

UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL OKLAHOMA
JOE C. JACKSON COLLEGE OF GRADUATE STUDIES
Edmond, Oklahoma

Whist, Quadrilles, and Social Hierarchy: *Pride and Prejudice* as a
Game

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS IN ENGLISH

By

Sheri Gaches

Edmond, Oklahoma

2012

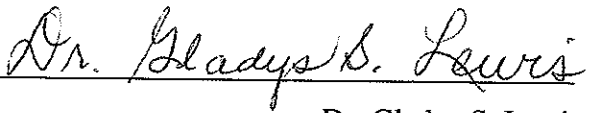
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November 28, 2012



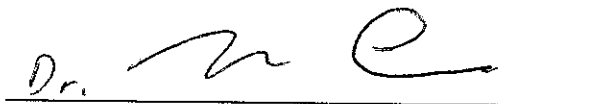
Dr. Gladys S. Lewis

Chair



Dr. Laura Bolf-Beliveau

Committee Member



Dr. Timothy Petete

Committee Member

Acknowledgements

It is possible to say of Jane Austen, as perhaps we can say of no other writer, that the opinions which are held of her work are almost as interesting, and almost as important to think about, as the work itself.

(Lionel Trilling)

For professional literary historians, acknowledging that the cultural Jane Austen has been a crossover phenomenon, and acknowledging that Austenmania straddles the divides between high and low culture, and between the canon and the cineplex, can be a humbling experience.

(Deidre Lynch)

I acknowledge the many *Pride and Prejudice* experts in the world and dedicate this thesis to those who have read every novel twice, and also to those who only know the story from the ramblings of other experts. I dedicate this work to you and the children and grandchildren you will one day subject to the story of Elizabeth and Darcy.

I thank mother for being one such expert, exposing me to *Sense and Sensibility* at a young age, and sparking an interest that turned to a wildfire of love for all of Austen's work. Both the blame and credit for my obsession falls on you. Congratulations.

I also wish to acknowledge my thesis advisor, mentor, and friend Dr. Gladys Lewis for teaching me how to approach my passions in a scholarly and "active" manner. Although I know you still wish I had written my thesis over Hawthorne, Dickens, or Hemingway, your encouragement through the process and enthusiasm for my work has been a blessing I cannot begin to describe. I now echo a phrase your students, colleagues, and friends say of you daily, "I want to be her when I grow up." And it is true, we all do.

ABSTRACT

University of Central Oklahoma

Edmond, Oklahoma

NAME: Sheri Gaches

TITLE OF THESIS: Whist, Quadrilles, and Social Hierarchy: *Pride and Prejudice* as a
Game

DIRECTOR OF THESIS: Dr. Gladys S. Lewis

PAGES: 95

Jane Austen begins her novel *Pride and Prejudice* by informing readers that what they are about to read is a story about competition. Throughout the novel, Austen's audience becomes aware of the elements of competition in her work, such as a motif of card games, expression of a battle on the dance floor through the rules of nineteenth century dances, and the limiting factors within the rules of social order. Such plot in a novel opens the door for game theory application and analysis of characters, scenes, and plot. By using game theory as a focal point of competition, as well as for sociological, psychological, and historical analysis, readers gain a better understanding of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* and form an educated opinion of the storyline, the characters, and the game itself, specifically who wins and who loses.

Whist, Quadrilles, and Social Hierarchy: *Pride and Prejudice* as a Game

Introduction

Scientists use game theory to study rational decision-making skills and interaction among groups of people in different settings and environments. In the study of economics, professionals use the theory to analyze the strategies incorporated when running a competing business. According to Drew Fudenberg and Jean Tirole, two kinds of games exist in the idea of game theory. Non-cooperative game theory means "the players' choices are based only on their perceived self-interest;" and cooperative game theory involves players working for the good of all, and considers who played fairly when attempting to declare a winner (xviii). Studies of mathematics, biology, computer science, and sociology also include game theory.

Ariel Rubinstein, who wrote her idea of game theory as a tool for conflict resolution, studies the "game form,"

the rules, and the "strategy," how it is played ("Comments" 909). The ideas found in game theory apply to daily life, how people relate to each other, and how society achieves its goals. The rules of society and common courtesy create the game form, while strategy is each person's individual way of abiding or disobeying these rules to reach a certain destination. How participants decide to relate to each other during the game is a matter of his/her strategic plan of action. According to Rubinstein,

The information sets [game forms] itemize the information available to the decision makers concerning random events and other players' previous moves. ("Comments" 910)

Rubinstein's analysis explains how rules determine the play in everyday life. Environment, laws of the land, and the behavior of others determine how people behave and react. These same rules apply to the behavior of society in nineteenth-century England. Men and women have long struggled with power, and the study of how both genders attempt to win power can be used to analyze every century that has passed. As literature expresses the behavior of society in the century it represents, game theory can assist critics in their study of literature. In the past century, critics like Steven J. Brams, Peter Swirski, Herbert de Ley, and Michael Chwe have begun to address the

application of game theory to literature. Closely tied to Marxist theory, this recent branch of literary criticism addresses factors involved in competition, power, characterization and analysis, and an author's narrative strategy (Swirski 126). Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* is an example of the struggle of power, human interaction, and economical choice, making it acceptable for the study of game theory.

In *Pride and Prejudice*, laws of society in Victorian England establish the game form used in that era, and the strategies differ from one character to the next. Game theory allows readers to see the different forms of strategy in Austen's works and analyze them based on literary uses of symbolization, characterization, and historical application. Because of card game motifs and many other social and romantic games that are played in the story, the overarching idea of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* reveals that the characters are involved in a game, primarily a love game. Analysis of this love game most closely reflects that of a board game, with all its tools of characterization and social criticism.

Like any typical board game, Jane Austen's novel involves a list of characters and their descriptions, a

board on which the players must move, and rules by which players must abide to determine the winner. By analyzing the characterization of players through the motif of card games, the dance floor that serves as a game board, and social etiquette that sets the rules for the players, readers will be able to build a better understanding of Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* and form an opinion of characters; specifically, who wins and who loses.

In first lines of *Pride and Prejudice*, the narrator sets the tone for the competitive nature that envelops the entire story:

It is a truth universally known, that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife. However little known the feelings or views of such a man may be on his first entering a neighborhood, this truth is so well fixed in the minds of the surrounding families, that he is considered as the rightful property of some one or other of their daughters. (5)

As soon as a wealthy, single man enters the scene, the game begins. This man is Charles Bingley, a wealthy merchant's son who seeks to buy property in their area. Immediately, Mrs. Bennet sets her strategy to win him and claim him as a husband for one of her older daughters. Since the story takes place in such a small community, the setting allows the competition to be magnified, dealing with only two or three families (Jenkins 63). This opening reveals the most

prevalent game in *Pride and Prejudice*, the infamous love game. The moment the curtain opens, Jane Austen begins to show the pushing, shoving, winking and manipulating of every form in the name of matchmaking.

Much like game theory, characters in this novel observe the other characters, see what benefit they could gain from them, and try to move accordingly, without giving way to any other players. This scenario closely reflects what Steven J. Brams defines as a zero-sum game since everyone seems to gain and lose equally depending on the results (5). Like most game theorists, Jane Austen shows that Mrs. Bennet has set up her list of choices and has weighed the payoff options, causing her to move quickly. Mrs. Bennet not only demands that Mr. Bennet pays a visit to Bingley, but also makes her reasons for haste very clear. In her speech, she mentions the Lucases (who have unmarried daughters as well), and the idea they may visit Mr. Bingley before the Bennets. She then refers to their neighbor, Mrs. Long, as a "selfish, hypocritical woman" who is only trying to steal Mr. Bingley for the sake of her unmarried nieces (8). The story features Mrs. Bennet's conniving ways to achieve her ultimate goal, get her

daughters married, and the loss other families will feel when she does.

Characters also play the opposite game, the *anti-love game*. Where there are matches to be made, there is usually someone trying to break them up: a defense to the offense. Caroline Bingley plays every card in her deck to separate the potential love connection between Elizabeth and Darcy and shows her disapproval of Bingley's pursuit of Jane Bennet.

Other characters, such as Lady Catherine De Bourgh, also join in on this anti-love game. As a woman accustomed to reigning over all she sees, Lady Catherine attempts to assume control over the couples in the novel by using money, power, and intimidation to scare them into doing her bidding. She controls the marriage of Charlotte Lucas and Mr. Collins and tries to control Mr. Darcy's marriage to Elizabeth.

Each character of the novel plays a role in the overarching game of *Pride and Prejudice*. Characters like Mrs. Bennet and Lady Catherine De Bourgh place themselves into the category of puppet masters, attempting to move players where they want them to be. Jane Bennet and Charles Bingley fit into the pawn category, as they are

constantly pushed and shoved into position, and they lack the temperament to make the actions stop.

Characters like Mr. Collins and Lydia Bennet fall into the category of those who long to be puppet masters yet are actually pawns. Both Collins and Lydia are delusional toward their stations in life and consider themselves to be worldly and in control, when—in reality—they become the pawns. Mr. Collins believes that his position in the church and his "favor" in Lady De Bourgh's eyes give him wisdom and authority. Unfortunately, he never realizes he is nothing more than pawn and court jester. Lydia, the personification of delusion, sees herself as belle of the ball and gamer extraordinaire, but in reality she becomes prey to Wickham's wiley ways. Jane Bennet appropriately calls Wickham—the story's scoundrel—a "gamester" (288). Though Austen eventually gives him relief by allowing Elizabeth to accept him, in the end, he is still what he was at the beginning of the novel.

One character that earns special recognition is Caroline Bingley. Though she is not a full-fledged member of the puppet master club, Caroline is the most determined player of the game. Caroline also demonstrates use of what game theorists calls mixed strategy in her approach to

competition, meaning she alters her strategy during her matches (Brams 290). Caroline acts as a key player in the initial matches involving Darcy and Elizabeth and plays a vital role in two of the most important card motifs in the story.

Charlotte Lucas becomes a difficult character to place in a category. At first, Lucas appears to be a member of the cast of victims; however, she later presents herself as, in the game of Pool, a shark. "Sharks" in the game of Pool are players who deceive opponents, often convincing the other players they are easy prey. However, as soon as the game begins to progress, the shark reveals him or herself to be a professional con artist and wins, leaving their opponents in confusion and frustration. The eldest Miss Lucas is one such character. Charlotte's lot in life seems meek and without hope. She is not a romantic woman and seems to have no future. However, readers soon discover that she is a stealthy character, who catches them by surprise.

According to Steven J. Brams' ideas of game theory, Miss Lucas exercises "deceptive strategy," hiding information from Elizabeth and the other characters in order to persuade them to move in a way that allows her

plan to be achieved (288). Charlotte almost uses her minor character status as a wall to hide behind to sort out her game plan. Her readers only figure out what she is doing when she decides to reveal it. In game theory's concepts of rational decision-making, Charlotte rises as an ideal example.

The two characters that stand out the most in this game are Darcy and Elizabeth, a smart, level-headed woman, who refuses to play the marriage game. Though she does engage in the match of her sister and Mr. Bingley, her motivations are not competitive as much as they are encouraging toward her sister's happiness. Darcy, though he is a powerful character, also cannot be moved around like a pawn. Darcy portrays a dominant personality and only engages in romantic affairs as they pertain to his opinions of the situations and the happiness of his friends. Neither character cares to play in society's games, yet both play a role in the love story of Caroline and Charles out of concern rather than pursuit of economic advantage. Another similarity between both characters is they believe, in the beginning, they are in control of the situations around them, only to be humbled later with the realization that they are not as wise as they thought they were.

As the narrator sets characters in their proper places on the board, the game becomes more tense and elaborate. Risks are high for each person, and rather than form a coalition, all seem to be fighting for themselves. As Joseph Wiesenforth writes,

It is important in this connection to note how little emphasis is put on the marriage and how much on the courtship. Getting married is not just an end, a standing at the altar; rather, it is a getting to the altar. (10)

Pride and Prejudice observes different journeys to the marriage altar, which seem to include the typical family manipulation, competition, battles against exes and, ultimately, a wedding to prove a victory has been won.

Jane Austen's novel also becomes a sociological study of human personality and how people interact with each other in regard to competitive situations. The competition of *Pride and Prejudice* shares similarities with an everyday board game. Austen gives the players and plot depth by using card games for characterization. She also uses the dance floor to signify the game board, shuffling players from place to place, bringing them closer to or further from their goals. Of course, rules must set the movements of the players and Austen uses the rules of etiquette and social order from the Victorian era to control the board.

Each chapter of this analysis will describe each of these competitive aspects of *Pride and Prejudice*, beginning with the motif of card games.

Chapter One

Card Games in Characterization and Context

Card playing was a common pastime in Regency England. The upper class spent hours in their parlors engaging in leisurely recreation and friendly competition with their peers to help pass the time. Jane Austen wrote her novels from life with realistic locations and activities to make her stories relatable to her readers. Like any board game has a plot description to introduce the background of the story and characters, Austen uses card games in her novel *Pride and Prejudice* to enhance her storyline and help define her characters in a way that was relevant to her audience. Thus, like the plot description of a board game, card games become a metaphor in *Pride and Prejudice*, expanding to a motif for characterization, development of love, and the relationships between characters.

In the world of *Pride and Prejudice*, women played with high stakes. Women without wealth had no choice but to marry, so pursuits of single men with the means to support

them and their families were essential. Because of this fact, the women engaged in a game against each other in order to find love and survive in their patriarchal society. The novel's prevalent inclusion of card games is appropriate and serves as a reminder to readers of the competition going on and how necessary a victory is.

Austen uses card games for characterization. Each character's game preference reveals significant personality aspects. For example, Mr. Collins expresses Lady Catherine's favorite card game is quadrille, which is indicative of the kind of woman she is (67). Matthew Schneider claims in his article "Card-playing and the Marriage Gamble in *Pride and Prejudice*" that Lady Catherine De Bourgh's love for the card game quadrille becomes important because quadrille is an old-fashioned game, formed in early eighteenth-century France (106). At the time of *Pride and Prejudice*, the game was out of style and favored primarily by women rather than men, significant to Lady De Bourgh because she is an old fashioned woman who tries to control her "woman-run" world (Parlett). Her old-fashioned mindset also explains her dislike of Elizabeth Bennet and the potential union between the second Miss Bennet and her wealthy nephew (Schneider 105).

Lydia Bennet's love of lottery symbolizes her personality, a shallow kind of girl who only wants to be entertained. Lydia has no skill or intelligence to make her a worthy opponent in card games or board games like chess; she lives on blind chance and hopes for good luck, which makes her easy prey for Wickham's schemes (Schneider 105). Mr. Collins points out this character flaw when she rudely interrupts his Fordyce's lecture, saying,

I have often observed how little young ladies are interested by books of a serious stamp, though written solely for their benefit. It amazes me, I confess; for certainly there can be nothing so advantageous to them as instruction. But I will no longer importune my young cousin. (70)

Though Mr. Collins is not a wise character, his accurate observation of Lydia shows the significance of her love of lottery.

Mr. Hurst, the Bingleys' brother-in-law, plays a significant role in the motif of card games; he is always in the mood for a game, any game. Austen's narrator describes Mr. Hurst as an "indolent man, who lived only to eat, drink and play at cards" (36). He plays a game every other time he is mentioned in the novel; Hurst plays loo and piquet in the Netherfield scenes and is disappointed later when no one wants to play. A possible interpretation Mr. Hurst's obsession could be that he has nothing to do;

his only excitement comes from game playing. Like someone reading a book for the chance to escape into another world, Mr. Hurst uses game playing as a way to put adventure into the mundane activities of daily life vacationing in the country. His character also expresses the leisure-loving attitude of the upper class at the time.

The Bingleys abide by the practices of their class by looking for a vacation spot. Daniel Pool says that the fashionable of society often left the excitement of city life to go to the country for calming activities such as hunting and enjoying nature (54). However, this fashionable custom did not address the participants' interests in the countryside; only that taking an extended vacation to the country was the upper-class thing to do. Therefore, Mr. Hurst might be bored. Readers can draw further speculation with the theory that Mr. Hurst, like some society of the day, only participated to save his family and to appease his wife's family. Naturally, he would be anxious for a card game to pass the time.

The first mention of the card game motif happens when Elizabeth discusses the budding romance between Jane and Bingley with Charlotte Lucas (23). Elizabeth describes Jane and Bingley's similarities by simply saying that "[t]hey

both like Vingt-un better than Commerce" (23). This description of their relationship not only shows their similarities but also reveals their personalities in their preferences. Vingt-un is the modern day Black Jack, where players try to get their cards to twenty-one without going over (Kruger). Commerce, on the other hand, is more like the modern day Poker where players must look at the cards they have and strategize to get the best hand possible (Pool 63). Matthew Schneider claims,

Jane and Bingley's preference of vingt-un—in which chance predominates over skill—to commerce—which tests a player's skill at a relatively higher level—reflects the timidity that keeps her from making her feelings known and allows him to be swayed easily by his sisters and Darcy. Because both are relatively unskilled in manipulating the dealings of chance, they prefer merely to succumb to its dictates. (105)

Charlotte's response to Elizabeth's observation reveals this fact. She says,

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. (24)

Charlotte believes that, like Vingt-un, chance determines marriage. Knowing the other person's personality, how he or she plays and how to behave accordingly has no place in romantic circles. Jane and Bingley's personalities match

Charlotte's ideas of marriage, even though Charlotte, herself, does not play by chance but hides her "pool shark" strategies.

From this scene, readers see that the card game motif joins characters and shows the audience an insight into the psychology of lovers. However, it can also divide characters into personality and class.

A pivotal scene in which card games serve to illustrate the novel's plot occurs when Elizabeth is at Netherfield, tending to an ailing Jane Bennet, and enters the drawing-room where Bingley, Darcy, and the rest of the family are occupying themselves at the card tables.

On entering the drawing-room, she found the whole party at loo and was immediately invited to join them; but suspecting them to be playing high, she declined it, and making her sister the excuse, said she would amuse herself, for the short time she could stay below, with a book. (38)

Loo requires players to play in rounds and gamble their money. They place bets before the game begins. The dealers give each player a hand, then deals an extra hand, called a "miss". The players can play from their hand, pass or pick up the "miss" and play the game with that hand (Pool 64). The player with the highest hand wins the round and the

"loo-ser" has to be the first to contribute to the next pot (Krueger).

Elizabeth refuses to step into the game, not because she does not care for the game, but because she does not have the amount of money required to participate. This scene shows the division between classes, namely the Bingleys and the Bennets. The game of loo, in this instance acts as a divider, also revealing other psychological characteristics of the people involved in the scene.

When Elizabeth refuses to play the game, Caroline Bingley observes, "Miss Eliza Bennet despises cards. She is a great reader and has no pleasure in anything else" (38). As judgmental as this statement seems to be, readers see a bit of truth in Caroline's accusation. Elizabeth does not care to play games. This truth applies to many areas of her life. Later in the same scene, Austen says that Elizabeth eventually puts her book down to observe this game; as readers learn, the game of loo is not the only game being played in this scene.

Loo also signifies both the love game and anti-love game occurring during the scene. Caroline soon turns her attention from Elizabeth to Mr. Darcy. She begins by bringing up his library at Pemberley, appealing to him by

mentioning how large it is and complimenting him on his vast collection. She even goes as far as to tell Bingley his library should try to compete with Mr. Darcy's, with the understanding that he will fail (39). She then moves to a subject near to Darcy's heart, his sister. She begins to brag on Georgiana, obviously trying to impress and win him. However, the game becomes more tense as Caroline meets resistance from the object of her pursuit. Darcy refuses to allow Caroline the pleasure of winning by creating diversions. In reference to his library, he says, "It ought to be good, it has been the work of many generations" (39). He says of his sister, "She is now about Miss Elizabeth Bennet's height" (39).

The game continues when the discussion moves to the group's ideal woman. The debate continues for several minutes with Darcy talking of accomplishments and Elizabeth refusing to agree with his and Caroline's ideas about women. During this time, Caroline can see that she is losing control when Elizabeth says, "I never saw such a woman. I never saw such capacity and taste and application and elegance as you describe, united" (41). Caroline and Mrs. Hurst object to her injustice toward women, but they clearly take offense because they believe they have been

slighted. Of course, Caroline especially senses the blow, because her goal in the scene is to win Darcy. If Darcy agrees with Elizabeth's comment, it continues to diminish Caroline's appeal and chances to gain his affection.

Caroline, a master of mixed strategy, then quits the love game and moves on to the anti-love game by tearing Elizabeth down after she leaves the room. She says, "Eliza Bennet is one of those young ladies who seek to recommend themselves to the other sex by undervaluing their own" (41). She accuses Elizabeth of attempting to win Darcy by playing devil's advocate, but she is turned down when Darcy responds, "Undoubtedly, there is meanness in *all* the arts which ladies sometimes condescend to employ for captivation. Whatever bears affinity to cunning is despicable" (41). Darcy challenges Caroline's accusation and her behavior. Readers see the game has ended on this note when Austen's narrator follows Darcy's comment with, "Miss Bingley was not so entirely satisfied with this reply as to continue the subject" (41). Fitzwilliam Darcy claims the win; however, Caroline does not give up.

Though she lost the first round, Caroline tries again to get Darcy's attention while Bingley and Mr. Hurst are playing piquet (48). However, Miss Bingley does not alter

her strategy. She attempts to flatter Mr. Darcy by acknowledging how meticulous a writer he is, compliments his ability to pick out books, and then moves on to Georgiana. But, once again, Darcy knows the ploy.

Darcy refuses to respond to Caroline's flattery, illustrating dominant power. After going back and forth for a few phrases, Caroline comments, "How can you contrive to write so even?" Then Austen's narrator simply says of Darcy, "He was silent" (48). This short statement shows Darcy's strategy. A woman like Caroline Bingley begs for attention, and Darcy realized that ignoring her is the best way to deal with her. Sylvia Hamilton says, "Whereas silence is used as a means to deny women their subjectivity and autonomy in Austen's world, silence for Fitzwilliam Darcy is a means of control and strength" (77). This silence deters Caroline for a brief moment, and then she tries desperately to recover it until conversation quickly transfers to another subject that does not involve her.

Unlike loo, piquet involves two players. Catherine Perry Hargrave describes piquet as "the game of knights and chivalry, in contrast to the old game which had come out of the East, which had its inception in chess, the game of war" (*History* 41). Most of the conversation in this scene

does not describe romantic love or involve many people. The majority of this conversation revolves around Bingley and Darcy's relationship, with Elizabeth coming in as a voice of reason.

Jane Austen's narrator addresses Bingley and Darcy's friendship earlier in the novel as "steady, in spite of great opposition of character" (18). Austen also writes of the two men,

Bingley was endeared to Darcy by the easiness, openness, and ductility of his temper, though no disposition could offer a greater contrast to his own, and though with his own he never appeared dissatisfied. On the strength of Darcy's regard, Bingley had the firmest reliance, and of his judgment the highest opinion. In understanding, Darcy was the superior. Bingley was by no means deficient; but Darcy was clever. (18)

Though their personalities are polar opposites, Charles Bingley and Fitzwilliam Darcy remain close friends. Bingley's personality is moldable and dependent on Darcy's opinion; and Darcy is clever enough to sway Bingley's mind anyway he sees best. In any typical game, Bingley and Darcy would be foils and competition for each other, but they choose to stay on the same team as a coalition. However, at some point, opposites must collide and this scene appears to be the moment that happens.

After Caroline's comments on Darcy's ability to run a quill across paper, Bingley responds, "That will not do for a compliment to Darcy, Caroline, because he does not write with ease. He studies too much for words of four syllables" (49). Bingley pokes fun at his friend for his pride in knowledge.

The subject then changes to Bingley's style of writing, which he describes by saying, "My ideas flow so rapidly that I have not time to express them..." Elizabeth claims, "Your humility, Mr. Bingley, must disarm reproof" (49). Darcy's response to these two statements is harsh,

Nothing is more deceitful than the appearance of humility. It is often only carelessness of opinion, and sometimes an indirect boast...for you are really proud of your defects in writing, because you consider them as proceeding from a rapidity of thought and carelessness of execution, which, if not estimable, you think at least highly interesting. The power of doing any thing with quickness is always much prized by the possessor, and often without any attention to the imperfection of the performance. (49)

Darcy intends to end this conversation by speaking his point and assuming it will be received and quitted, as he is rarely challenged or corrected. However, Bingley defends himself saying, "I did not assume the character of needless precipitance merely to show off before the ladies" (49).

Instead of allowing Bingley the stalemate, Darcy challenges Bingley on his well-meaning spinelessness when it comes to pleasing people. He claims Bingley is, though kindhearted and innocent, easily swayed, as seen later in the novel, when Darcy manipulates him into carrying out his own personal will concerning his separation from Jane. This people-pleasing trait of Bingley's seems to be a curse in Darcy's eyes, yet Darcy takes advantage of it often, even in Bingley's eventual proposal to the eldest Miss Bennet. Darcy also refers to his *Vingt-un* personality by saying, "Your conduct would be quite as dependant on chance as that of any man I know" (49).

After he continues further for a few moments with unfavorable descriptions of Charles, Elizabeth comes to the rescue of Darcy's best friend. She tries to turn Darcy's words against him in order to spare Bingley's feelings, but Bingley has already felt the sting of Darcy's comment and declares that Mr. Darcy, "would certainly think the better of me, if, under such a circumstance, I were to give a flat denial, and ride off as fast as I could" (49). Bingley knows Darcy well enough to understand he means what he says and that Darcy expects him to yield to his judgment, as he does frequently. The game plays on with a new contender,

Elizabeth, still concerning herself with the discussion between the two men and their ideas of friendship. Like piquet, the confrontation between Bingley and Darcy is a match of gentleman against gentleman, and their conversation addresses the honor and character of each.

Elizabeth steps into this world of disagreement and hostility between gentlemen and becomes an advocate, defending the honor of Bingley and questioning the character of Darcy before Bingley. Elizabeth's comments evoke a scene like that in William Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* when Portia defends Antonio's character and actions before Shylock's biases (1.4). Shylock has criticized Antonio and demanded his subservience. As Shylock and Antonio represent the two sides of an argument, so do Darcy and Bingley illustrate a congruence of opposites in character and attitude.

Elizabeth asks, "Would Darcy consider the rashness of your original intention as atoned for by your obstinacy in adhering to it?" (49) Would Darcy prefer Bingley's impulsive nature to his ability to be swayed? Would Darcy not then be grateful for Bingley's adherence to reason so readily, seeing how he can often make impulsive decisions? Darcy responds by saying he is being accused of declaring

something he has never said. Elizabeth turns the analysis onto Darcy, himself, and says,

You appear to me, Mr. Darcy, to allow nothing for the influence of friendship and affection. A regard for the requester would often make one readily yield to a request...But in general and ordinary cases between friend and friend, where one of them is desired by the other to change a resolution of no very great moment, should you think ill of that person for complying with the desire, without waiting to be argued into it?
(50)

Elizabeth confronts Darcy on his harsh treatment of Bingley and his seemingly harsh view of friendship and affection. Much like piquet, this conversation is a game of chivalry and knighthood. A gentleman's treatment of friendship and camaraderie, as that between Darcy and Bingley, receives the focus of this scene and piquet seems an appropriate background activity. Though Darcy often has the upper hand in his dealings with Bingley, he loses at the entrance of a third player. Because of Elizabeth's witty defense, Bingley is allowed to strike back; however, he wins as only Bingley can, in a way that corrects but appears to be no win at all.

I assure you that if Darcy were not such a great tall fellow, in comparison with myself, I should not pay him half so much deference. I declare I do not know a more awful object than Darcy, on particular occasions, and in particular places; at his own house especially, and of a Sunday evening, when he has nothing to do. (50)

Bingley and Elizabeth wounded and convicted Darcy by the former's words of defense and latter's encouragement. However, even though he is hurt by Bingley's defiance, he still gets the last word by manipulating Bingley and drawing the conversation to a close. He says, "I see your design, Bingley...You dislike an argument and want to silence this" (51). Bingley said nothing to slow down or to end the conversation, yet Darcy demands it be done, and Bingley acquiesces by saying, "Perhaps I do. Arguments are too much like disputes. If you and Miss Bennet will defer yours til I am out of the room, I shall be very thankful; and then you may say whatever you like of me" (51). Bingley backs down, yet has not left Darcy without scars.

The conversation leaves Bingley with more edge but with little difference in the way of his and Darcy's relationship; however, the discourse has affected Darcy and Elizabeth's relationship. The presence of a woman has shaken this game for gentlemen; Elizabeth's words plague Darcy's mind his views of friendship and he is intrigued by her strength. He shakes these feelings. Austen's narrator comments, "Were it not for the inferiority of her connections, he should be in some danger" (52). One game has ended, but another has begun.

Other scenes in *Pride and Prejudice* involve card game motifs such as when the girls attend a small party at the Phillips' residence. The group sits down to a game of whist, "the parent of all card games" (*Complete Hoyle's* 9). Wickham, the "gamester," ironically declares that he is no good at the game and moves to another table to flirt with Elizabeth (288). The irony of this statement comes from whist being one of the most intense and competitive card games in British history. The rules of the game use words like, "revoke," "adversaries," and "penalties." Men of the day loved Whist as it was a game of war (10-12). Excellent at gaming, Wickham fools everyone from the beginning. The fact that he refuses to play due to lack of talent, then moves straight over to the ladies to continue to play proves his lie, especially since, as a military man, he must have played this game many times before.

After informing Mrs. Phillips that he "knows little of the game at present" and being kept from elaboration due to Mrs. Phillips' dismissal, he proceeds to sit between Elizabeth and Lydia. At this stage, Elizabeth appears eager to hear about Wickham's connection with Darcy, and does not have to open the conversation, because Wickham is more than willing to bring it up. He leads into the conversation by

asking how far Netherfield was from Meryton, then "in a hesitating manner" asks how long Darcy had been a guest in the house (78). Elizabeth, intrigued as she is about the relationship between the two men, continues to ask questions about Darcy. She quizzes him about Darcy's estate in Derbyshire, using what little she knows to figure out how much he knows. His response not only shows his knowledge of the Darcy family but also his intimate connection with the information. He volunteers,

You could not have met with a person more capable of giving you certain information on that head than myself—for I have been connected with his family, in a particular manner, from my infancy.
(78)

Wickham's strategy in this chapter closely reflects Uriah Heep's "umble" persona in Charles Dickens' *David Copperfield*. Uriah feigns humility and exploits his low class status to blind others to his evil schemes. With every crouching position and wringing of his hands, Uriah convinces David and his friends of his innocence, only to use their trust to blackmail them (779-804). Heep's fake, sympathetic character reflects Wickham's alternate-personality in the form of a poor, wronged foot soldier that is trying to come back from a tragic occurrence in his past.

In his rhetoric, Wickham uses emphasized pronouns like *him and me* often, trying to create an obvious distinction between himself and Darcy (78-82). When asked whether or not Darcy is a disagreeable man, Wickham responds,

I have no right to give *my* opinion, as to his being agreeable or otherwise. I am not qualified to form one. I have known him too long and too well to be a fair judge. It is impossible for *me* to be impartial. (78)

From the moment he begins his speech, readers can only imagine him bowing frantically and rubbing his hands together while speaking.

Elizabeth calls attention to the fact that no one in their community thinks Darcy is a respectable man, and when Wickham confirms that Darcy is the rude, prideful man she thinks he is, she suggests that one of the two gentlemen must leave. To this, Wickham responds,

Oh no—it is not for *me* to be driven away by Mr. Darcy. If he wishes to avoid seeing *me*, he must go. We are not on friendly terms, and it always gives me pain to meet *him*, but I have no reason for avoiding him but what I might proclaim to all the world—a sense of very great ill usage, and most painful regrets at his being what he is.

His wording puts emphasis on the opposing men, himself and Darcy, and creates a tone of bravery as he shows he cannot be driven away. Of course, he is mysteriously absent at a

ball Darcy is attending, showing the irony of his brave demeanor in this scene (90).

Wickham takes a break from his speech to compliment the wonderful society of the Meryton area to show Elizabeth how he needs a town like it since he feels like a "disappointed man" whose "spirits will not bear solitude" (80). He informs Elizabeth that though the military helped get him by, his real passion involves the church. Now is the time for readers to object to his dishonesty and to understand it. Wickham chooses to relieve all speculation from Elizabeth and take the opportunity to assure her of his sainthood. He says, "I was brought up for the church; and I should at this time have been in possession of a most valuable living" (80). This sly comment strongly reflects Mr. Collins' ideas, concurrent with contemporary practice, that the clergy profession is "equal in point of dignity with the highest rank in the kingdom" (98). He also claims,

I have warm, unguarded temper, and I may perhaps have sometimes spoken of my opinion of him, and to him, too freely. I can recall nothing worse. But the fact is, that we are very different sort of men, and that he hates me. (80)

Although readers can understand that Wickham is lying, he convinces Elizabeth by his story. Austen's narrator says, "Elizabeth found the interest of the subject

increase, and *listened with all her heart*; but the delicacy of it prevented further enquiry." (79) Wickham sees how his character fares with his audience and sinks deeper into his deception, adding truth to his lies, making his lies even more plausible.

Wickham informs Elizabeth that Darcy revoked his promised living at the parish because he was "extravagant" and "imprudent" (80). Though Wickham speaks accurately, Darcy's reasons for excusing Wickham from his inheritance were due to his scandalous behavior and his treatment of Georgiana. Wickham claims later that he "devoted hours and hours to [Georgiana's] amusement;" this statement amuses readers when the truth comes out (83). He also describes the closeness of their families while they were growing up, which Darcy confirms later in the novel. His descriptions of Darcy's character also seem to have a ring of truth to them. His statement about Darcy "despising his fellow creatures", though exaggerated, does not appear false as Darcy does have difficulties in relating to people and Elizabeth's suspicions prove that Darcy had not treated the residents of Meryton well (81). Wickham also points out Darcy's pride.

Perhaps Wickham's truest statement of the novel comes when he says,

For almost all his [Darcy's] actions may be traced to pride; and pride has often been his best friend. It has connected him nearer with virtue than any other feeling. But we are none of us consistent; and in his behaviour to me there were stronger impulses, even than pride. (82)

Darcy does struggle with intense pride. Austen's narrator makes that clear. Wickham himself proves man's inconsistency. During the time to which Wickham refers, Darcy, in fact, behaved on stronger impulses than pride. He worked in the defense of his sister and Wickham's scandalous and ungrateful behavior toward Georgiana and the Darcy family.

Wickham also points out that Darcy has been known to be "liberal and generous," but cancels out the compliments to Darcy's character with a negative emphasis on pride (82). He speaks of Darcy's positive qualities as if they make him shameful, and Elizabeth agrees with him. Once again, he speaks truth but with emphasis and tone that discredits Darcy. He mentions family, filial and brotherly pride, as a few of Darcy's specific pride points. Readers cannot deny the truth of these accusations, but the redemption of Darcy in the end shows both Elizabeth and readers Wickham's sly deception.

Once the whist party breaks up, so does the round of gaming between Wickham and Elizabeth. Though he unknowingly does so, Mr. Collins makes a significant statement. When asked if he was disappointed by his loss in whist, he says, "I know very well, madam, that when persons sit down to a card table they must take their chance of these things" (83). When Elizabeth sits down at the table with Wickham she takes the chances of deception and manipulation. At this moment, Wickham's good looks and charisma blind Elizabeth, and her prejudice against Darcy makes her unwise about Wickham's game. Elizabeth soon learns that though she does not like to play games, she can still be affected by the games of others. This realization makes Elizabeth a wiser woman.

The last time the narrator mentions a card game, by name, occurs near the end of the novel when Collins proposes to Elizabeth. He mentions that Lady Catherine de Bourgh told him to marry as the guests set up quadrille table (105). The fact that he mentions this as his initial motivation for considering a wife shows how much this old-fashioned matriarch manipulates him. She insists on controlling his life as much as she demands he play quadrille. Though Collins is a young man, playing an old

woman's game, he abides like a slave, doing the exact opposite of his wishes. Not only does it reveal her puppet-master status, but also it continues to prove how much of a pawn Collins is.

As the novel reaches its denouement, and Darcy and Elizabeth's romance blossoms, the more ambiguous the games become. The narrator mentions card games when Darcy and Elizabeth long to talk to each other but are placed at separate tables, and then again when Mrs. Bennet insists a game be played to give Bingley time alone with Jane to propose. These games, though symbolic and significant, are even more so because they are untitled; Austen's narrator never specifies which games the characters play in these scenes. Though a character mentions whist, the narrator does not emphasize any kind of games at other tables, nor does she speak intensely about game playing in the scene (331). This lack of detail suggests that the name of the game does not matter. Before this time, the games were specific, and used to interpret the stage of Elizabeth and Darcy's relationship. Readers see petty banter in early scenes and deep, philosophical discussion of character later. By the time Bingley's pursuit of Jane was in full array, and Darcy and Elizabeth had come to terms with their

feelings for each other, there was no more need for banter or discussion. The game became irrelevant, so the narrator no longer informed the readers.

However important the sitting room is to the game of *Pride and Prejudice*, it is not the most prominent site for most of the battles in the novel. Card games set the players and the relationships they have with each other, but the game board takes place in a different setting.

Chapter Two

Dance Floor as Game Board

The center of the Victorian social world was the ballroom. The ballroom served as a hub for society, class, and upcoming fashions. Like her card game references, Jane Austen includes dancing as a pastime and metaphor in her novels in order to familiarize her audience with the world she created, a fictional world based in reality. Though Austen never names specific dances, the prevalence of dancing reveals how the pastime plays the role of game board for the novel's love game. The movements involved in dances in the nineteenth-century reflect the position of pawns and players on a board, and the rules of each dance determine and limit players' movements during the game. The position of the game pieces also represent hierarchy and determine winners and losers according to the expectations of the dances and figurations. Dancing also signifies the development of love between Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy.

The three most popular dances in the Regency Era were the quadrille, the waltz, and the country dance. Each of these dances possesses qualities of a game board and rules that lend themselves to the theme of competition in love in *Pride and Prejudice*. The dance floor plays the role of the board for love games in the novel because the structure and complexity of each dance represent the structure and complexity in love and matchmaking. The need for strategy on the part of the dancer reflects the need for strategy in the love game, and the rules that apply to each dance set the boundaries of the game and determine the success of the dancers, in whatever endeavor they try to achieve. For this reason, the dance floor most accurately signifies placement in the love game, better than any other environment.

The importance of dancing in the love game of *Pride and Prejudice* becomes evident in the first lines that mention the pastime; "To be fond of dancing was a certain step towards falling in love" (11). The moment Mrs. Bennet realizes that Bingley will be attending their next assembly, the more hopeful she becomes that there will be a connection between him and one of her daughters. The first battle for the affections of Mr. Bingley will take place on the dance floor, and the opportunities for matchmaking

multiply. Though the other women in the room provide a challenge, Mrs. Bennet is confident that her goal will be achieved.

Much like a professional sport, the ballroom is an arena where the game takes place and the dancing line represents the line of scrimmage where the players stand. From a magnified view, the arrangement of dancers is like the pieces in a game of chess with genders often facing each other and competing either for or against each other. Other dances involve couples facing each other, shifting into different formations. The quadrille is one of these dances.

The quadrille was a staple for the ballroom in the nineteenth century and was often used to begin the night's dancing (Pool 360). Unlike the other two dances, the quadrille splits couples into sets rather than divide everyone by gender. Each dance set has four couples that, through a series of movements, refigure the square they form into different shapes, and change positions with the other couples.

The quadrille was not just a complex dance; it had political undertones. According to Cheryl A. Wilson, the French-based quadrille was a "choreographic reflection of

nineteenth-century society" that "embodies changing cultural perceptions concerning nation, class and gender" (104-105). Certain dances became more prominent in English dance halls because they had roots in England, rather than initially forming in other countries, such as the country dance. However, the quadrille's appearance in high society balls revealed a new idea of unification and outsourcing for England. The perception of class and gender also changed with the appearance of the quadrille, and Wilson's analysis of the quadrille is consistent with Jane Austen's use of dancing in *Pride and Prejudice*. Austen used dancing to show division between class and gender and how they pertain to conflict in the love game, making the ideas found in the quadrille relevant to her story.

Jane Austen's opinion of the quadrille was respectful but disapproving, as revealed in her letters. In a note to her niece, Fanny Knight, Austen comments, "Much obliged for the quadrilles, which I am grown to think pretty enough, though of course they are very inferior to the Cotillions of my own day...Your objection to the quadrilles delighted me exceedingly" (Chapman 481). Many with Austen opposed the quadrilles because of the conflict between England and France; others complained because quadrilles were difficult

(Pool 61).

A significant trait of the quadrille is the complexity of its choreography. Class and distinction determine the arrangement, as were all dances of the time. The two most important couples danced at the head and end of the room, the head being the point closest to the entrance (*Dick's* 29). Once set, the couples would make their way through a maze of formations with other couples alternating in motion, and then joining in the movement together. Multiple formations involved switching partners for a few steps, and other formations involved separating couples into respective genders. The steps of quadrille were complicated, with young women often told to "know only the figures—not the steps" and to walk through it rather than skip because there was less danger of hurting themselves or another dancer in the set (Pool 61).

In order to dance the quadrille, a dancer had to navigate well, know the changing formations, keep in time with the music, and be aware of the other dancers and their movements (*Wilson* 105). This trait of the quadrille employs the art of strategy in observation of other players' movements and ability to adjust accordingly, which serves as a symbol for Mrs. Bennet's attempts at matchmaking in

the ballroom.

Mrs. Bennet keeps a close eye on Bingley in the days preceding the first ball. She hears that he has left Hertfordshire to retrieve a company from town and is attentive to who he intends to bring back. She does so in order to evaluate the possible increase in population of available women that might steal Bingley's attention from her daughters (11-12). At first, Mrs. Bennet hears that Bingley is bringing twelve women, causing her to put the house in panic (12). But as the ball approaches, the number changes from twelve ladies, to six sisters. In the end, Bingley appears with only two women, his sisters Caroline and Mrs. Hurst.

Like quadrille, the numbers and formations in the love game change moment to moment, and Mrs. Bennet does her best to adapt to these changes in order to give her daughters a better chance at love and fortune.

Mrs. Bennet also takes timing into consideration while planning her schemes. The moment she hears of Mr. Bingley's arrival she begs Mr. Bennet to visit him before anyone else can have the opportunity. She cites other women in the neighborhood, in order to convince her husband that being the first to appear to Bingley is advantageous to all of

their well being (5). Like dancing quadrille, timing must be perfect, and Mrs. Bennet sees the same quality in her pursuit of Mr. Bingley.

Mrs. Bennet understood that the reason dancing was "a certain step toward falling in love" was because of the intimacy dancing provided for a man and a woman. The Regency Era introduced a new dance to England's society that allowed such intimacy to the masses.

The 1790s introduced the German waltz into English society, but it did not become prominent until the early 1810s (Knowles 30). The general response to this dance was unfavorable, and is well summarized in an anonymously penned etiquette book, published in 1811,

But with regard to the lately-introduced German waltz, I cannot speak so favorably. I must agree with Goette, when writing of the national dance of his country, 'that none but husbands and wives can with any propriety be partners in the waltz.'
(*Regency Etiquette* 187)

The waltz scandalized England through the new intimacy dynamic it created between men and women in the ballroom, and was rejected for years. After decades of spending the pastime in gender segregated lines, the idea of not only being in close proximity with the opposite gender, but also touching them in places other than their upper extremities

seemed immoral. One had to be careful during this dance because if dancing was, as Mrs. Bennet believed, a "certain step toward falling in love," couples had to make sure they were dancing with the right partner. Therefore, it was imperative to Mrs. Bennet's plan to push Jane and Bingley together as much as possible during the balls. As Cheryl Wilson has emphasized, to dance with someone is a public display of something private, that, "bodies are spectacularized; they are put on display in the middle of the room to be viewed by others" (39). Mrs. Bennet believed that Bingley's decision to dance with Jane was a public display of his private intentions.

This thought also drives Mr. Collins to monopolize Elizabeth's dance card at the Netherfield ball. Austen's narrator writes, "The prospect of the Netherfield ball was extremely agreeable to every female of the family," showing that each daughter had a target for the evening (87). Jane's expectations involved the attention of Mr. Bingley and his two sisters; Elizabeth's goal included the special attention of Mr. Wickham, and special frustration of Mr. Darcy; and the youngest two Bennets just wanted attention from men in general (87). Of each Bennet holding hopeful anticipation for the Bingleys' party, Elizabeth's dreams

are the ones dashed in one way or another. Mr. Wickham does not appear, and she is called upon by two unwanted men.

Unbeknownst to Elizabeth, Mr. Collins, too, has a target for the evening, her. Out of disinterested kindness, Elizabeth asks Collins if he plans to dance, assuming he finds dancing sinful, as was a popular idea held by the church (Knowles 3). Instead, Mr. Collins replies,

I am by no opinion, I assure you that a ball of this kind, given by a young man of character, to respectable people, can have any evil tendency; and I am so far from objecting to dancing myself, that I shall hope to be honoured with the hands of all my fair cousins in the course of the evening; and I take this opportunity of soliciting your, Miss Elizabeth, for the two first dances especially; a preference which I trust my cousin Jane will attribute to the right cause, and not to any disrespect for her. (88)

Collins has no objection to the dance at Netherfield and shows that he, too, has high hopes for the evening.

Elizabeth is now aware that she has become the focus of his wife hunt and is aware that he is seizing the opportunity to develop intimacy with her through dancing, as well as showing those watching that she belongs to him.

If Mr. Collins got his way, observers of the dance would not only see him dancing with Elizabeth, but also they would take note of how many times he danced with her. Typically, a lady would dance with the same partner a

maximum of three times before she must choose another man to avoid scandal (Pool 55). That is why Mrs. Bennet emphasizes Bingley's two dances with Jane in the beginning of the novel when she says, "Mr. Bingley thought her quite beautiful, and danced with her twice. Only think of *that*, my dear: he actually danced with her twice" (14).

This fact also prompts Mr. Collins to propose that Elizabeth give him the first two dances at Netherfield. He later asks her for more dances and, after he is refused, informs her that he has no intention of leaving her side, offering proof of his quest for her love (102).

With this idea of intimacy, readers can also see the significance of Darcy and Elizabeth's dance at the Netherfield ball. Throughout the novel, Darcy and Elizabeth have avoided moments of intimacy with one another, either out of indifference or disgust for the other. However, this scene is where the opposing lines finally collide and the result is what neither expected. The intimacy of this scene is expressed in the waltz, but this scene also brings out another use of dancing in Austen's work, to illustrate the divisions between dancers.

The most common dance of the Regency Era, the one often used in Jane Austen film adaptations, is the English

country dance. The only specific dance alluded to in *Pride and Prejudice* is the *Boulangier*, a French-influenced country dance performed in ballrooms at the time (15). Jane Austen often refers to these dances in her letters to her sister and niece, showing that she did not write about things in her novels that were unfamiliar to the daily life of nineteenth-century English society (Chapman 11). Country dances divided men and women into separate lines with the couples arranged by rank, and the most prestigious couple would lead the rest of the dancers in the weaving patterns and soul train-like choreography (Pool 59).

The country dance, though influenced by practices in other countries, was essentially English, and it accurately represented the culture of England at the time. A feeling of patriotism was important to the Englishmen living in the Regency Era, proven by its successor era, the Victorian Age (Wilson 73). By the time *Pride and Prejudice* was published, Great Britain was already a world power, the French Revolution had just taken place, and the English Revolution was stirring. The feeling of the almighty empire swelled in this time period, only to be increased when Victoria ascended the throne in 1837 (Cody). Because of Britain's patriotic mindset, the country dance was a favorite at

social functions and, though it was less popular with the arrival of dances like the quadrille and the waltz, it was a symbolic reminder of the pride the English should have in their country (Wilson 73).

Country dances also revealed the gender separation and hierarchical attitude of the culture, furthering the competition for class power and gender. The book *Literature and Dance in Nineteenth-Century Britain* points out that the separations within the country dance "call attention to the fact that the only way women can proceed up or down the hierarchy is with the aid of a male partner" (Wilson 69). One of the most obvious scenes in which this battle between power and gender is described is when Darcy and Elizabeth confront each other on the dance floor.

The lines were formed with the highest-ranked couple at the head of the room, and the line continued with decreasing rank to the lowest ranked couple in the line at the end. As readers see in the scene in which Elizabeth dances with Darcy, a woman's status can change with her position in the dance line, thanks to the gentleman who moves her to that spot.

Jane Austen does not address this issue in *Pride and Prejudice* as much as she does in her other novels, but

there are a few allusions within the text that display the hierarchy of the dance lines. When Elizabeth finally dances with Darcy, Austen's narrator writes,

Elizabeth made no answer, and took her place in the set, amazed at the dignity to which she was arrived in being allowed to stand opposite to Mr. Darcy, and reading in her neighbors' looks their equal amazement in beholding it. (91)

Whether the narrator is talking about the figurative or physical "place in the set," Elizabeth's rank in the dance is usually much lower than Darcy's, so her place in this specific set is further up than her place nearer the end. Both her surprise and the surprise of her neighbor's suggest that this is a position she has never occupied before this dance.

Later in the dance, Sir William Lucas tells Darcy and Elizabeth that they are superior dancers and adds, "It is evident that they belong to the first circles" (93). Sir William clearly means to uplift them in prestige and hierarchy. As readers can see in the character of Sir William Lucas, he is a man obsessed with rank and high society. For as he told Mr. Darcy in an earlier scene, "There is nothing like dancing, after all. I consider it as one of the first refinements of polished societies" (26). With this character quality in mind, readers can see that

his compliment to the couple refers to their physical places in the line of dancers. In this case, there is no doubt that the "first circles" to which Sir William Lucas refers is the head of the dance line.

The country dance was a series of advances, retreats and weaving within the lines. As *Pride and Prejudice* shows, dances often left room for conversation between partners and interactions between couples. Perhaps the reason this specific dance is the most cinematically used in adaptations of Jane Austen's novels, specifically Darcy and Elizabeth's dance at Netherfield, is its clear representation of divided lines within society and its demand that partners look at each other. This literary tool gives the hero and heroine the appropriate effect of a facing off.

At first glance, this scene does not seem significant to the theme of the love game, until later when readers realize that this dance serves as a catalyst for the eventual marriage of Darcy and Elizabeth. Jane Austen uses dancing to show the stages of love in which the hero and heroine travel from disinterest toward each other to passionate love.

In Austen's novel, a character's willingness to dance

with another character shows his or her feelings toward that person. Timothy Dow Adams points out that Darcy's proposal to dance is directly correlated to his proposal of marriage, and Elizabeth's acceptance to dance relates to her acceptance of Darcy's marriage proposal. As Adams says,

Darcy proposes to dance, Elizabeth refuses; Darcy proposes again to dance, Elizabeth accepts; Darcy proposes marriage, Elizabeth refuses; Darcy again proposes marriage and Elizabeth accepts. (42)

Darcy's willingness to dance with Elizabeth is symbolic of his feelings for her, and vice versa. This symbolism also applies to other characters. Bingley is attracted to Jane from the beginning and is so willing to dance with her that he asks her multiple times during the first ball. Mr. Collins goes against the assumed clerical idea that dancing was sinful in order to show affection to Elizabeth, while Elizabeth's willingness to dance only applies to the scenario where Wickham is her partner (88).

Readers can see the development of Darcy and Elizabeth's relationship at balls and social gatherings where dancing is included. The first dance of the novel is at the Meryton assembly where the newcomers are introduced to the locals of the town (12-14). Austen's narrator does not describe the assembly as much as she describes the new gentlemen. The fascinating thing about the narrative of

this scene is the lack of description of Mr. Bingley's two sisters, even though they are as unfamiliar as the men; it is not until later that the two women are featured in detail. The narrator says that Bingley's sisters "were fine women, with an air of decided fashion," but does not keep track of their, or Mr. Hurst's, activities during the dance. The missing details are evidence of their unimportance in the assembly. The narrator only considers them while they are a mysterious threat to Mrs. Bennet's schemes, but the moment they became non-threatening, they were no longer considered at all. Like the people of Meryton, Austen focuses the scene on the eligible men who just walked into their midst.

The narrator describes the men in the way a single woman looking for a husband would see them; "Mr. Bingley was good-looking and gentlemanlike," "Mr. Darcy, soon drew the attention of the room by his fine, tall person, handsome features, noble mien, and...having ten thousand a-year" (12). Upon their arrival, Austen writes them a profile of availability in a way that any woman in the room would read over an application. Of course, Mr. Darcy looks to be the more desirable of the two until, so to speak, he opens his mouth.

Mr. Darcy is the richer and more handsome of the two, but the women at the party immediately change their minds when he begins to show his personality. From that moment, no one gives him another thought and spreads the word to all people in the county that he is "the proudest, most disagreeable man in the world" (13). He proves that he thinks no more of the locals than they do of him by passing judgment on the few people at whom he actually looks.

Darcy refuses to dance with anyone with whom he is not acquainted, and refuses to become acquainted with anyone beyond his party, bringing Bingley to the rescue. He insists that Darcy dance and is refused for the aforementioned reason that he knows no one and insists that there are no girls pretty enough for his taste. Bingley scoffs at his vain and exaggerated statement by pointing out the number of pretty girls in the room, making reference to Elizabeth who is sitting because of the shortage of men in the assembly.

After taking a quick glance at Elizabeth, Darcy makes the judgment that she is "tolerable; but not handsome enough" and assumes that because she is sitting that she is a poor soul who is dull enough to be abandoned by all the men in the town (13-14). Darcy's initial feelings towards

Elizabeth are passive, bordering on disgust, proven by his unwillingness to dance with her.

The narrator does not specify what Elizabeth's initial feelings are toward Fitzwilliam Darcy at the Meryton assembly before her eventual offense by his slight. Readers know from her behavior and attitude that Elizabeth is not as silly as her mother and sisters, and would be more sensible than they are concerning hearsay. There is the possibility that she had no ill feelings toward Mr. Darcy since she had not yet met him. When she hears Bingley's suggestion that Darcy ask her to dance she does not interrupt the conversation to refuse ahead of time or respond with a look of horror (13). She begins the evening relatively disinterested and ends the night in playful dislike. Whatever willingness Elizabeth had toward dancing with Mr. Darcy is far removed as she realizes how ridiculous he is and later promises her mother to never dance with him (21).

Later, the group is assembled at the Lucas' house and dancing begins. By this time, Austen's narrator has informed readers that immediately after his slight on Elizabeth, Darcy begins to rethink his initial judgment about her. Austen writes,

Mr. Darcy had at first scarcely allowed her to be pretty: he had looked at her without admiration at the ball; and when they next met, he looked at her only to criticize. But no sooner had he made it clear to himself and his friends that she had hardly a good feature in her face, than he began to find it was rendered uncommonly intelligent by the expression of her dark eyes...He began to wish to know more of her. (24)

Darcy no longer sees Elizabeth as a normal resident of Meryton and becomes fascinated by her to the point where he begins to listen in on her conversations at social events.

Elizabeth, on the other hand, does not feel the same way. Since her first encounter with the gentleman, Elizabeth's negative feelings toward Darcy have been reinforced by the many conversations she has had with her mother and other women in the community who share her opinion of him. The two are on different plains when they meet again at the Lucas' gathering with Darcy feeling a spark of interest and Elizabeth feeling further removed from him.

During the party, Sir William Lucas observes to Darcy that the lovely Elizabeth Bennet is, yet again, without a dance partner. For the second time, someone tries to persuade Darcy to dance with Elizabeth, but the response during this scene differs from the first. Austen's narrator said that Sir William "taking her hand, he would have given

it to Mr. Darcy, who, though extremely surprised was not unwilling to receive it" (27). The first time Darcy had the option of dancing with Elizabeth, he looked at her and immediately refused, showing his disinterest. However, the moment Sir William offers Elizabeth to him, Darcy "was not unwilling" to oblige, showing his new interest.

Unlike the first ball, when she merely looked at Darcy to see his reaction, Elizabeth immediately refuses to dance with him the second time. The narrator says that Sir William's insistence made Elizabeth "instantly draw back and say with some discomposure, 'Indeed, sir, I have not the least intention of dancing'" (27). Darcy then asks Elizabeth for a dance "with grave propriety," and Sir William follows it with further coercion toward Elizabeth (27). He tries to convince her that she is an excellent dancer and that Darcy's distaste in the pastime would pass once it was satisfied in dancing with her. Elizabeth then turns away "archly," ending the conversation and revealing her negative feelings for Darcy (27). However, Austen's narrator informs readers that Elizabeth's refusal does not alter Darcy's new interest in her. In fact, the narrator describes Darcy's following thoughts as complacent but agreeable (27-28). The development of the relationship goes

from being passive on both sides to one person taking interest and the other remaining indignant.

These scenes lead to the confrontation at the Netherfield ball where the clash between Darcy and Elizabeth begins to take shape, opening them to inner passions, eventually leading them to fall in love. Elizabeth's feelings toward Darcy have become more hostile by this time due to the entrance of the brutish Mr. Wickham, and the drama he brings concerning Darcy and his family. Darcy, however, has different feelings.

After a few dances with Mr. Collins and enthusiastic conversations about Mr. Wickham, Elizabeth is surprised to find Mr. Darcy before her, requesting a dance. Out of shock, Elizabeth agrees, surprised to see his willingness to dance with her and even more surprised to find that she has accepted his proposal. Readers are not as surprised by Mr. Darcy's proposal to dance, since the narrator has given a peek inside the curtain to Darcy's emotional development for Elizabeth in previous scenes off of the dance floor, such as the scene where Darcy confesses to himself that if Elizabeth had been richer he would be real danger of falling for her (52).

The couple begins to dance and, out of an angry

intention, Elizabeth tries to start conversation (92). She opens the conversation with small talk about the dance with Darcy doing his best to be an obliging dance partner.

Elizabeth then becomes less friendly as she says,

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. (92)

Elizabeth attempts to annoy him with her obvious sarcasm, but Darcy's response is cordial as he compliments her character as being the opposite of what she described and assures her that he knows she is referring to him alone.

The dance becomes more heated as the conversation continues when, through Darcy's innocent attempt at small talk, Elizabeth alludes to Mr. Wickham. In response, Darcy "speaks in a constrained manner" and she "replies with emphasis" (93). The conversation is temporarily paused as Sir William Lucas, a common apparition in Darcy and Elizabeth's dances, addresses the couple on their fine dancing and the potential marriage between Bingley and Jane. After the interruption, Darcy attempts to get the conversation going in a positive direction by asking her about books, knowing that she loves them. However, once again, Elizabeth is determined to stay the course in her

plan to confront Darcy about his attitude and his treatment of Wickham. The dance becomes more aggressive.

Elizabeth's "thoughts had wandered far from the subject" as she interrogates him about his character and he responds with more coldness than he had previously in their conversation (94). She weaves in and out of the line and circles him multiple times as the music becomes more intense, and he begins to respond in kind, turning their dance into a faceoff. However, readers can sense the new passion being revealed as they cross each other. Darcy asks Elizabeth why she asks the questions she does, and Elizabeth's response is that she is trying to figure out his character. He has become a fascinating study for her, a study that has been the subject of many conversations with others and observations in social settings, especially the dance floor (94). To Elizabeth, Darcy is a difficult puzzle to solve as those closest to him sing his praises, yet his personality seems contrary to their claims. Darcy's interest in Elizabeth is equally puzzling as he cannot understand why, in spite of all the disadvantages, he is still falling for her. Both Darcy and Elizabeth seek to figure out the other, releasing not only frustration and confusion but feelings that eventually develop into love.

This moment is not only where Darcy and Elizabeth's emotional confusion comes to a head, but it is significant to the gender and class boundaries that are being crossed.

A woman of lower rank, matching wits with, and scolding a wealthy man of higher class seems to be a rebellion against the rules of the dance. Before Elizabeth joins Mr. Darcy on the dance floor, Charlotte Lucas warns her not to let her bias toward Wickham allow her to "appear unpleasant in the eyes of a man of ten times his consequence" (91). However, Elizabeth is raised to Darcy's level and continues to compete within the boundaries of the dance. Mr. Darcy, though without title, is a man of distinction who fits the mold of the typical patriarchal male of the time. For Elizabeth Bennet to take such liberties shows that she has crossed borders, but her demeanor is such that she still obeys the rules of the game. She only addresses Darcy when he brings her up to his level on the game board. With this in mind, readers can see that Elizabeth has crossed borders while being a respectful member of society and behaving prudently.

The irony of these scenes, specifically the ball at the Meryton assembly, evolves when the narrator performs a slight-of-hand with the other characters in the novel.

While the other players are looking at the game being played in the name of Jane and Bingley's potential marriage, the narrator reveals the relationship developing across the room between a couple not expected to be romantically involved. The illusion continues throughout the novel as each dance brings Darcy and Elizabeth closer to marriage. The Netherfield ball is no exception as Sir William points the couple toward Bingley and Jane, making no observation of what is going on with the couple he to whom he is speaking.

Austen writes two games into her novel, one intentionally played and another game that develops on the dance floor with only two people aware of it. Social balls and community dances act as the arena and game board for the love game, challenging players in their endeavors by setting rules and changing formations. These changes cause players to shift positions on the board and adapt to the complexity of the game. In order to achieve the desired ends, the players must face each other on the dance floor, whether they mean to gain their partner's love or confront them. Mrs. Bennet tries to take advantage of the game board, moving according to the dance and providing intimacy for her daughter and Mr. Bingley. Darcy and Elizabeth use

the dance floor for their own ends, Darcy to gain her attention and Elizabeth to challenge his undesirable traits.

Throughout *Pride and Prejudice*, readers can see the significance of what happens on the dance floor. The rules of dances such as the quadrille, the waltz, and the country dance reflect the strategy, intimacy, and social issues of the Meryton community. On a smaller scale, the dances illustrate the development of love between the two main characters.

As a board game brings about different outcomes, the dance floor provides twists and turns for its players. A competitor may be ahead throughout the game, but in the end, the final winner may be a surprise. In the case of *Pride and Prejudice*, Charles Bingley and Jane Bennet were the main goal of the love game; however, the dance floor gives the players an unexpected outcome. Another love story concerning Darcy and Elizabeth takes place on the same game board on which the observers are watching the former couple. *Pride and Prejudice* proves that the game of love is tricky and that players must keep watch to see that they are aware of every move being made.

Players must also keep themselves in line by observing the rules set in the game. Rules and standards present extra obstacles to the players of the love game in *Pride and Prejudice*, because the characters have to stay inside the lines while forming strategies concerning other players.

Chapter Three

Social Etiquette as Rules of Play

An essential aspect to any board game is the presence of rules or standards to help explain the objective and set boundaries for the players. For the love game in *Pride and Prejudice*, these rules take the form of societal standards and etiquette in the Regency Era. These rules create a maze through which the players must find their way in order to attain their prize. They also act as an equalizer, as each player is aware of the rules; in game theory terms, the rules of social order make *Pride and Prejudice* a game of "complete information" (Brams 288). Each rule sets up a wall the characters must get around to continue with the game; some make it to the end of the maze, some do not, and some attempt to bypass the obstacles, but the rules apply to all.

In nineteenth-century England, social order ruled the daily lives of the British. What they wore, how they spoke to familiar faces they passed on the street, and who got

their property when they died were all subject to expectations and laws concerning etiquette, hierarchy, and primogeniture. In *Pride and Prejudice*, these rules and expectations set boundaries for the love game, as players must obey the rules of society yet still strive to attain their goals. Often, the rules set up blockades for the players and the person facing the challenge must figure out how to get around it, requiring stealth on the part of the players.

Jane Austen also uses rules of society to prove her satirical point. In Austen's mind, certain expectations put upon young people, especially young women, are nonsense. Throughout the story, she points out these expectations and proves in her love story how unimportant they are. However, no matter how unimportant some rules appear to be, they are useful in the story of *Pride and Prejudice* and to the couples they challenge and protect.

In the beginning of the novel, readers see the importance of rules as Mrs. Bennet senses a game is on the horizon. The moment she receives word that Mr. Bingley has moved to the neighborhood, she knows she must get to him before anybody else, but she hits the first wall. Mrs. Bennet tries to get Mr. Bennet to introduce him to the new

bachelor and is having a hard time doing so. When he suggests that his wife go instead she says, "Indeed, you must go, for it will be impossible for us too visit him if you do not" (6). According to the rules of society, a woman must not introduce herself to a man, especially a man of higher status than she. After the first introduction, a woman can then approach a man and introduce others, but not beforehand (Pool 55).

Once she learns that Mr. Bennet has already made the introduction, Mrs. Bennet is allowed to continue her strategy for the game, with the expectation of the next obstacle, getting her daughters close to him. She does this by inviting him to dinner, getting her daughters an audience with him, and refusing to introduce Mr. Bingley to any others (9). However, Mr. Bennet suggests his wife introduce Bingley to other women in the area and once she refuses, jokingly says, "Do you consider the forms of introduction, and the stress that is laid on them, as nonsense?" (9) He reminds her of another blockade in her way, common courtesy and the expectations that a lady would introduce newcomers to locals.

Of course, Mr. Bennet is trying to complicate Mrs. Bennet's game by making such a suggestion, and reminding

her that there are other players on the board. Throughout the novel, readers do not fully understand on whose side Mr. Bennet is, whether he is trying to help Mrs. Bennet get to her goal or if he forms obstacles for the sake of making her look ridiculous. He seems noncooperative and breaks his coalitions as easily as he forms them. Yet, no matter how many obstacles Mrs. Bennet faces, she never gives up, even if it means breaking the rules.

Mrs. Bennet also uses intimidation as a means of keeping Mr. Bingley to herself. She tries to expose Charlotte Lucas' homeliness and remind Mrs. Lucas how much Bingley seems to fancy Jane (20-21). She also speaks openly to others in the community about how close Bingley and Jane are to engagement at the Netherfield ball (99). This, however, is where she begins to break rules of society, by speaking impertinently about Bingley's potential marriage to one of her daughters. Mrs. Bennet behaves in a manner in which women of that time were told never to behave.

An even greater disadvantage in Mrs. Bennet's behavior is that her daughters have inherited her vulgarity. Kitty and Lydia are both flippant, openly flirtatious girls, and Mary has an impropriety all her own in being overtly moral and antisocial. Mr. Darcy refers to these faults in his

first proposal to Elizabeth. The impertinence and vulgarity of the Mrs. Bennet's conversations, the presumptuous attitude she takes in doing so, the effects these attributes have on her daughters, and other aspects of her public behavior put her in a place where she does not reflect society's ideas of an acceptable lady.

Expectations for women in the Regency Era were expansive. Etiquette books for young women were prevalent during those years and carried on during the Victorian period. Caroline Bingley covers this point well in the novel when she attempts to overturn the spell Elizabeth Bennet seems to have cast on Mr. Darcy. Of accomplished women, Caroline says,

A woman must have a thorough knowledge of music, singing, drawing, dancing, and the modern languages, to deserve the word; and, besides all 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. (40)

This speech sounds like a direct quotation from an etiquette book of the time period. Kristin Olsen echoes these ideas in her *All Things Austen Encyclopedia*. Of female education in the Regency Era, Olsen says,

Girls were channeled into the acquisition of "accomplishments," a set of mostly artistic skills that were designed to keep them busy in

their life of leisure and to enhance the pleasure of those around them...It was considered of the first importance that girls be musical...should be able to speak French and perhaps Italian...paint in watercolors...and should be adept with a needle.
(235)

According to Elizabeth's description, and the conversation she has with Lady Catherine at her dinner party, the second Bennet daughter fulfills almost none of these traits (165). Caroline obviously means to expose Elizabeth's flaws and impropriety by naming these ideal qualities as a contrast to her competition. Mr. Collins also expresses high expectations of women in his scenes.

When he first arrives at Longbourn, he demonstrates to the women of the household how highly he regards women of moral character and domestic accomplishments. Of course, his primary example for excellent womanhood is Lady Catherine De Bourgh and compares every woman he sees to "her Ladyship" and her daughter Anne (68). He then suggests to his cousins that he read Fordyce's Sermons aloud. James Fordyce's *Sermons to Young Women* was a book written in 1766 to instruct young ladies on how to conduct themselves properly and to educate them in a conservative manner (footnote, 69). His book choice reveals his ideas of femininity and the standards in which he will hold his wife during their life together.

He later exhibits expectations toward women and their presumed desperation toward marriage proposals when he proposes to Elizabeth. He assumes that the character of a woman is silly and playful and that a woman would never refuse a man's offer to provide for her in her life (107).

To her refusal, Collins replies,

I am not now to learn that it is usual with young ladies to reject the addresses of the man whom they secretly mean to accept, when he first applies for their favour; and that sometimes the refusal is repeated a second or even third time. (107)

Mr. Collins assumes that the character of a woman is silly and playful, and that her refusal is "consistent with the true delicacy of the female character" (108). He also follows in the belief that a woman would never refuse a man's marriage proposal because she has no other option.

It does not appear to me that my hand is unworthy your acceptance, or that the establishment I can offer would be any other than highly desirable. My situation in life, my connections with the family of De Bourgh, and my relationship to your own, are circumstances highly in my favour; and you should take it into further consideration that...it is by no means certain that another offer of marriage may ever be made to you. (108)

To readers of this century, Mr. Collins' speech seems harsh and inappropriate. However, Mr. Collins speaks to the reality of women of the time. Women had no choice but to

marry for fear of being left to their own devices, which were nothing since the Bennet sisters could not earn or inherit in respectable ways. Be that as it may, Mr. Collins represents the expectations that a woman would never refuse a man's offer of marriage. Elizabeth does not oblige.

Jane Austen's narrator describes Mr. Collins as being "a mixture of pride and obsequiousness, self-importance and humility" and makes it clear in the novel that he is no one to admire (71). Readers also discover that Caroline Bingley is also something of a ridiculous character and see her as an antagonist of sorts. Austen's choice in matching society's expectations to laughable characters shows her opinion of the beliefs they represent. Naturally, these two characters see the expectations of women as rules for the love competition; however, as the game maker, Austen has given the hero and heroine an advantage by removing the obstacle every other character expects to appear.

Collins and Caroline are not the only characters that Austen provides as an extreme example of society's ideas of marriage. If Miss Bingley is Austen's stereotypical idea of Regency England's ideal woman, then Mrs. Bennet represents the opposite extreme. One would assume that because Austen has removed the legalistic ideas of womanhood from the

rules of the game that she has removed the virtue of prudence. This is not the case, and she proves it with the character of Mrs. Bennet.

The Bennet matriarch, though she upholds the traditional ideas of marriage, is not considered an ideal woman by nineteenth century England's standards and is an avid rule breaker in *Pride and Prejudice's* love game. Mrs. Bennet is an inappropriate woman who gossips and is publicly ruthless in her scheming. She openly slights Charlotte Lucas by calling her plain, for the benefit of making her daughters more appealing (93). An etiquette book written in the 1811 says,

Seek, as an example, some one of your less fair acquaintance, whose sweet disposition, gentle manners, and winning deportment render her the delight of her kindred. (Lady of Distinction 16)

Mrs. Bennet does not put this quality into practice and clearly discourages Miss Lucas and makes it her goal to tear down any other woman who poses as a threat to the Bennet sisters. When speaking to Mr. Bingley in his home, Mrs. Bennet says of the Lucas family,

For my part, Mr. Bingley, I always keep servants that can do their own work; my daughters are brought up differently. But everybody is to judge for themselves, and the Lucases are a very good sort of girls, I assure you. It is a pity they are not handsome! Not that I think Charlotte very

plain; but then she is our particular friend.
(45)

Though Charlotte seems to be the greatest victim of Mrs. Bennet, she is not the only victim of slander. In this speech, Mrs. Bennet also ridicules the entire Lucas family, showing that she is not partial to anyone who thickens the competition. Mrs. Bennet's behavior toward Mr. Darcy is also openly disdainful.

When Mrs. Bennet pays a visit to Netherfield to see the ailing Jane, she is decidedly rude to Mr. Darcy (44). After Darcy comments on life in the country, Mrs. Bennet responds negatively toward him, surprising everyone in the room with her disrespectful candor (44). According to society's rules, a woman must treat a man of higher status with "reverential courtesy," Mr. Darcy may not have a title but he is most certainly her superior (*Regency Etiquette* 203). For her to speak to a superior in such a way is unthinkable. Even if he is the least of officers under the ranks of the king, Mrs. Bennet's manner should be that of "calm and dignified respect" (*Regency* 203).

Unfortunately, Mrs. Bennet does not stop with one jab at Darcy. Once Bingley has given his opinion, Mrs. Bennet turns the attention back to Darcy by saying, "That is because you have the right disposition. But that

gentleman...seemed to think the country was nothing at all" (44). She later says that Sir William Lucas "is my idea of good-breeding; and those persons who fancy themselves very important and never open their mouths quite mistake the matter" (44). This disrespectful reference was irrelevant in the conversation and served only to prove how much Mrs. Bennet has despised the rules laid before her.

One rule Mrs. Bennet does abide by is the rule of visitation. Homes in Regency England had designated times in which a guest could come for a visit. For a long visit, usually for those who lived far from the visited person, visitors could enter whenever they arrived; however, visitors could also make morning calls, allowing them to come in after breakfast (Olsen 699-700). Of course, the definition of morning was somewhat different from our ideas today. Morning in the early 1800s could be anytime between the time the family ate breakfast and dinner, usually 10:00 a.m. to noon, or noon to 3:00 p.m. Mrs. Bennet visits Netherfield after she has already become acquainted with the house owners and at an appropriate time, after breakfast (42). However, this rule was often only allowed in country homes, as the residents of London had only a three-hour window in which visitors could present

themselves in the afternoon (Hughes 177). This rule, of course, limits players to when they can engage with the goal, namely Charles Bingley.

Other visitation rules involve propriety of visitations after events such as balls and dinner parties. Kristine Hughes writes,

Ceremonial visits must be made the day after a ball, when it will suffice to leave a card; within a day or two after a dinner party...and within a week of a small party, when the call should certainly be made in person. (177)

Although the rules for the countryside differed from those in the cities, the presence of rules permits and prevents characters from being able to access the desired parties whenever they want. The visitation rules also put the players on the same level; every other acquaintance of the Bingley's may visit just as much as the Bennets. However, Mrs. Bennet finds a loophole through the rules by sending Jane on horseback, causing her sickness and extended stay with the Bingleys. Though she does obey the rules of visitation, Mrs. Bennet twists the game by changing the nature of the visits.

Mrs. Bennet's defiance of the rules is not the only example of rule breaking in the novel. Mr. Collins has what can only be described as class delusion, a sense that he is

above the rules and, in turn, behaves in a way that is opposed to how society believes his class should act.

At the Netherfield Ball, Mr. Collins hears that Mr. Darcy is at the assembly and decides to introduce himself. He says,

I happened to overhear the gentleman himself mentioning to the young lady who does the honours of this house the names of his cousin Miss De Bourgh, and of her mother Lady Catherine. How wonderfully these sort of things occur! Who would have thought of my meeting with, perhaps, a nephew of Lady Catherine De Bourgh in this assembly! I am most thankful that the discovery was made in time for me to pay my respects to him, which I am now going to do, and trust he will excuse my not having done it before. (97)

Mr. Collins believes that his love and obsessed devotion to Lady Catherine gives him the right to address Mr. Darcy without regard to formality. His emotional attachment gets the better of him, but Elizabeth tries to remind him of societal rules of introduction, and to Mr. Darcy's character.

Much like the rule preventing the Bennet women from visiting the Bingleys before Mr. Bennet had introduced himself, an inferior could not address a superior without a formal introduction. Daniel Pool elaborates on this rule, noting that even if someone from an inferior class wanted

to be formally introduced to a superior figure, they could only do so if the superior party agreed to meet them (55).

The narrator writes,

Elizabeth tried hard to dissuade him from such a scheme, assuring him that Mr. Darcy would consider his addressing him without introduction as an impertinent freedom, rather than a compliment to his aunt; that it was not in the least necessary there should be any notice on either side; and that if it were, it must belong to Mr. Darcy, the superior in consequence, to begin the acquaintance. (97)

Elizabeth knows that the rules of society do not allow Mr. Collins to introduce himself to Mr. Darcy without a superior making the introduction. She also knows from her experiences with both men that Mr. Darcy will not have much tolerance for a man like Mr. Collins and will more than likely dismiss him shamefully. Though Elizabeth does not care for Mr. Darcy, she does concern herself with the judgmental glances he casts upon her family.

However, Mr. Collins' overwhelming emotional attachment also gives way to his class delusion. In response to Elizabeth's concerns, he says,

My dear Miss Elizabeth, I have the highest opinion in the world of your excellent judgment in all matters within the scope of your understanding; but permit me to say, that there

must be a wide difference between the established forms of ceremony amongst the laity, and those which regulate the clergy; for give me leave to observe that I consider the clerical office as equal in point of dignity with the highest rank in the kingdom. (97-98)

Mr. Collins' delusions are not only a class issue, but also a gender issue. His speech to Elizabeth begins with the assertion that he, as a man, is above her in intelligence as well as station. He thanks her for her judgment but notes that he only accepts her advice in the areas in which he feels Elizabeth has sufficient knowledge, matters of class and relations between men not being part of her expertise. He goes as far as to say, "I consider myself more fitted by education and habitual study to decide on what is right than a young lady like yourself," treating Elizabeth like a child (98).

After assuring Elizabeth that he knows what he is doing, Mr. Collins leaves her side to "attack" Mr. Darcy, Darcy's response is exactly what Elizabeth expects (98). Austen's narrator describes Mr. Darcy's reactions to the heir of Longbourne with phrases such as "evident astonishment," "unrestrained wonder," "distant civility," and "increasing contempt" (98).

Perhaps the worst aspect of this exchange is that Mr. Collins leaves Mr. Darcy unaware of the rule he has broken

and the shame he has brought upon himself. He returns to Elizabeth with utmost confidence.

I have no reason, I assure you, to be dissatisfied with my reception. Mr. Darcy seemed much pleased with the attention. He answered me with the utmost civility, and even paid me the compliment of saying that he was so well convinced of Lady Catherine's discernment as to be certain she could never bestow a favour unworthily. (98)

Mr. Collins believes that Mr. Darcy has justified his philosophies of class, but does not see that the gentleman was being merciful in his reaction. He also does not see that Darcy's compliment was generalized and directed more toward Lady Catherine than it was to Mr. Collins who thinks he has successfully overcome the rules of society but, in actuality, has broken the rules and has merely received free pass from a superior.

Mr. Collins' and Mrs. Bennets' rule breaking tendencies in *Pride and Prejudice* closely resemble Peter Swirski's descriptions of irrationality. Swirski says,

But even if agents had perfect access to perfect information...their conduct might not be fully explicable according to the classical postulates of rationality...In freeform game theory players may observe, or fail to observe, rules which were in force at different stages of the game, in essence giving them the power to make the rules up as they go. (136).

The rules have gotten too complicated for Mr. Collins and Mrs. Bennet, so they have chosen to turn a blind eye to them in order to work the game to their advantage. However, in foregoing the rules, they have become mockeries in society, potentially losing the game for themselves. Though he is not a rule follower, Mr. Collins' presence in the novel is evidence of societal rules at work.

Laws concerning inheritance in Regency England were the driving force behind society. England was patriarchal and its male driven stances were demonstrated through its practices of inheritance and ownership. A single woman could inherit money and property once she was 21 (Ziegenfuss). However, women would rarely inherit because the assets would be left in a will with the stipulation that they had to go to the next male in the family. Education for women in the Regency Era was also a limiting factor in the inheritance of property; women were taught to be domestic and often knew little of property care or business (Ziegenfuss).

Even if a woman inherited her family's legacy, she would more likely be married and her husband would then have control of it. The only exception to this law was if a

woman was rich enough for her parents to will their money to her alone legally, free from a husband's control.

Until the Married Women's Property Act of 1882, married women could not have full control of their inheritance. Before this time, everything a married woman received from her family before or after her wedding day went to her husband to do with it what he pleased. Near the end of the nineteenth century, the government passed laws that would give ownership to women, specifically within the Married Women's Property Act of 1882 (The National Archives). With this act, women could keep all property and income from before they got married and everything they gained during the marriage; however, this act did not come into being until seventy years after *Pride and Prejudice* was published.

At the time of *Pride and Prejudice*, women's suffrage had not yet come to a head. Though Mary Wollstonecraft had published *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* by this time, the women's movement would not cause major social change in the empire until years later (Timeline). Thus, the society in Jane Austen's novel still worked under the ideas of patriarchal inheritance, better known as primogeniture (Cartei).

Mr. Collins is the next male relative to the Bennet estate and is heir to Longbourne once Mr. Bennet dies. The purpose for the Collins character is to express the affect social rule has on the world Jane Austen creates. Though he tries to pretend hierarchy and the other standards set in this game do not exist, the fact that Austen writes about him at all is proof that he is wrong. While he and Mrs. Bennet try to ignore the rules, other characters represent the opposite extreme, rigidity in complete obedience to the rules.

Perhaps the most rigid rule follower in the game of *Pride and Prejudice* is Lady Catherine De Bourgh. She is a master of the gaming and feels entitled to keep everyone in line with the rules. When Elizabeth goes to dinner at Rosings during her visit to Charlotte and Collins, she is told not to be paranoid that her dress style is too lower class. As Mr. Collins notes, Lady Catherine, "likes to have the distinction of rank preserved" (161). In other words, Lady Catherine enjoys the idea of hierarchy and likes to keep everyone aware of where they are on the social ladder. Austen's narrator tells readers that Elizabeth is not intimidated because,

She had heard nothing of Lady Catherine that spoke her awful from any extraordinary talents or

miraculous virtue, and the mere stateliness of money and rank she though she could witness without trepidation (161).

Before meeting the lady, Elizabeth recalls that no one had ever spoken of Lady Catherine as a virtuous or impressive person. Elizabeth had only heard how rich in property and status she was, and was neither impressed nor intimidated by Lady Catherine purely because she knew her status was no match for Elizabeth's character.

By society's standards, Lady Catherine would be a woman to be revered. The Lady of Distinction describes Regency England's ideas of hierarchy,

We therefore regard society as a grand machine, in which each member has the place best fitted for him...This sentiment of order in the mind, this conviction of the beautiful harmony in a well-organized civil society, gives us dignity with our inferiors...By keeping them at a due distance, we merely maintain ourselves and them in the rank in which a higher Power has placed us. (*Regency Etiquette* 204-205)

Catherine De Bourgh's ideas of rules and rank are in step with the beliefs of the day, and she keeps each with such devotion that it creates an expectation for all to do the same.

Lady Catherine's dinner party reflects the formal ceremony of normal Regency gatherings. As was required, the hostess of the dinner party greeted the guests and paired

them for seating at the meal. Seating for a dinner party involved matching men and women by rank, with the each side of the table in a pattern, normally alternating man-woman-man-woman (Pool 73-74).

Lady Catherine greets them "with great condescension" and the narrator describes her manner was not welcoming enough "to make her visitors forget their inferior rank" (162-163). From the description of the meal, the dinner served at Rosings was a *la russe*, which meant that servants would serve guests at their seats rather than a *la francais*, where guests would be served a buffet style dinner (Pool 75-76). Because of the lack of men in Rosings party the pattern of the table is broken, readers learn that Elizabeth sits between Charlotte and Lady Catherine's daughter on one side of the table, which leaves readers to assume that Maria Lucas was sitting in between Sir William and Mr. Collins on the other side of the table (163).

After dinner, Austen's narrator tells readers that the ladies went to the drawing room, and mentions no presence of men (163). This practice was typical of dinner parties, as men would separate from the women to smoke, then the two genders would eventually come together for a round of cards (Pool 77-78). While in the drawing room, Lady Catherine

brings it upon herself to instruct the women in right living and appropriate behavior, scolding them in areas in which they fall short. She gives Charlotte assignments in appropriate care of their property and then turns to Elizabeth with inquiry and reproachful concern.

Lady Catherine questions Elizabeth on her family and upbringing; Elizabeth's answers shock her and Lady Catherine proceeds to put Elizabeth in line by informing her of what should have happened. This conversation further reveals how much of a foil Mrs. Bennet is to Lady Catherine. The Bennet sisters do not excel in domestic pursuits, such as music and art; they had no governess to train them; they were all introduced to society at the same time; they do not attend town events; and they, like Elizabeth, are all outspoken (165). All of these qualities, or lack thereof, reveal how much of a rule breaker Mrs. Bennet is as far as motherhood is concerned; yet, they also reveal how much of a rule follower Lady Catherine is.

Unlike Mrs. Bennet's children, Ann De Bourgh is an exact model child for rule following in child rearing. She is quiet, sickly, and obedient; everything Lady Catherine commands in her daughter. However, readers also see the fault in this type of mothering, as well.

After hearing Elizabeth's account of her upbringing and the encouragement from her parents to read and think in unusual ways, Lady Catherine begins her attempt to correct what is out of line about the Bennet family.

Aye, no doubt: but that is what a governess will prevent; and if I had known your mother, I should have advised her most strenuously to engage one. I always say that nothing is to be done in education without steady and regular instruction, and nobody but a governess can give it (165).

In Lady Catherine's words, there is only one way to achieve what needs to be done, and that way is hers. She prides herself on being the gatekeeper for what is right and appropriate. Elizabeth notices this aspect of Lady Catherine immediately and says, "Nothing was beneath this great lady's attention, which could furnish her with an occasion of dictating to others" (163).

The most obvious scene in which Lady Catherine attempts to exercise her expertise of decorum and authority as gamekeeper is when she pays an unexpected visit to the Bennets after hearing the rumors of Darcy's engagement to Elizabeth. Lady Catherine becomes aware that a line in hierarchy may be crossed and journeys to Longbourne herself to set everything right and keep her nephew from breaking the rules. She approaches Elizabeth in a direct and

authoritative manner, informing her that she is entitled to know the truth (342).

Elizabeth openly defies her by telling her that though she may have filial entitlement to know Mr. Darcy's romantic endeavors, she has no rights to hers. Catherine's moment of revelation concerning rules and sustaining hierarchy comes when she says,

Are you lost to every feeling of propriety and delicacy...Honour, decorum, prudence, nay, interest, forbid it. Yes, Miss Bennet, interest; for do not expect to be noticed by his family or friends, if you willfully act against the inclinations of all. You will be censured, slighted, and despised...Your alliance will be a disgrace, your name will never even be mentioned by any of us (344).

Lady Catherine reveals why this marriage could never be and the consequences of their defiance. To Lady Catherine, obedience creates honor, respect, and perfection; those who do not abide by such rules see rejection and disgrace.

Lady Catherine soon learns in Elizabeth's response that her ladyship is not as special as she thinks she is. Everything her Ladyship rejects works against her, confusing her in changing the game she thinks she is playing. However, she illustrates only one of the confused players in *Pride and Prejudice*.

In the love game, Lady Catherine determines to win the way she knows how, by enforcing rules and keeping the characters in line by moving them around the board. Mrs. Bennet tries to win by ignoring rules, finding loopholes, and staying in the game based on technicalities. Mr. Collins, either actively or passively, decides to be blind to rules and is near-sighted toward to the game, only seeing what he thinks is happening.

Elizabeth, however respectful of rules as she may be, discerns between the propriety of some rules and the ridiculousness of others. She understands the prudence of introduction and avoiding gossip, but she finds the legalism of hierarchy and the expectations for women absurd. As she tells Lady Catherine,

Neither duty, nor honour, nor gratitude has any possible claim on me, in the present instance. No principle of either would be violated by my marriage with Mr. Darcy. And with regard to the resentment of his family, or the indignation of the world, if the former were excited by his marrying me, it would not give me one moment's concern—and the world in general would have too much sense to join in the scorn. (347)

Elizabeth refuses to play the love game, by neither caring about the rules, yet abiding by rules that coincide with common courtesy. She believes that if she and Darcy are in love, that takes precedence over rules of society, yet is

considerate of society by not throwing all caution to the wind.

In *Pride and Prejudice*, readers see the rules of Regency England and how they are used in the game Jane Austen sets in her novel. Austen uses her characters to explain extreme views toward the rules, and uses Elizabeth Bennet as a middle ground, wisdom in a worldview full of paradoxes. Like any other board game, the rules not only set lines, standards, and obstacles to make the game interesting, but they also help determine winners.

Conclusion

If *Pride and Prejudice* is, in fact, a game, who wins? Like most questions in cases such as these, opinions may differ. Peter Morris says that one goal of game theory is to help players decide how to play "as well as possible," meaning the prediction of a win is not always possible (vii). He continues by saying,

For example, poker is too difficult to solve, but analysis of various forms of simplified poker has cast light on how to play the real thing. Computer programs to play chess and other games can be written by considering a restricted version of the game in which a player can only see ahead a small number of moves. (viii)

Players in the game can try to predict moves and make responsive plans but that does not necessarily mean they will gain victory. Mrs. Bennet can plot all she can through foresight into the best possible scenario, but she cannot determine a win based on theory. Lady Catherine spends the novel participating in a dominant strategy to avoid the worst outcome despite anyone other players' strategies (Elizabeth becoming part of her family), yet still loses the battle (Brams 289).

For example, Roger McCain says that in economics, game theory pairs with the ideas of neoclassical economics in order to predict movements within the game; neoclassical economics means that everyone plays rationally (6). However, the problems appear when players do not play rationally. Therefore, the standards of the game determine the winners, whether choices are made cooperatively or noncooperatively. The same thought can apply to the game in *Pride and Prejudice*.

The natural response to the question of who wins the love game in *Pride and Prejudice* would be Elizabeth and Darcy; after all, they are the hero and the heroine of the story. However, the winner of *Pride and Prejudice* may not depend on who played fairly, or who ended as the reader favorite. For example, the victors could be the character that got what they wanted regardless of the purity of strategy. This response from readers would define a noncooperative analysis of *Pride and Prejudice*, where the ends justify the means. When looking at the game from this angle, Austen's readers realize that Elizabeth and Darcy do not finish first; instead, characters like Mrs. Bennet and Charlotte claim the win.

Another non-cooperative theoretical opposition to the hero and heroine lies in the use of providence rather than strategy. Since neither Elizabeth nor Darcy bothered to be involved in the scheming, and had neither plan nor strategy toward falling in love, they are put into the category of losers. From the standpoint of game theory, these two players would not be factored into the equation since every attempt to include them in the past has failed economically. Mrs. Bennet tried to apply Elizabeth's profitability in her equation concerning Mr. Collins and her home; however, Elizabeth's lack of cooperation and "irrational" behavior caused the plot to fail, also causing Elizabeth to become an unprofitable flight risk.

Mr. Darcy, though he is wealthy, also proves to be an unlikely investment. Since his first appearance in the novel, Mrs. Bennet and all the other women in the county consider him a non factor and do not bother to include him in their hypothetical scenarios. Therefore, since neither character seems to have any space on the chart, their marriage hardly seems worth mentioning in the game at all.

However, most readers of *Pride and Prejudice* prefer to look at the novel from a cooperative standpoint, those who played fairly. Unlike the second objection to Elizabeth and

Darcy's victory in the novel, Joel Weisheimer believes the couples of the story are ranked in a hierarchy of marriage based on how much meddling was done to bring them together (404). To play by the rules, as can be inferred by Weisheimer, is to leave marriage to providence and chance to bring about what needs to happen. This same stance can apply to individual characters. If this is the case, the order remains as it always has. Characters like Mrs. Bennet, Caroline, and Lady De Bourgh fall into last place either because of their refusal to play by societal rules or they act as players without scruple or integrity. Peter Swirski notes in his book that those who rarely act rationally (like Mrs. Bennet) are never taken seriously, so their rebellion against rules do not have as much affect on the game as those who consistently behave rationally (137).

Characters like Jane and Bingley tend to receive mercy from readers because they seem helpless and unable to escape the pressure placed upon them. Austen's audience may consider this pair the winners because, in the end, they do escape the game and get to spend the rest of their lives in a relationship based on mutual love and individual choice.

If readers side with Weisheimer over Petete, they fall into the category of cooperative rather than noncooperative

theorists. With cooperative theory in mind, the factors leading to the outcome would determine winning. This choice in theoretical approach would set Darcy and Elizabeth as the winners. Elizabeth refuses to be party to the scheming and does not play the game by the philosophies of others. However, Elizabeth does adhere to rules and is brought into the game with integrity and prudence. Darcy—who closely reflects Lady Catherine for most of the novel—is independent and tries to control everyone. However, Darcy realizes that his decisions and way of thinking are wrong, and he becomes a humbled man. Darcy begins as a form of puppet-master and comes to the same conclusion as Elizabeth. The couple behaves rationally throughout the novel, often being the voices of reason in the game; correcting the irrational and influencing desired outcomes.

Another reason people tend to see this couple as the winning team consists in real growth that occurs in them by the end of the story. As Julie McMaster notes, Darcy and Elizabeth are like Benedick and Beatrice from *Much Ado about Nothing*, each learns from the other through humility and selflessness (42). Jane Austen's view of marriage seems to be one of mutual respect and benefit, seemingly making Austen herself a cooperative theorist. Both Darcy and

Elizabeth lose and gain in their relationship; they lose pride but gain a better perspective. In this case, the grounds of morality would determine their position in the game, but the position from which a reader is looking determines the outcome of the competition.

An analysis of *Pride and Prejudice* provides the study of game theory. Analyzing the plot, characters, and outcome is impossible without analyzing game form, strategy, and victors. The love game of the novel closely reflects a board game as the card motif serves for the purpose of characterization and context; the dance floors acts as the game board; and the rules of social order set the rules for the game. However, game theory does not necessarily take into account irrational thinking, nor can it fully determine the winning team. Therefore, in *Pride and Prejudice*, the narrator lays for us the factors, the decision, and the outcome; it is up for the readers to decide who is best and who is worst.

Perhaps the confusion grants the best part of the novel; characters are crafty enough to cause a stir in decisions, and Jane Austen paints everyone in a light in which they gain sympathy and are somewhat redeemed in readers' eyes. Peter Swirski says that literary game theory

"can model the reading process as a tacit game between the author and the reader" (126). The game may not be in the story after all; perhaps Jane Austen has readers in a game of which they are unaware.

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