains two figures, three charts, and one appendix.

The first chapter of this bachelor thesis focuses on the very basic but absolutely vital background information on Jane Austen in regards to her life, both as a woman and as an author of the early 19th century. It lies heavy emphasis on the historical and social conditions back in those days and explains why Jane Austen used the writing style and methods that she did.

In the following chapter the main plotlines of Jane Austen's greatest literary works are explained in more detail. A short analysis by professional literary critics is provided along with samples and quotes from the respective novels.

The last chapter deals with the empirical part of this bachelor thesis. The findings of the survey are disclosed. Based on the results, the opinions of lay people are compared to the ones of professionals in the field of research of the author that is Jane Austen.

In conclusion, the final findings of this bachelor thesis are that the surveyed general public lacked the advanced knowledge necessary to form an informed opinion on the issues discussed the first two chapters of this thesis.

**Keywords:** Jane Austen, love, marriage, Romantic novel.

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## **Introduction**

The main objective of this bachelor thesis is to compare the opinion of the lay general public on the novels of Jane Austen with the professional opinions and criticism of literary critics and experts in the given field, with heavy emphasis on love, marriage, and the standing of women in society in the early 19th century. It also tries to determine whether the issues Jane Austen discussed in her works and that were the main focus of her novels are still applicable to the society as we know it in the 21st century as well, and if so, to what extent.

The first chapter of this bachelor thesis focuses on the very elemental yet absolutely crucial background information on Jane Austen in regards to her life, both as a woman and as an author of the early 19th century. It lies heavy emphasis on the historical political situation and social conditions back in those days and explains why Jane Austen used the writing style and methods that she did.

In the following chapter the main plotlines of Jane Austen's greatest literary works are explained in more detail. A short analysis by professional literary critics is provided along with samples and quotes from the respective novels.

The last chapter deals with the empirical part of this bachelor thesis. The results of the survey, which was conducted, are disclosed. Based on the empirical findings, the opinions of lay general public are compared to the ones of professionals in the field of research of the author that is Jane Austen.

The importance of this bachelor thesis lies in explaining the social situation and struggles of women in the 19th century in context of Jane Austen novels, further making it possible for the reader to understand and fully grasp said issue, and how the events in that time period might have affected the views of our society in 21st century. Furthermore, on the discovered views of modern people, it demonstrates how those effects can still be seen in the contemporary times. On the findings of the survey which was conducted as a part of the empirical part of this thesis, it tries to showcase whether or not the general public is capable of fully understanding the aforementioned issues, and if so, to what extent. It is of utmost importance that people are aware of, and that they understand the events that happened in our history in order to be able to fully comprehend current happenings around us to the full extent.

# 1 Jane Austen overview

It is safe to say that Jane Austen belongs to the group of historical authors that have had great impact on the society but also on people as individuals, without perhaps every planning to gain such reach. Her stories and novels have changed the way we see and how we understand the world around us. Their complexity has brought many essential issues of the human society into the spotlight, not only back in the 19th century but also in the present times.

## 1.1 Jane Austen the Person

*“Seldom, very seldom, does complete truth belong to any human disclosure; seldom can it happen that something is not a little disguised, or a little mistaken.”* Jane Austen in *Emma* (1815).

### 1.1.1 Family life

Jane Austen was born in year 1775 on December 16th in Steventon, Hampshire, England. Her parents were George and Cassandra Austen. She was born as the second daughter and in total the seventh child and the second youngest child of her parents. Warren (2018) mentions that out of all her siblings Austen had the closest bond with her brother Henry who later posed as her literary agent and her elder sister Cassandra, with whom the relationship felt, at least to Warren, a bit more forced on the basis of being the only sister rather than a kindred soul (Warren, 2018). Le Faye (2003) goes on to mention that Jane's second eldest brother did not grow up among his other siblings, since from early childhood he showed signs of deafness, muteness, and epilepsy, and therefore, despite the efforts of Mrs. Austen he could not have been raised at home along with the other children but instead he was sent to live with a cottager family in a neighbouring village. It is said that his well-being was taken care of and that his family did not break ties with him and paid the coin for his upbringing and all of his needs, which could be proven with the fact that he lived for seventy-two years (Le Faye, 2003).

Parents of Jane Austen got married in year 1764 on April 26th in the city of Bath. Jane's mother, Cassandra Leigh, used to live there alone with only her mother. Jane's father, George Austen also known as 'The Handsome Proctor' of St. John's College, was a reverend

and later in his life only three years before marrying Jane's mother, he became the rector of Steventon, a position that he held until his last dying breath. It is mentioned by Austen-Leigh (1913) that their marriage was happy albeit difficult at times, with one of their son's illness and whatnot (Austen-Leigh, 1913).

Back in those times being a woman and a writer presented a challenge, mostly since the experiences of women tended to be limited by the societal opinions and of what was considered proper for a lady. How did then Jane manage to create a connection with the outside world and gather outlook on the world at large? Le Faye (2003) makes it look like the answer to this question is quite simple. She mentions that Mr Austen's older sister Philadelphia served as Jane's first and most important link to the outside world. Philadelphia is said to have visited India in search of a potential husband and find him she did. Later on, she and her husband and their daughter moved back to the United Kingdom and revived their connections to the Austen family. After the tragic and unexpected death of her husband who returned to India once again to provide for his family, Philadelphia and her daughter Betsy used to spend their summers in the countryside where they would from time to time drop by the Austen household and present them with fine gifts from India and share stories and experiences (cf. Le Faye, 2003). Another crucial link with the world at large experienced Jane during her studies, first at Oxford in 1783 and for the second time under the tutorship of Mrs. La Tournelle at her Ladies' Boarding School in Reading, Berkshire. Young Jane and her sister Cassandra almost succumbed to Typhoid fever while studying at the boarding school, but luckily enough for the whole family their mother Mrs. Austen was able to nurse them back to full health. Because of the fact that Mrs. La Tournelle asked 35 pounds a year for each pupil, soon after the typhus incident both girls had to end their studies a bit prematurely. According to Le Faye, the years which Jane spent studying in Oxford and Berkshire ended up being the only opportunities she ever got to leave her family behind and to spend time in new environment, from thereon she opted to keep close to her family circle (Le Faye, 2003).

### *1.1.2 Love life*

As is the case with majority of writers, they tend to get inspiration from their own feelings and emotions, therefore it comes as a no surprise that the very same is being disputed when it comes to Jane Austen. Some are of the opinion that her own romances might have

influenced her professional career to an extent. Ray (2007), however, argues that Austen's own personal letters do not uncover much of her presumed romance with Tom Lefroy, nephew of Madam Lefroy – who happened to be Jane's friend and mentor, or the real reach of it. To Ray's knowledge it was only stated that Tom left Steventon and both of the Austen girls behind to pursue his ambitions, which as it appears at that time, might not have been parallel to those of Jane. Another point to be taken into consideration as Ray mentions is the fact that both Jane and Tom were of similar social standing and therefore in case of a possible marriage did not have much to offer each other in terms of climbing the social ladder. However, as a matter of fact, Ray (2007) also raises the issue of this pseudo-romance to only have been unrequited and not as passionate as Austen's letters would have us believe. After a precise research of the 1871 *Memoir of Chief Justice Lefroy* Ray found out the following: *"The Memoir includes letters about Tom's character and career plans written by Tom's Trinity tutor, the Rev. Dr. Burrowes, who has earlier been introduced, as well as by Tom's great-uncle Benjamin Langlois and by others who knew and witnessed Tom's behaviour during his late teens and early to mid-twenties. The letters give us an objective picture of a pious, principled, responsible, and ambitious young man, who would not have "led-on" a young woman..."* (Ray, 2007, n.p.). The aforementioned discovery leading us to believe that Tom Lefroy, in fact, did not have any kind of romantic feelings toward Jane Austen and was only behaving in a way any other young gentleman would. According to Ray (2007) even going as far as to try and spare Jane's feelings in spite of already having had a romantic interest of his own in form of Miss Mary Paul, whom he had met at least two years prior to meeting Jane. The fact that Lefroy, as reported by Ray (2007), already had a woman in mind to marry during his stay with the Austens shines a lot of light on his behaviour and run from the Ashe, an act that hurt and saddened the infatuated Jane Austen a great deal (Ray, 2007).

### 1.1.3 Death

Jane Austen took her last breath on 18th July 1817 and her remains were buried in the Winchester Cathedral approximately a week later. She died aged only forty-two years due to what appeared to be Addison's disease. Le Faye (2003) mentions that her sister Cassandra took her in to live with her in Winchester in May 1817 and also made sure that Jane was checked by a specialist surgeon, who, in those times, did not find a way in which he could help Jane make full recovery from her condition. A snippet of how Jane's brother Henry viewed her last days on Earth: *"She supported, during two months, all the varying*

*pain, irksomeness, and tedium, attendant on decaying nature, with more than resignation, with a truly elastic cheerfulness. She retained her faculties, her memory, her fancy, her temper, and her affections, warm, clear, and unimpaired to the last.*" (Le Faye, 2003, p. 38, 39). It can be therefore assumed that Jane Austen enjoyed every second of her remaining life joyfully, even though she knew the end was near.



Figure 1: The only authenticated portrait of Jane Austen, her sister Cassandra's watercolour sketch of c. 1810, in Le Faye, D. (2003). *Jane Austen: The World of Her Novels*, p. 39

## **1.2 Jane Austen the Author**

Warren (2018) argues that in many aspects Jane Austen was akin to the female characters she created. Some of the features she mentions are stubbornness and determination both of which have become shared characteristic attributes among all the women that she wrote and were also known to be true for Austen herself. Warren also notes

that no matter the fact that all those characters originated in different social and economic backgrounds their only true goal was the same and they all go through substantial character development in the course of the book in which they appear. Thereafter according to Warren, this fact eluded Austen herself who presumably failed to notice the similarities between herself and the characters she wrote, which, Warren assumes, was for the better (Warren, 2018).

### *1.2.1 Early writings*

Ever since Jane learned how to read she became fascinated with the language and style of the novel and with the way the writers managed to communicate their feelings and experiences through it. Early on in her writing attempts Jane attempted to revamp fiction as she knew it, since she herself was not very fond of some of its features. She considered the popular narrative forms to be too ‘hypnotic’ and ‘thought-denying’ for her personal taste. As Waldron stated: “*Her earliest writing puts a number of fashionable fictional stereotypes, often derived from the pomposities of conduct-literature as well as from fashionable progressive ideas, into a domestic frame which renders them ludicrous and, more importantly, shows them to be repetitious and stultifying. From the start, she set out to put forms and theories to the test of the everyday, without which they were, as she saw it, merely substitutes for coherent and rational deliberation.*” (Waldron, 2003, p. 16).

The evidence of Austen’s first literary works can be dated back to the times when she finished her formal education and came home from the boarding school. As presented by Le Faye (2003), Jane’s first works were short stories, sometimes not even half a page long, mostly focusing on her early experiences in the English society with the added flavour of her own wit and humour. These were later named *Volumes First, Second and Third*, and in their entirety, are known as Jane’s *Juvenilia*. It is said that during those times Jane did not have any plans to publish the pieces she wrote and was only writing for fun and to entertain her close family circle, to whom she would read her short stories during long winter evenings by the fireplace. Therefore, Le Faye (2003) does not fail to mention that none of those were accessible by the public during Jane’s lifetime and were only published after her death (Le Faye, 2003).

### 1.2.2 Main works

In 1793 Jane tried her hand at writing a serious short novel-in-letters which she did not name but is nowadays recognized under the name *Lady Susan*, which happened to be the main character's name and from which the book's title is derived. The plot revolves around a woman named Susan and her treacherous manipulative techniques and schemes to get what she wants no matter the cost and consequences. Main focus of this work lies on very mature themes which stand in quite a stark contrast to Jane's young age. Jane's another attempt at a story-in-letters came in 1795 when she wrote the piece *Elinor and Marianne*, which later became quite popular under the changed name of *Sense and Sensibility*. *Elinor and Marianne* was also Austen's first attempt, prompted by her father, to get one of her works published. George Austen sent the manuscript to a publishing house, however, he failed to attach a brief fitting description of the plot and therefore, the manuscript was declined without being spared a second glance. This fortunately did not deter Jane from future attempts at being published and recognized as an author nor did it in any way impede her passion for writing (Waldron, 2003).

In the autumn of 1811 Jane's publication dreams came true when, after much convincing and support from her family's side, *Sense and Sensibility* was published by Thomas Egerton of Whitehall in London. Quite understandably, with Jane being a new unknown author, the publishing house only agreed to publish her first piece at her own expenses. Jane accepted the offer, even though she did not expect to make any profit off it. Soon after *Sense and Sensibility* gained very favourable reviews which incited Austen to finish writing *First Impressions* and to change its name to *Pride and Prejudice*. This time around the publisher, fully convinced that the book was going to be a bestseller, bought the copyright from Austen instead of commissioning her, however, Jane's name did not stand on the front page of her books. Le Faye provides a clear explanation as to why that was, she says: "*Jane's name did not appear on the title page of either of the books, since at that date it was considered very unbecoming and undignified for a respectable lady to be seen to write novels for money and for general publication; her first book was therefore said to be 'By A Lady', and the second was 'By the Author of "Sense and Sensibility'".*" (see Le Faye, 2003, p. 35).

Afterwards, it did not take long for Jane with her newfound self-assurance to finish drafting and revising her other works, such as *Mansfield Park* and *Emma*, both of which gained tremendously positive response from the public, prompting Jane to write further.



Austen almost instantaneously thereafter started working on *Persuasion*, but the grave news of her brother Henry's illness made her stall all of her writing endeavours due to her fragile state and the fact that she was slowly falling ill herself. Both *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion* were published posthumously with the help of Jane's brother and literary agent Henry, who is also believed to have them titled as such respectively. Austen last two unfinished works – *The Watsons* and *Sanditon* – were not published until the early twentieth century (Le Faye, 2003).

### 1.2.3 Writing style

There is no doubt about the fact that Jane Austen's style of writing has sparked a lot of interest all over the years. Some criticize her for it, others praise her to the heavens. Professor John Mullan (2013), however, argues that one thing that Jane Austin did, which was special to her since no one else did it back then, is that she lets the consciousness of her characters to freely change the narrative of the story, which is known in the contemporary times as the free indirect speech. What this actually means is, that when the narrative is being rather judgemental it is in fact not reflecting the author's point of view, but rather the point of view and the consciousness of the character on the situation. According to Mullan, it would appear, in comparison to other author's such as Charles Dickens, as if Austen is not part of her novels at all when it comes to this aspect and that her real views on the matters at hand are rather obscured (Mullan, 2013).

As it would be expected, Mullan mentions that Austen's writing style and the aforementioned method that she used became much more sophisticated the more she wrote. He argues that it is perhaps at its peak in Austen's fourth novel *Emma*. When it comes to Jane Austen's descriptions and the way she portrayed her characters and happenings in her novels, Mullan states that: "*Exquisite touch is a generously precise appreciation of Jane Austen's precision. Accuracy is her genius. Noticing minutiae will lead you to the wonderful connectedness of her novels, where a small detail of wording or motivation in one place will flare the recollection of something that went much earlier. This is one of the reasons they bear such re-reading. Every quirk you notice leads you to a design. The boon of Austen's confidence is that the reader can take confidence too, knowing that if he or she follows some previously neglected thread it will produce satisfying pattern.*" (Mullan, 2013, p. 6).

When it comes to the exact words Jane Austen liked to use in her works, a study carried out by Wijitsopon (2013) claims that in comparison with other authors of her period, she had a tendency to utilize words referring to women, which, perhaps, considering her main subject of interest and the focal point of her works is not as surprising as one could think. Words such as “she”, “her”, “Miss”, or, when it came to familial relations, Austen rather tended to use the word “sister” in abundance. To get the point across or to emphasize a certain section in the text Jane preferred the usage of intensifying words, for instance “very”, “much”, “so”. Wijitsopon’s study links this use of the intensifying method to be one of the pivotal traits of her writing, which, in Jane Austen’s case, ultimately results in a feature she is both criticized and praised for, irony. Upon closer examination of Austen’s most used keywords, Wijitsopon has found out the following: “...it is found that the words denoting a high degree are used in close proximity to one another. A strong density of high-degree words at some points in the novels constitutes an exaggerated discourse in Jane Austen’s works. The exaggeration, in turn, is likely to encourage readers to feel that the part of the text they are reading cannot be interpreted at face value.” (Wijitsopon, 2013, p. 51, 52).

### **1.3 Description of the period**

#### *1.3.1 Royalty*

The novels of Jane Austen take place during the rule of King George IV., who became King after assuming the role of Prince Regent after his father King George III. was deemed no longer fit to wear the crown responsibly in 1811, therefore, this period of time came to be known as the Regency, but as a whole it is also titled the Georgian era. The period of time when King George IV. ruled is commonly known to have been rather frivolous, with his focus lying mostly on organizing and attending various lavish parties and spending all that could have been found in the royal treasury on new over-zealous building projects and art collections. In regards to arts, it must be mentioned that the King took great interest in all kinds of arts and literature, however, his endeavours could not always have been made come true to the full extent, despite his over-the-top expenditure (see Parissien, 2011).

In regards to King George IV., Dr Parissien mentions: “*George IV's undoubted charm, his evident wit, his innate aesthetic sense, his enthusiasm and his imagination still left him ill-equipped to rise to the challenge of a nation daily growing in self-confidence and wealth. His self-indulgence and short attention span, together with his evident ability to*

*abandon political principles and to forget friendships with barely a backward glance, won him little praise.*" (Parissien, 2011, n.p.). Which in and of itself makes it a telling sign that Prince Regent seemed not to have been one to have their subjects' best interests weighing too heavily on their heart, and rather focused all his energy and time on matters that proved to be more satisfactory for his soul and personal needs rather than for the nation at large. Parissien argues that the Prince, later King George IV., took great pleasure in keeping a myriad of mistresses around for the whole duration of his life, that is, once he came of age, in the process effectively shattering the image his father, King George III., was trying to build, the one of a respectable family man. Nevertheless, the Prince did not only have a strong fondness of the ladies, but it is safe to say that fashion and costumes fascinated him a great deal as well. It could be said that his motto, when it came to clothing, was, the more dazzling and extravagant, the better. He is said to have enjoyed the feel of luxury fabrics and custom fitted garbs from an early age (Parissien, 2002).

*"To George IV, everything revolved around his own whims and caprices; if these altered, so the attitudes and actions of his friends, his household and his government were expected to follow suit. Notwithstanding the King's incontrovertible charm, this major failing was to exasperate even his political supporters."* (Parissien, 2011, n.p.) and his political supporters were not the only ones that happened to be exasperated. Jane Austen herself had the pleasure of meeting his Majesty during one of her stays in London while nursing her brother Henry back to full health. Austen was invited and escorted to the royal palace by the order of the Prince himself, whom longed to meet up with the up-and-coming author. In spite of the fact that up until that point all of Austen's works were published anonymously, her brother and literary agent Henry managed to get the word out among the London society circles, that it was in fact his little sister writing up a storm, making her authorship of the books a public secret. This gained Jane some great and influential admirers, the Prince himself among those. Although Jane Austen was not the Prince's biggest fan and she quite openly criticized his extravagancy and questionable moral values, when asked if she would be willing to kindly dedicate her next book to his Majesty, she did not have much of a choice from the societal standpoint. After all, who would dare oppose the future king's wishes openly? Fortunately for Jane, she managed to add a dedication note to her novel *Emma* before it was published (Le Faye, 2003).

### 1.3.2 Classification and the Romantic novel

Jane Austen's literary works show signs of being influenced by both the literary period of Enlightenment and the literary period of Romanticism, it is therefore a bit difficult to say precisely which one of those periods her novels could be classified as belonging to. Furthermore, there is even the possibility of Jane, unbeknownst to even her herself, to have combined the features of literary periods that would only come after her time, such as Victorian aspects and some attributes generally related to Realism. Sutherland herself mentions that: "*Jane Austen fills her novels with ordinary people, places and events, in stark contrast to other novels of the time.*" (Sutherland, 2014, n.p.). Back in those times the novel was the main source of entertainment for the literate public, therefore it comes as a no surprise that even if not everyone had enough money to buy their own copy, people found ways of to share and spread the word among themselves. However, in spite of the novel being very popular, it was not necessarily held in high regards. Some of those, like *Anna: or Memoirs of a Welch Heiress: interspersed with Anecdotes of a Nabob* (1785) by Anna Maria Bennett, had strange, hard to grasp titles and even stranger, at times almost implausible, plotlines even for fictional works. According to Sutherland, Jane Austen was an avid fan of the novel of her time, but that did not stop her from being critical in her assessment of it. She poured quite a lot of her opinions and criticism of the period, in which she was brought up and its literary works, into her own novels. The extravagance and the sensational nature which was rather typical for the novel type that was popular back then did not sit well with Austen (Sutherland, 2014). In one of her letters to James Stanier Clarke, who was the Prince Regent's librarian, she wrote: "*I could not sit seriously down to write a serious Romance under any other motive than to save my Life, & if it were indispensable for me to keep it up & never relax into laughing at myself or other people, I am sure I should be hung before I had finished the first Chapter. – No – I must keep to my own style & go on in my own Way; And though I may never succeed again in that, I am convinced that I should totally fail in any other.*" (Austen, 1816, n.p.) the aforementioned clearly states that even though Austen was not a regular Romantic novelist, she could not have imagined herself writing anything but Romantic novels. Be it as it may, that she, rather unknowingly, redefined the definition of the Romantic novel itself, as evidenced by her own words, that she could not write serious romance without inserting some features of comedy of manners into it.

My dear Sir,

I am honoured by the Prince's thanks, & am very much obliged to yourself for the kind manner in which you mention the work. I have also to acknowledge a former letter, forwarded to me from Home Place. I assure you I felt very grateful for the friendly notice of it, & hope my silence will have been considered as it was timely meant to proceed only from an unwillingness to tax your time with idle thanks. — Under every interesting circumstance which your own talents & literary labours have placed you in, or the favour of the Regent bestowed, you have my best wishes. Your recent appointments I hope are a step to something better. The service of a court can hardly be. In my opinion, no service should be performed for which no well paid, & no improvement, can be made. The Prince's interest in the novel is a great blessing. I hope to have the pleasure of seeing it in a second edition. I feel it is a great blessing for the sacrifice of time & feeling that must be made in writing.

You are very, very kind in your hints as to the sort of composition which might recommend me at present, & I am fully sensible that a Historical

Jane Austen

(Figure 2: Letter from Jane Austen to James Stanier Clarke, 1. April 1816, <https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/jane-austens-social-realism-and-the-novel>)

However, in comparison to the regular novels of those times, the novels of Jane Austen were viewed differently by the general public. Sutherland argues, that this is because of the fact that Austen was describing situations that were quite likely to actually take place and the characters she created were of the kind that common folk could easily sympathise with. They were real, almost palpable, since Austen's portrayals were based in reality that she experienced first-hand, therefore, making their actual existence believable, unlike the existence of the characters from other novels of the era, which sometimes had to overcome, for the human imagination, almost incomprehensible obstacles. With Austen's fiction, it was not about making up unreal scenarios and at times even superhuman abilities for the

characters. She focused more on what she already knew from her own experiences to be true, her novels being set in the landscape that she knew like the back of her hand, the plots she came up with not spanning over a long period of time, the struggles of her heroines not being that much different from the struggles which real women in the real world had to come face to face with on a daily basis in the 19th century England. Simply put, she wrote stories about ordinary lives of ordinary people at those times, which later, in a way, became extraordinary. Sutherland also mentions that she, personally, would consider Jane Austen to have been, in her very own way, a social realist, in terms of her understanding of social issues which women had to face in the early 19th century, in regards to opportunities and freedom when compared to men. In that period of time, marriage was seemingly the best, and many times also the only, way to secure financial stability and social standing as a woman. However, to successfully arrange a marriage, sometimes a whole lot of conspiring and scheming was necessary. To support her statement, Sutherland says the following: *“Many of the crucial events of her stories take place indoors, in the female space of the drawing room. Often her plots move forward by means of overheard conversations. She writes some of the most natural and real-seeming conversations in literature. Rumour places a large part in transmitting news, and in her small, enclosed communities, everyone is a gossip.”* (Sutherland, 2014, n.p., online: 2.4.2019).

When it comes to stating to which literary period Jane Austen novels belong to, Sutherland simply says, that to mark Austen as being a realist is by far not at all the same as stating, that her works mirror the way life and society used to be like back in those times. Chronologically speaking, it cannot be said that Jane Austen was a true-to-word realist as she did not live during that literary period, however, she was not a pure romantic either, since her novels are rather comedic in style and ending (Sutherland, 2014, online: 2.4.2019).

## 2 Analysis of Jane Austen's novels

*“Let me not to the marriage of true minds  
Admit impediments. Love is not love  
Which alters when it alteration finds,  
Or bends with the remover to remove.  
O no! it is an ever-fixed mark  
That looks on tempests and is never shaken;  
It is the star to every wand'ring bark,  
Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.  
Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks  
Within his bending sickle's compass come;  
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,  
But bears it out even to the edge of doom.  
If this be error and upon me prov'd,  
I never writ, nor no man ever lov'd.”*

- William Shakespeare in *Sonnet 116* (1609)

As it was already mentioned in the previous chapter, Jane Austen wrote novels not only about the social problems in the 19th century, but moreover, the main theme in all of her works was love, and wherever love goes, which was the universal truth back in those times and perhaps it is in our times as well, marriage is following closely behind. The aforementioned quote, by another literary mastermind of another time period, William Shakespeare, links rather closely to the core values that Jane Austen's novels represent.

This chapter is going to deal with the novels of Jane Austen in detail, as to bring the issues presented and discussed therein closer to the reader's understanding, and to make them more comprehensible to a reader that has not yet had the pleasure of experiencing them first-hand.

## 2.1 Pride and Prejudice

*Pride and Prejudice* was in reality not what this novel was originally titled as. The name of its former draft was “*First Impressions*”, and it is said by Jane Austen’s sister, Cassandra, to have been first created in 1796. This would date it back even before the creation of *Sense and Sensibility*, which is considered to be Austen’s first ever published novel. However, it would seem that Austen put *Pride and Prejudice* on the backburner after being refused by a bookseller. The novel was eventually published in 1813 by the same publisher as *Sense and Sensibility* and it was titled as being written by ‘*By the Author of “Sense and Sensibility”*’ (Le Faye, 2003).

The novel opens with the following quote: “*It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife.*” (Austen, 1813/2013, p. 1) meaning, for every family with unwed daughters in the Georgian period, that an eligible bachelor moved into the town and would surely be seeking a possible lady for himself, in this instance it was Mr Bingley. Therefore, they should act fast and meet and greet such a man before any other family has the time to pre-empt them from doing so. That is why Mrs Bennet, upon hearing the news, immediately runs to share them with Mr Bennet, for they have five unwed daughters, Jane, Elizabeth, Mary, Kitty and Lydia (Le Faye, 2003; Austen, 1813/2013).

### 2.1.1 Inheritance

A problem closely connected to the above-mentioned, and one that is brought forth in this novel, is the inheritance issue. Since Mr and Mrs Bennet only had female progeny, and back in the early 19th century only male offspring could inherit, there was no viable heir in the first line of succession. Therefore, their whole estate of Longbourn House, upon Mr Bennet’s death, would fall into the hands of their distant cousin Mr Collins, the heir presumptive, and that is also the reason why Mrs Bennet rejoices upon hearing the news, that Mr Collins would be interested in proposing marriage to one of her daughters. This issue also poses as the most essential problem for women back then, because, even if they were brought up in a considerably wealthy family, as long as they were female, there was just no way for them to gain access to their family’s wealth on their own. This is seemingly ruthlessly demonstrated when Mrs Bennet, upon hearing of Elizabeth refusing the marriage proposal of Mr Collins, says that he could turn herself and her daughters out of Longbourn



as soon as Mr Bennet was dead. The more fortunate ladies had kind enough brothers that were willing to take them in and to provide for them, in case they were not married by the time such a tragedy befell them. However, apart from the aforementioned, the only solution that remained was to find oneself an eligible suitor, who was well-off and, if they got immensely lucky, also shared some personality traits and qualities akin to theirs. From the financial and social standing point of view, love could most of the time, unfortunately, not be further from one's mind when deciding about a potential suitable husband (Austen, 1813/2013; Waldron, 2003).

### *2.1.2 Marriage*

Though, the aforementioned is not completely the case in *Pride and Prejudice*. Elizabeth Bennet, the main protagonist of this novel, states early on in the book that she shall not marry unless it is for love, a rather bizarre and quite unreasonable view, considering the time period and society. In the end of the novel, however, we see that even though some would have considered her foolish for withholding hope for such a possibility, she does indeed marry for both, love and financial stability alike. But the one who would believe that it was a love at first sight is to be sorely mistaken. When Elizabeth Bennet first meets Mr Darcy, she does not fall in love with him at first sight, quite the opposite. Mr Darcy refuses to dance with her and consequently insults her, in his own words: "*She is tolerable; but not handsome enough to tempt me...*" (Austen, 1813/2013, p. 9), and Elizabeth, having overheard the exchange between Mr Darcy and Mr Bingley, in turn considers him to be a prideful and egotistic man, and she calls him thus in a conversation with her sisters and their mother, Mrs Bennet, the latter of which says that she does not like him one bit either. This conversation only prompts Elizabeth to deepen her disdain and prejudice against Mr Darcy. Another reason why she deems him to be an arrogant and self-serving man is for his openly declaring his disdain for her family based on their social status and him saying that it is inferior to the social rank he possesses, and, furthermore, her contempt for the man flares up even more upon hearing the rumours about him and Mr Wickham, which at that time she does not know to be false. In the end, however, all misunderstandings and issues get resolved, and the couple finally admit their true feelings to one another, Elizabeth accepts Mr Darcy's proposal of marriage and the novel seemingly closes with a happy-end (Austen, 1813/2013).

Notwithstanding, Elizabeth Bennet was not the only major female character in the book to have a say in the matters of love and marriage. Her best friend, Charlotte Lucas, the eldest daughter of Sir William and Lady Lucas, who, at the beginning of the novel is twenty-seven years of age, unwed, and for those times' standards, considered a burden to her family, since they were not particularly wealthy to begin with. Charlotte is portrayed to be an active character that has a lot to say when it comes to the theme of love and marriage. For her, marriage in itself is of more significance than a purely romantic coupling could ever be. When it comes to the subject of happiness in marriage, Charlotte speaks her mind clearly: *"Happiness in marriage is entirely a matter of chance. If the dispositions of the parties are ever so well known to each other or ever so similar beforehand, it does not advance their felicity in the least. They always continue to grow sufficiently unlike afterwards to have their share of vexation; and it is better to know as little as possible of the defects of the person with whom you are to pass your life."* (Austen, 1813/2013, p. 18). In a sense, one cannot blame her for thinking practically about it, because while some women could win economic freedom through having money settled on them, and in that way protecting it from a husband's ownership, through an inheritance (until marriage), or through widowhood, the majority of women back in the early 19th century had no economic independence and they were expected to continue to reside in their father's homes until an advantageous marriage offer arrived, this is also something that Charlotte despaired of. Thus, most women's economic freedom, at the very least from their fathers and mothers, came only after they have married a well-established man. And that was a compelling reason enough for Charlotte to marry. Charlotte was older than Elizabeth and less lovely. Even if some women managed to earn economic freedom through novel writing, like Ann Radcliff and Fanny Burney, most women had to use their wits and attractions to gain economic freedom through the only other way available to them – marriage (Le Faye, 2003).

### 2.1.3 Inspiration

Speaking of Fanny Burney, according to Waldron (2003) it would appear that she happened to be one of Austen's main role models when it came to writing. *"In Pride and Prejudice there is a strong structural and thematic connection with the novels of Fanny Burney."* says Waldron (Waldron, 2003, p. 37). This connection is dated back into the times of *"First Impressions"*, the original draft of *Pride and Prejudice*. The aforementioned connection is visible the most in Burney's novels *Cecilia* (1782) and *Camilla* (1796), from

which it would seem, influenced Jane Austen while penning *Pride and Prejudice* the most. However, Waldron's very own analysis of the above-mentioned novels of both authors and their common features stands in stark contrast to what other literary critics have concluded. She mentions that the most substantial difference between Burney's *Cecilia* and Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* is how well the reader can sympathise with the main protagonist. In *Cecilia*, the main character goes through a multitude of struggles and has to overcome almost impossible odds in order to survive or to achieve happiness, such as getting married to a man willing to take on her surname rather than she his, as was the custom, in order to acquire her inheritance. Between the main heroine and her inheritance also stand her guardians and the obstinacy of her beloved's family. All this eventually brings her to the verge of death, and she finally decides to make a compromise in form of her giving up on all her previous ambitions and dreams to spend her inherited funds to live her life as she envisioned and instead she accepts the aid of her husband's family. Waldron argues that the story in itself is quite engrossing, nonetheless, the reader becomes more of a spectator rather than a sympathiser or a sharer of the heroine's hardships. Whereas in *Pride and Prejudice*, the battles the characters fight are easier to sympathise with as they are mundane enough for us to relate to. Simply put, the probability of the occurrences portrayed in Austen's novel to take place is much higher when compared to the ones portrayed in Burney's novel. Furthermore, we get to experience everything that the character is going through in that moment at a face-value, and through later musings of the protagonist, her deeper conscience is uncovered to us, which in a way makes it possible for us to better understand their struggles, be it moral, financial or romantic, and to empathize with them, even in today's times (Waldron, 2003).

#### 2.1.4 Mr Darcy

Why the title *Pride and Prejudice*? It could be said that those terms represent two sides of the same coin. In this novel, each main character depicts one side of said coin. Mr Darcy portrays *Pride* whereas Elizabeth portrays *Prejudice*. How the main heroine, Elizabeth, is the portrayal of prejudice was already briefly explained in the second sub-chapter – 2.1.2 *Marriage*, therefore, the only remaining question mark is then how exactly does Mr Darcy illustrate pride? Waldron states, that Mr Fitzwilliam Darcy could be characterized as what was supposed to be a 'patrician hero', but since we are talking about Austen, got completely redefine and subverted. To support this statement, Waldron offers a

range of arguments, starting with the fact that: “*..as a patrician, his choice of close friends is peculiar.*” (Waldron, 2003, p. 49), with this she is pointing at Mr Bingley and his family, who have only recently acquired riches and are therefore, in reality, not true aristocrats, since they do not come from the so-called “old money”. The behaviour Mr Darcy demonstrates during the Meryton assembly, and which was more closely described in the sub-chapter - 2.1.2 *Marriage*, when meeting Elizabeth for the very first time would be deemed rather tactless, even for his annual income and his social standing. Another very essential personality trait that Mr Darcy displays is his socially detached countenance, which, even according to the ones closest to him, is considerably abnormal for someone in his position. Having lost his father at the age of twenty-three, he since had to take care of the upbringing of his younger sister, which he believes that he has failed in that regard, while also taking on the responsibilities of the proprietor of their family’s estate. Waldron nonetheless expresses that taking into account all that we know about Mr Darcy in regards to his age, family situation and his depicted behaviour, she would consider him to be rather unsure of himself at times. “*His demeanour at this time is typical of a young man so determined on managing his own reactions and creating the right impression that he is unable to relax and becomes pompous. It is not perfectly aristocratic in its usual fictional manifestation of careless confidence. He is too anxious to put people right.*” (Waldron, 2003, p. 50) and Mr Darcy’s need for spotless control of his behaviour and emotions becomes even more evident once he realizes the full extent of effects that Elizabeth has on him. At first, as it is in his nature, he tries to resist all of the conflicting emotions he starts to feel in regards to Elizabeth, but at the same time he lets go of himself a bit in an exchange with Miss Bingley on Elizabeth’s beauty, in which he vehemently insists on her attractiveness in contrast to Miss Bingley’s saying otherwise. He appears to be rather rigid in comparison to Mr Bingley, who was not a subject of proprietorship and taking care of the upbringing of his sisters, and therefore seemingly has little to no problem dismissing the issues of different social standing and social rank between himself and the Bennet daughters. As a proof for the aforementioned serves this quote by Mr Bingley: “*If they had uncles enough to fill all Cheapside*”, he says in answer to his sisters’ jibes about the Bennets, “*it would not make them one jot less agreeable.*” (Austen, 1813; in Waldron, 2003, p. 50). Mr Darcy’s detached persona is more of a front he puts on for he is insecure rather than being that “grand and careless” attitude we can observe on other characters of similar rank back in that time period. Once his prideful detached insecure disposition comes to direct collision with Elizabeth’s confident witty

countenance, he slowly but intensively starts to question himself and his ways (Waldron, 2003).

## 2.2 Sense and Sensibility

*Sense and Sensibility* is Jane Austen's first ever published novel. It was issued in 1811 by Thomas Egerton. Instead of Austen's actual name on its cover only stood "By a Lady", since the author herself did not expect the novel to sell well if her real name had been disclosed. As it was the case with *Pride and Prejudice*, *Sense and Sensibility* is also not the original title of this novel. At its inception, it was named by the author as simply "*Elinor and Marianne*", which, as we already know, was at a later date changed to its current title (Le Faye, 2003).

### 2.2.1 Behind the name

As was the case with *Pride and Prejudice*, there is a great significance in the name of this novel as well. The words "sense" and "sensitivity" stand in stark opposition to one another. First one is focused on expressing the way of thinking and acting that is rather rational, whereas, in the understanding of the early 19th century, the second one embodies the human nature that is particularly emotional, impressionable, and sensitive. This stark contrast is demonstrated in the novel *Sense and Sensibility* on the example of two main protagonists, sisters Elinor and Marianne Dashwood. Elinor, the eldest sister, is the perfect representation of a level-headed rationally thinking young woman, meanwhile her younger sister Marianne is the exact opposite to her. She is sensitive, gullible, and very romantic, to the point that she is much more concerned about the question of marriage at only 16-years of age than her 19-year-old sister. Le Faye (2003) mentions that perhaps if the novel was to be released in present days, a rather fitting name for it would have been "Head and Heart" or "Reality and Illusion" (Le Faye, 2003).

### 2.2.2 Elinor's fate

The novel starts with the death of Mr Henry Dashwood, father to Elinor, Marianne, Margaret, and John. Since John is Mr Dashwood's one and only son from his first marriage, the ancestral home of the Dashwoods', the estate worth of which was estimated at £4.000 a

year is going to be inherited by him solely. However, Mr Dashwood, on his death bed, makes John promise him that he shall take care of his half-sisters in any way he can, since they were only going to be receiving a pension of £500 a year. John agrees to this and promises his father thus. Despite his promise, once John's wife Fanny Dashwood, née Ferrars, hears of this, she begins to manipulate and convince her husband to not keep such a promise, for the girls and their mother shall be able to afford a comfortable life with their pension alone. Once he and his wife arrive to the estate, it is made blatantly obvious that the girls and their mother are no longer welcome to stay. An offer is made to Mrs Dashwood, by her cousin Sir John Middleton, to stay at a cottage of his in Barton Park. The family's departure is however delayed, once it becomes quite clear that a romance, and out of it a possible marriage proposal, is starting to bloom between Elinor and Mr Edward Ferrars, the brother to Mrs Fanny Dashwood, who came to pay a visit to his dear sister and her family. Mr Edward Ferrars is portrayed as a shy, not very tall young man of sweet countenance with only goodness shining through his eyes. However, since him and his family are in disagreement about his future, he seems to be rather demure about his life and future which at times makes Elinor question whether he does indeed have feelings for her. Once he is suddenly called back to London by his mother Mrs Ferrars, Elinor, her sisters and mother leave for the cottage and are not reunited with Mr Ferrars until later on in the novel, for his family bars him from visiting them. During a visit to Sir Middleton's estate, Elinor gets introduced to Miss Lucy Steele, a distant cousin to Sir Middleton's mother-in-law Mrs Jennings. Steele then proceeds to tell Elinor that she and Mr Edward Ferrars have been engaged in secrecy for over four years and that it had happened when Edward was still a student of her uncle's in Plymouth. And for Elinor, according to Le Faye (2003), it now becomes evident why Edward seems to be so depressed: *"Elinor now understands the reason for Edward's depression — even if he has now fallen in love with her and wishes to break off his engagement to Lucy, by the standards of the time he cannot do so, for such a break can be made only by the lady and not by the gentleman, and it is quite evident that Lucy has not the least intention of letting Edward go."* (Le Faye, 2003, p. 172). Thereafter Elinor considers her feelings for said gentleman to be invalid for it can never be since he was already promised to another, and therefore tries to hide them even more than before. However, eventually when Lucy Steele meets Edward's younger brother Robert, she breaks off her engagement to Edward and marries his brother instead, in the process enabling him to propose marriage to another. This, in the end, allows Edward and Elinor's love story to come to fruition, and

a relationship that was seemingly doomed from the beginning ends in something that in those times could be called a happy-end (Austen, 1811; Le Faye, 2003).

### 2.2.3 Marianne's fate

Soon after having moved to the cottage in Barton Park provided to the family by Sir John Middleton, Marianne meets Colonel Brandon, a tall man of thirty-five years that has served many years in the military, mostly in West Indies. At first, she considers him to be a man of not too many words, his posture grave, however, his countenance is rather sensible and his conduct gentlemanly. However, once it becomes apparent that the Colonel might be interested in her romantically she discourages all of his advances, since she deems him to be rather old and unattractive to her in terms of not sharing the same values as her when it comes to poetry and romance. This becomes even more evident once Marianne meets Mr John Willoughby who saves her when she sprains her ankle during a walk in a downpour. Willoughby is seemingly everything Marianne has ever wanted in a husband; handsome, tall, graceful, and very well-read in terms of poetry. He also comes from a good family, about to inherit the estate of his cousin Mrs of Allenham Court whom he visits from time to time when she calls upon him from London, as it was the case when he and Marianne met. Marianne falls deeply in love with Mr Willoughby and she does not try to hide it at all, the exact opposite, she flaunts it. As it would seem, Mr Willoughby requited her feelings, therefore everyone around just waited for them to announce their engagement officially. Soon after, however, when instead of an official marriage proposal Willoughby returns back to London without any explanation which shatters Marianne's heart to pieces. During their trip, when the two sisters are accompanying Mrs Jennings and her friends to London, Marianne meets Willoughby and learns that he is to marry another; an heiress with dowry of £50.000. Thanks to Colonel Brandon, it is later uncovered that Willoughby's cousin has disowned him upon finding out of his past indiscretions. This leaves Marianne sick with grief and the sisters decide to leave London. On their way home, they stay a few nights in Somerset, where Marianne falls gravely ill. After recovering from her sickness, she slowly comes to realize the true depth of Colonel Brandon's feelings for her and starts to notice his good personality traits rather than the ones she is not all too happy with. *"Colonel Brandon was now as happy, as all those who best loved him, believed he deserved to be; in Marianne he was consoled for every past affliction; her regard and her society restored his mind to animation, and his spirits to cheerfulness; and that Marianne found her own happiness in*

*forming his, was equally the persuasion and delight of each observing friend. Marianne could never love by halves; and her whole heart became, in time, as much devoted to her husband, as it had once been to Willoughby.*" (Austen, 1811/2010, chapter 50, p. 4) it can therefore be said, that Marianne, like her older sister Elinor, too, found true happiness in the end (Austen, 1811/2010; Le Faye, 2003).

#### *2.2.4 Agreeable marriage*

Marriage no doubt played the central role of everyone's lives, be it men or women. They were expected to marry at a certain age, if they failed to do so, the society would see them as odd. For example, Waldron (2003) states that a woman over thirty years of age would have been viewed as an old maiden; if a man was over thirty and still unwed, the society would think that there surely must be something wrong with him. However, it was not enough to just marry whomever, there were certain standards to be kept in mind when making such a choice. The most favourable, however, most of the times, unattainable option was to marry for love, but still gain enough financial support from one's spouse to be able to live on and to improve one's social status or at the very least, not downgrade it. This was a very rare occasion but as Austen's novels stand to prove, not absolutely impossible. Love was not viewed as a necessity for a marriage in the early 19th century, and therefore when it was not possible, one was supposed to at least try to find someone they would consider to be agreeable in other respects, be it social standing, financial matters or like-mindedness, latter of which was still of little value (Waldron, 2003).



### **3 Empirical part**

This is the third and the last part of this bachelor thesis, and concurrently this is also the only empirical part of the thesis. Therein the pivotal focus lies on the survey which has been conducted using a sample of seventy respondents of lay public, and the consecutive analysis of the aforementioned survey. The findings of which are later compared to the findings of reputable experts in the given field of Jane Austen and her selected literary works.

The following methods were used to bring around the data which has been collected in the process of this empirical research. First, we started with observation of the general lay public and choosing the method of data collection which would best fit our needs. It has been established that a survey would most likely be the best method to bring forth unbiased and raw opinions which make up an essential part of said research. Depending on the topics which were discussed in the first and the second chapter of this thesis by literary experts in the field of Jane Austen, the most fitting questions for the survey were selected and thereafter applied to said survey. Afterwards it came to the very act of testing the general public. The respondents were chosen at random and their answers were recorded anonymously to assure that the recorded responses be as impartial and uninfluenced by a third party as possible. Subsequently, once a satisfactory number of responses was acquired, the process of profound evaluation, and the process of comparison of the findings of the survey with the findings of literary experts started, both of which can be found in the first sub-chapter of the empirical part of this thesis.

### 3.1 Evaluation of the survey

The respondents of this survey were asked to state their age and sex, in order to let us better understand the reasoning behind the options they chose later on. On average 40% of the population surveyed declared to be anywhere from 18 years old to 24 years old. The other most selected option was 30 years old or more which was selected by 34.3% of the surveyed respondents. The least number of respondents, precisely only 25.7%, said to have been anywhere between the ages of 25 to 29.

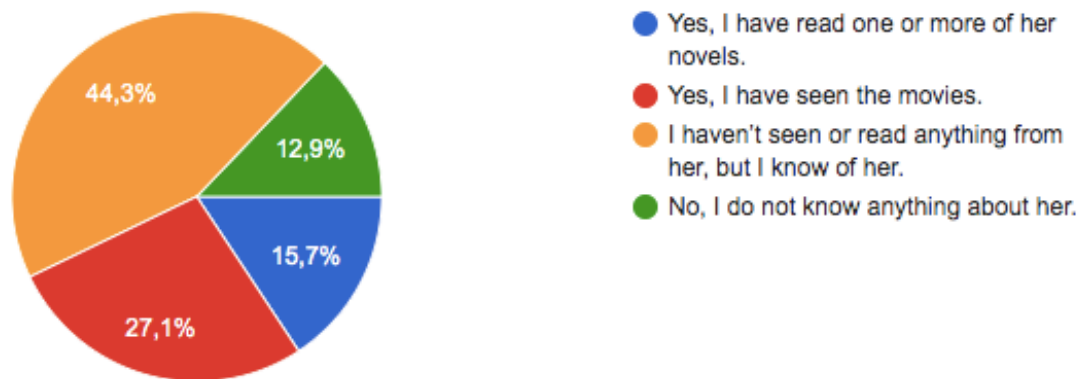
When it comes to the declared sex of the respondents of this survey, on average it would seem that the women had the majority with 61.4% of the surveyed respondents stating to have been of the female sex, and only 38.6% of the questioned respondents claiming to have been of the male sex. In exact numbers this would make exactly 43 of the respondents to have been female, and the rest which is assessed at 27 to have been male.

In order to ensure that the findings of this survey are objective, it was of utmost importance to first assess the level of understanding of the respondents. Therefore, the first survey question which was asked was, whether or not, and if yes to what degree, have the respondents come into contact with the literary works of Jane Austen. The viable options were:

- *Yes, I have read one or more of her novels.*
- *Yes, I have seen the movies.*
- *I haven't seen or read anything from her, but I know of her.*
- *No, I do not know anything about her.*

The findings of which point at the fact that even though the vast majority of 31 respondents never read a novel by Jane Austen themselves, they were aware of her name, and therefore must have come into contact with it either during their education process or elsewhere, and were in possession of some very loose basic knowledge on the issue. The second answer which was picked the most shows that people in general are more likely to choose watching a movie based on a Jane Austen's novel instead of actually reading a book by her. Judging by the knowledge of the movie industry that we have, it is commonly known that for the screen time's sake, not all happenings from a novel can be successfully transformed onto the big screen, and for this reason sometimes important details are being omitted, resulting in those respondents to also be lacking substantial parts of knowledge on the discussed issues. Surprisingly, the difference in percentages between respondents who have stated that they

have never ever even heard the name Jane Austen, let alone read any of her literary works, and the ones that have stated that they have read one or more of her novels is strikingly small at best, as can be seen on *Chart 1* below, with only 15.7% of the respondents having read one or more of Austen's works.



*Chart 1: Are you familiar with Jane Austen and her works?*

In the next part of the survey, the respondents were asked to state their general opinion on Jane Austen depending on what their answer to the previous question was. The answers to the second question of this survey proved to be rather intriguing. During the evaluation process, it was noted that it came to a perfect draw between two possible answers. On one side, there is a sample of respondents making up 37.1%, according to whom the novels of Jane Austen are to be considered true-to-life stories about life and struggles of women in 19th century in relation to marriage and love, and on the other hand there is a 17.1% sample of respondents claiming that they only view the novels of Jane Austen to be sappy romantic historical chick-flicks. In-between those two stands the 37.1% of respondents who argue that in their opinion both parties are correct, meaning that they consider Jane Austen's literary works to be true-to-life stories about the struggles of women when it came to marriage and love, but that those were also spiced up a bit with the addition of sometimes unnecessary drama and seemingly out of nowhere happy-endings. For respondents who could not possibly pick between the offered answers for lack of knowledge on the topic, an option admitting thus was presented to them. Only 8.6% of the surveyed

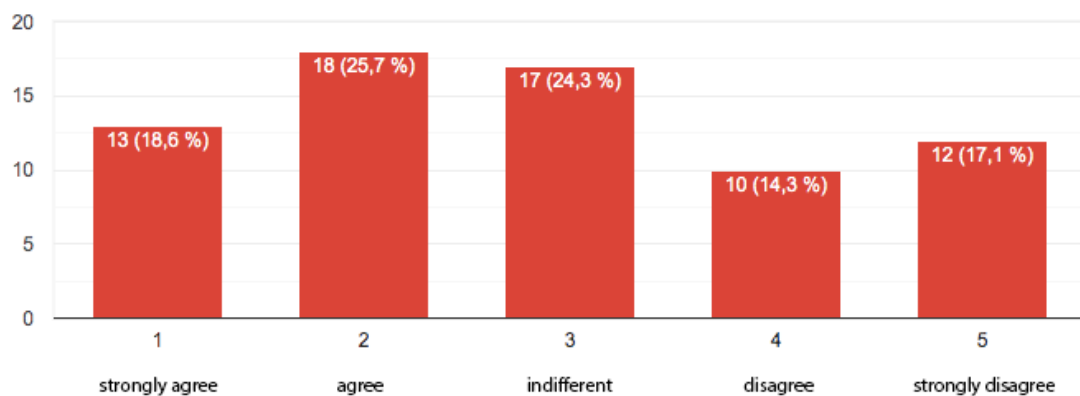
respondents opted to select this option, in spite of the fact, that in relation to the previous question, 12.9% of the surveyed respondents claimed to never have even heard about the discussed issues. Therefore, it can be said, that a small part of the responding sample has an inclination to be misled and thereafter to jump to premature conclusions based on the answers provided to them.

Another important issue that needed to be tackled head on when it comes to Austen and her novels was the public reception back in the early 19th century. The respondents of the survey were questioned, whether they think that the public reception of the people back then was rather positive or negative, and whether the underlying social satire in all of Jane Austen's novels was understood by the common folk back then or that the point was she was trying to make was completely missed. The selected answers to this particular question rather varied; with only 7.1% of the respondents claiming that according to them the public was indifferent in their reception of Austen's novels. The findings show that 12.9% percent of the respondents assumed that the reception of the novels was positive, that the readers in the early 19th century were intrigued and enthusiastic, and that the underlying satire was understood. According to a whole 20% of the respondents, the satire in Austen's novels was understood, however, the public reception was rather negative and the author herself was sharply criticized and bashed by the readers. By the evaluation of the responses to this particular question, as was the case with the previous question, once again two evenly balanced camps arose, both having 30% of the respondents on their side. On one side, the general consensus was that the novels were received positively and that the readers were intrigued and enthusiastic about them, on the other side, the general opinion was that the novels were viewed rather negatively and that they were bashed and sharply criticized by the readers. However, they both agreed that the underlying satire in Austen's novels was missed by the general public back in those times.

One of the main foundations of this bachelor thesis is how the novels of Jane Austen have influenced the society not only back then, but also in the present times and whether or not the issues this author focused her attention on are still relatable in the context of modern times. A similar question was asked in the survey, where almost half of the respondents, precisely 45.7%, stated that they think that the literary works of Austen and the main points discussed therein are indeed relatable to the contemporary society. Another 27.1% of surveyed respondents claimed that they do not see any such a relation between the past and the present with focus on marriage, love, and standing of women in society. The rest,

consisting of another 27.1% of respondents, opted not to make their opinions on the matter be known.

As it was already mentioned in the previous paragraph the standing of women in society was a pivotal point of Jane Austen's novels. Not only was it a focal point back then, but it is one even in the present days. Therefore, it is of utmost importance that the general public is able to identify such connections and to apply them on the contemporary times. This was put to the test in the next question of this survey. The respondents were questioned whether or not and to what degree they agreed or disagreed with the following statement: *Women back then could be considered nowadays 'gold-diggers' in sense of climbing the social ladder*. The results of the findings, in regards to this question, were rather intriguing, with the majority of 25.7% of responses saying that they are in agreement with the statement, and 18.6% of respondents strongly agreeing to the above-mentioned testimony. Whereas almost the same number of respondents, making up 17.1%, claimed to strongly disagree with the aforesaid, and 14.3% of the surveyed respondents being in disagreement. However, a total of 24.3% of inquired respondents chose to remain indifferent on the matter for unspecified reasons. The conclusion that could be drawn from the aforementioned findings is that the general public is torn on the matter. A portion of it finds the practices used by women back in the early 19th century, to ensure their own survival by the only means available, to be on a comparable level to the practices of some women or men in the contemporary times used for the betterment of the quality of life not by one's own financial means gained via employment, but with the help of a rather wealthy third party, be it a partner or a spouse. However, the other portion of the general public refuses to see any such link between the practices used by women in the past out of social pressure and nowadays.



*Chart 2: Climbing the social ladder*

The answers to the question “*What in your opinion constituted as an “Agreeable Marriage” back in the 19th century?*” varied greatly. The viable answers which were presented to the respondents were:

- *harmony was paramount, personalities and opinions of both parties didn’t clash*
- *so-called “lucrative marriage” with societal perks benefitting at least one party*
- *love was the most important thing, nothing else mattered*
- *all of the above*
- *none of the mentioned*

Out of those, the most selected one rallied 32.9% of the respondents behind itself. Those claimed that for a marriage to constitute as agreeable back in the 19th century, it must have been providing societal benefits to at least one of the parties involved. For another 20% of the surveyed respondents the most important thing in an agreeable marriage was harmony. Those concluded that it was paramount that the personalities and opinions of both partners in a marriage did not clash. Another 20% of the respondents, however, argues that for a marriage to be considered agreeable, love was a must. If one’s marriage did not have love included in the mix, it was not to be seen as agreeable by far. A total of 15.7% of respondents are of the opinion that all of the listed answers, or conditions, need to be met in order for a marriage to be called agreeable in the 19th century, with only 11.4% of respondents stating that none of the mentioned answers meet the conditions on what they could call an agreeable marriage. As this matter has already been discussed in the theoretical part of this thesis, most of the findings of this survey on said matter are in stark contrast to what constitutes as an agreeable marriage in Jane Austen novels, as it was presented in the chapter 2.2.4 of this bachelor thesis.

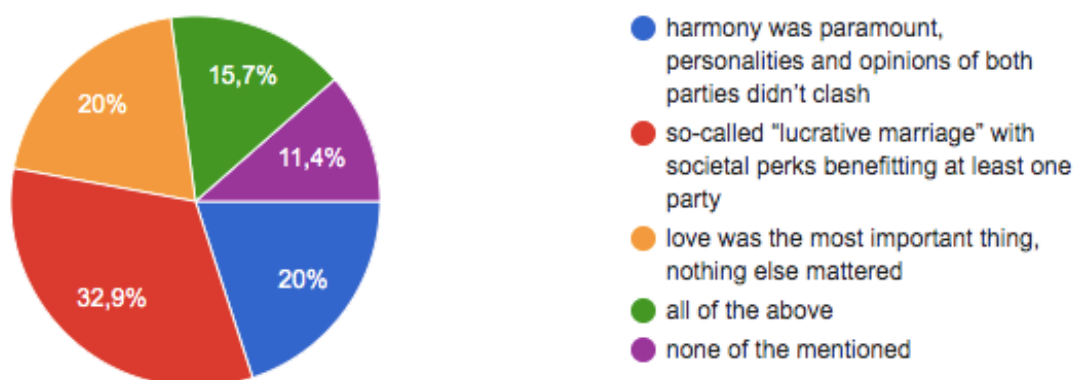


Chart 3: Agreeable Marriage

The level of understanding of Jane Austen's novels was put to the test when the respondents were inquired on whether they think that the following opening quote from Austen's novel *Pride and Prejudice*: "*It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife.*" in the context of early 19th century relates to the society's pressure on men to get a wife, no matter their feelings on the issue, and the social expectations placed on women to be competing for such a man's affections. Almost the same number of respondents strongly agreed and strongly disagreed with the aforementioned statement, with 21.4% of the respondents being in strong agreement, and 20% of the respondents being in strong disagreement. 14.3% of the gathered responses to this question claim that they agree with the above-mentioned statement, and 17.1% of the respondents declare that they do not agree with the statement. The highest percentage per answer achieved in this question was 27.1%, with respondents stating that they are indifferent on the matter, which goes to prove that a rather big part of the general lay public is unable or unwilling to form opinions on the matters discussed in the historical literary works, in case of this survey, the ones of Jane Austen. This, compared to the findings and analysis of literary experts in this field, serves to prove that oftentimes the lay public lacks vital background information to make a well-informed opinion on such matters, and are therefore only left guessing.

When it comes to specific novels of Jane Austen, the respondents of the survey were asked why do they think the main protagonist of the novel *Pride and Prejudice*, Elizabeth Bennet, acted as she did when Mr. Darcy proposed to her. Background information was provided, so even the respondents that have not read the novel or seen the movie could be on a level-ground with the ones that have. The respondents were also allowed to pick multiple answers out of the selection. More than majority of the respondents, consisting of 57.1%, claims that she says no to Mr Darcy and his marriage proposal for she is strongly prejudiced against him, with this prejudice being based on his actions and rumours about him, with both of which she does not agree. The remaining part of the respondents were rather split about the issue, with 34.3% of the respondents arguing that Elizabeth only did so only to spite Mr Darcy and to unnecessarily stall further development of the plot, stating that in the modern times, such a character would be called a drama queen. The rest, consisting of 31.4% of respondents stating that they view Elizabeth as a prideful person who would reject an offer of marriage for it not being worded in a way that she would approve of, and the tone of voice used by Mr Darcy prompted further doubt in her mind.

## Conclusion

At the beginning of this thesis bachelor the main objective of it was outlined to be to find and consequently to compare the opinions of the lay general public on the novels of Jane Austen with the professional opinions and criticism of literary critics and experts in the given field, with heavy emphasis on love, marriage, and the standing of women in society in the early 19th century. One of the sub-objectives was to determine whether the issues Jane Austen discussed in her works and the ones which were the main focus of her novels are still applicable to the society as we know it in the 21st century as well, and if so, to what extent.

In the first chapter of this bachelor thesis the very elemental yet absolutely pivotal background information on Jane Austen in regards to her life, both as a woman and as an author of the early 19th century, has been discussed. Therein heavy emphasis was laid on the historical political situation and social conditions back in those days and explained why Jane Austen used the writing style and methods that she did.

In the second chapter the main plotlines of Jane Austen's greatest literary works were explained in great detail. To every novel which was being discussed, short analysis by professional literary critics was attached and a number of samples and quotes from the respective novels has been provided to the reader.

The last chapter dealt with the empirical part of this bachelor thesis. The results of the survey, which was conducted, have been revealed. Based on the empirical findings, the opinions of lay general public have been compared to the ones of professionals in their respective field of research. It has been concluded that the lay general public lacks the information on the issues discussed in this thesis to form an informed opinion which was apparent when those were compared to the opinions and analysis of literary experts.

The reason as to why this bachelor thesis and the issues discussed therein are of substantial importance is the fact that it has provided an explanation of the social standing and struggles of women in the 19th century in context of Jane Austen novels, further making it possible for the reader to understand and fully grasp said issue, and how the events in that time period have affected the views of our society in 21st century.

Additionally, on the views of lay public in the contemporary times, it demonstrated how those effects are still to be observed in nowadays society. On the findings of the survey which was conducted as a part of the empirical part of this thesis, it has been showcased that the general public is capable of fully understanding the aforementioned issues only to a very



limited extent, and in order to form a fully educated opinion on said issues, a more in-depth research is needed on the side of the lay public. It could be of great interest to research said findings on a more profound level, with the main focus lying on the part of lay public that shows at the very least the basic knowledge on the above-mentioned matter.

## Resumé

Hlavným cieľom tejto záverečnej bakalárskej práce je porovnať názory bežných ľudí na romány Jane Austenovej s profesionálnymi názormi a kritikou literárnych znalcov, so zreteľom na lásku, manželstvo a postavenie žien v spoločnosti na začiatku 19. storočia, a zistiť, či problematika, ktorou sa táto autorka zaoberala, sa stále dá aplikovať na spoločnosť aj v dnešnej dobe. Táto bakalárska práca je rozdelená do troch kapitol.

V prvej kapitole tejto bakalárskej práce sme sa sústredili na objasnenie tých najnákladnejších a najdôležitejších informácií o Jane Austenovej a o jej živote, nie len ako autorky ale aj ako ženy v ranom 19. storočí. V tejto časti sme kladli veľký dôraz na sociálne ako aj historické okolnosti, ktoré nám ozrejmuju, prečo Jane Austenová používala taký štýl písania a metódy tvorby, aké používala a aké faktory ju v jej tvorbe ovplyvňovali už od raného detstva.

Prvá podkapitola sa zaoberala osobným životom Jane Austenovej. Jane Austen sa narodila 16. decembra roku 1775 v Steventone v Anglicku. Jej rodičmi boli George a Cassandra Austenová. Narodila sa ako siedme dieťa a v poradí druhá dcéra. Jane bola druhým najmladším dieťaťom svojich rodičov. Najlepšie a najbližšie vzťahy mala so svojim bratom Henrym, ktorý sa neskôr stal aj jej literárnym agentom, a so svojou najstaršou a jedinou sestrou Cassandrou, ktorá bola jej najdôveryhodnejšou dôverníčkou. Jane vyrastala v prostredí anglického vidieku v spoločnosti svojich súrodencov a rodiny, len málokedy sa stalo, žeby bezpečie domova opustila na dlhší čas, a keď sa tak aj stalo, väčšinou len v spoločnosti svojej sestry Cassandry.

V časoch, keď Jane Austen žila a písala svoje romány, nebol život ženy ako spisovateľky jednoduchý. Jednu z mnohých nástrah predstavovalo oklieštenie možností, ktoré boli v ranom 19. storočí ženám k dispozícii, spôsobené spoločenskými názormi na to, čo bolo považované za správne a prijateľné správanie pre ženy v tých časoch. Z tohto dôvodu bola jednou z Janeiných hlavných inšpirácií a zdrojom príbehov zo života jej teta z otcovej strany rodiny Philadelphia, ktorá strávila veľkú časť svojho života v Indii. Po návrate do Anglicka mala Philadelphia vo zvyku navštevovať Jane a jej rodinu, priniesť im dary zo zahraničia a rozprávať im o svojich zážitkoch. Jedným z ďalších spôsobov ako sa Jane dozvedala o svete a čerpala inšpiráciu pre svoje romány bolo prostredníctvom svojho vlastného štúdia. Po prvýkrát tak urobila v roku 1783 v Oxforde a neskôr spolu so svojou

staršou sestrou Cassandrou navštevovala Ladies' Boarding School pod vedením Mrs La Tournelle v Readingu. V tomto období skoro obidve podľahli týfusovému ochoreniu.

V nasledujúcej podkapitole tvorila ústrednú tému tvorba Jane Austenovej a jej štýl písania. Jane bola fascinovaná jazykom ako takým, ale hlavne románmi a spôsobom, akým autori dokázali vyjadriť svoje myšlienky a pocity, už od okamihu čo sa naučila čítať. Vo svojich začiatkoch ako autorka sa Jane pokúsila vylepšiť vtedajšiu beletriu, nakoľko sa jej niektoré z jej vlastností nepozdávali. Jane Austen považovala vtedajšie populárne naratívne formy za príliš „hypnotické“ a „myšlienku-popierajúce“ pre jej osobný vkus. Dôkazy o prvých literárnych dielach Austenovej možno datovať do čias, keď ukončila svoje formálne vzdelanie a vrátila sa domov z internátnej školy. Prvé práce Jane Austenovej boli krátke poviedky, niekedy ani polstránky dlhé, a väčšinou sa zameriavali na jej skoré skúsenosti v anglickej spoločnosti s pridanou chuťou jej vlastného vtipu a humoru. Tieto boli neskôr nazvané *Volumes First, Second a Third* a vo svojej celistvosti sú známe ako *Jane's Juvenilia*. V časocho svojich začiatkov nemala Jane žiadne plány publikovať práce, ktoré napísala, a písala hlavne len pre svoje vlastné pobavenie ale svojimi poviedkami bavila aj svojich najbližších, ktorým ich predčítavala počas dlhých zimných večerov pri krbe.

V druhej kapitole tejto bakalárskej práce sme sa podrobne zaoberali najdôležitejšími vybranými dielami Jane Austenovej, ktorými sú *Pride and Prejudice* (Pýcha a predsudok) a *Sense and Sensibility* (Rozum a cit). Došlo tu k detailnému charakterizovaniu hlavných dejových liniek vyššie spomínaných románov, ktoré boli sprevádzané aj krátkou analýzou profesionálnych literárnych kritikov a citáciami z týchto diel.

Román Rozum a cit bol vydaný v roku 1811. Namiesto skutočného mena Jane Austen stálo na obálke iba „By a Lady“ (napísané dámou), nakoľko sa Jane obávala, že román by nebol úspešný, keby sa vedelo kto presne ho napísal. Hlavnou myšlienkou románu, ako už z názvu vyplýva, je súboj dvoch protichodných prúdov, ktoré riadia človeka, citu a rozumu. Tieto sú v románe zobrazené na postavách dvoch sestier, Marianne a Elinor Dashwoodových. Elinor je predstaviteľkou rozumu, keďže ako najstaršia z troch dcér musela ísť vždy vzorným príkladom. Jej mladšia sestra, Marianne je naopak predstaviteľkou citu a svoje emócie sa za žiadnych okolností nebojí prejavovať. Román sleduje to, ako sa obe sestry vysporiadajú s nástrahami lásky a dvorenia po smrti svojho otca a strate rodinného sídla. Zatiaľ čo Elinor sa snaží držať v ústraní a nasledovať svoje logické zmýšľanie, pomáha svojej matke starať sa o potreby domácnosti a svoju novo nájdenú lásku pokladá za nemožnú, Marianne neváha a potom čo spozná Mr Willoughbyho bezhlavo sa doňho

zamiluje, aj na úkor toho, že neberie na vedomie Willoughbyho nedostatky. Elinor vyčíta Marianne nedostatok logické zmýšľania, zatiaľ čo Marianne nedokáže pochopiť ako Elinor dokáže byť navonok tak chladnou ženou a neprejavovať svoje city. V tomto románe je možné vidieť, že podľa Jane Austenovej je pre šťastný život nesmierne dôležitá súhra rozumu a citu.

Román *Pýcha a predsudok* bol vydaný v roku 1813 rovnakým vydavateľstvom ako román *Rozum a cit*, avšak počiatky jeho písania sa datujú až do roku 1796. V prípade tohto románu sa avšak na obálke neobjavil pseudonym „By a Lady“ (napísané dámou), ako tomu bolo v prípade románu *Rozum a cit*, ale stálo tam „By the Author of *"Sense and Sensibility"*“ (od autorky románu *Rozum a cit*). Ústrednou témou tohto románu je manželstvo a s ním úzko spojené dedenie a finančná zábezpeka žien v tom období. Hlavnou postavou je mladá slečna Elizabeth Bennet, ktorá má štyri sestry, a to Jane, Mary, Kitty a Lýdiu. V tých časoch mali právo dediť majetok len mužský potomkovia, a z tohto dôvodu je hlavným ťahúňom deja lukratívny vydaj Elizabeth a jej sestier, nakoľko všetok ich majetok po smrti ich otca zdedí ich najbližší mužský príbuzný, ktorým bol Mr Collins. Preto, keď sa rozšíri správa, že do ich kraja sa pristáhoval mladý zámožný a slobodný Mr Bingley, začína sa pre všetky rodiny s nevydatými dcérami zápolenie o jeho náklonnosť. Z už uvedeného je očividné, že manželstvo zohrávalo v ranom 19. storočí hlavnú úlohu v živote každého človeka. Nebolo ale pravidlom, že ruka v ruke s manželstvom kráčala aj láska. Jane Austen sa avšak vo svojich románoch snažila dokázať pravý opak, a to, že manželstvo, akokoľvek lukratívne, bez lásky v skutočnosti nemá žiaden význam.

Záverečná kapitola tejto bakalárskej práce sa zaoberá praktickou časťou. Dochádza tu k vyhodnoteniu dotazníka. Podľa výsledkov už vyššie spomenutého dotazníka, prichádza k porovnávaniu názorov laickej verejnosti a odborníkov v danej oblasti na túto problematiku. Konečnou dedukciou prieskumu sa stala hypotéza, že bežný laický človek v 21. storočí nemá k dispozícii dostatok vedeckých informácií, na to, aby si mohol utvoriť dostatočne informovaný názor na v tejto práci riešenú problematiku.

V konečnom dôsledku sa pomocou prieskumu, ktorý bol vykonaný ako súčasť tejto bakalárskej práce zistilo, že laickej verejnosti chýbajú informácie na vytvorenie informovaného názoru v oblasti danej problematiky, a pre hlbšie zistenia v tomto odvetví je potrebný ďalší výskum.

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# **Appendix**

## **Love, Marriage and Courtship in Jane Austen's novels**

The main task of this survey is to analyse the opinions of the public on Jane Austen's novels and the issues discussed therein. Jane Austen was a female author back in the 19th century, whose main focus was the Romantic novel and the issue of the standing of women in society in regards to marriage and how this impacted their own needs and feelings, which many times went unnoticed or were considered of lesser importance. In conclusion, findings from this questionnaire will be compared with the findings of professional literary critics and historians in this given field to construe an objective and educated opinion on the matter.

### **1. Are you familiar with Jane Austen and her works?**

- Yes, I have read one or more of her novels.
- Yes, I have seen the movies.
- I haven't seen or read anything from her but I know of her.
- No, I do not know anything about her.

### **2. Depending on your answer to question no. 1, how do you view Jane Austen's novels?**

- sappy romantic historical chick-flicks
- true-to-life stories about life and struggles of women in 19th century in relation to marriage and love
- both answers are correct
- I cannot say

### **3. What was the public reception of Jane Austen's works at time they were written? Did people understand she was writing a satire?**

- positive, readers were intrigued and enthusiastic, the satire was understood
- positive, readers were intrigued and enthusiastic, the satire was missed
- negative, they were bashed and criticized, the satire was understood

- negative, they were bashed and criticized, the satire was missed

**4. Would you consider the main points (love, marriage, position of women in society) of Jane Austen's novels to be relatable in the context of modern times?**

- Yes.
- No.
- I cannot say.

**5. Women back then could be considered nowadays 'gold-diggers' in sense of climbing the social ladder.**

Strongly Agree (1) – Agree (2) – Indifferent (3) – Disagree (4) – Strongly disagree (5)

**6. In the novel "Pride and Prejudice" the main protagonist Elizabeth Bennet rejects the proposal of Mr. Darcy to marry him, despite the fact that she previously stated that she was indeed romantically interested in him. Why do you think she does so?**

- she rejects the offer for dramatic purposes only
- she rejects the offer because of her pride and the way Mr. Darcy worded his proposal did not sit well with her
- she rejects the offer because of her assessment of Mr. Darcy's actions and rumours about him, both of which she does not agree with

**7. What in your opinion constituted an "Agreeable Marriage" back in the 19th century?**

- love was the most important thing, nothing else mattered
- so-called "lucrative marriage" with societal perks benefitting at least one party
- harmony was paramount, personalities and opinions of both parties didn't clash
- all of the above
- none of the mentioned



**8. The quote “It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife” in the context of 19th century relates to the society’s pressure on men to get a wife no matter their feelings on the issue and the social expectation placed on women to be competing for such a man’s affections.**

Strongly Agree (1) – Agree (2) – Indifferent (3) – Disagree (4) – Strongly disagree (5)

**9. Sex**

- female
- male

**10. Age**

- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35 and more