

**Discourse Analysis and Comparison of Jane
Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* and Charlotte Brontë's
*Jane Eyre***

Social Class, Social Mobility and What Society Expects of Women

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Abstract

As my thesis topic, I decided to research, analyse and compare the two classic novels: *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen and *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë. The foci of this analysis will be the attitudes of the novels' protagonists on social class, the concept of social mobility and women's rights during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. As a method of choice for my thesis, I chose close reading. I chose these novels as primary sources and previous studies as secondary sources order to back up my claims further. I will subsequently compare the two novels focusing on characterization, how the two protagonists perceive the world around them and what paths do they follow when moving on to upwards social mobility. I will then compare the treatment of social class as a theme, looking into the way Austen and Brontë criticize society and support women's rights in a society that was reluctant to do so. The thesis is concluded with me acknowledging the different styles of the authors, the criticism they address towards society and its' way of thinking, along with the protagonists' efforts to support themselves and move up in social class.

Keywords: jane austen, charlotte brontë, social class, social mobility

Kandidaatintutkielma

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Discourse Analysis and Comparison of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* and Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*: Social Class, Social Mobility and What Society Expects of Women

Sivumäärä: 20 sivua

Tiivistelmä

Tutkimuksen tarkoituksena on tutkia, analysoida ja verrata kahta romaania: Jane Austenin *Ylpeyttä ja ennakkoluuloa* ja Charlotte Brontë'n *Kotiopettajattaren romaania*. Tässä analyysissä keskityn päähahmojen asenteisiin sosiaalista luokkaa kohtaan, sosiaaliseen liikkuvuuteen käsitteenä ja naisten toimijuuteen 1800- ja 1900-luvulla. Valittuna tutkimuksen menetelmänä oli lähiluku, joka viittaa kirjallisten tekstien ja niiden muunlaisten kohtien tarkkaan analyysiin ja tulkintaan. Käytin romaaneja primäärilähteinä ja edellisiä tutkimuksia sekundaarilähteinä tukeakseni väitteitäni. Analysoituani kaksi valitsemaani romaania erikseen, vertailen päähahmojen maailmankatsomuksia, eli miten he hahmottavat yhteiskuntaa. Keskityn myös tapoihin, joilla he hakevat sosiaalista liikkuvuutta. Sitten vertailen, miten Austen ja Brontë kirjoittavat sosiaalisesta luokasta. Vertailen myös, miten kirjailijat kritisoivat yhteiskuntaa, tarkastellen millä tavoilla he tukivat naisten oikeuksia silloin, kun ne eivät olleet tärkeitä yhteiskunnan silmissä. Tutkimuksen lopussa huomioin kirjoittajien kirjoitustyylien väliset erot, heidän asenteensa yhteiskuntaa kohtaan, sekä päähahmojen ponnistelut heidän yrittäessä selviytyä eteenpäin yhteiskunnassa.

Avainsanat: jane austen, charlotte brontë, yhteiskuntaluokka, sosiaalinen liikkuvuus

Table of contents

1	Introduction	5
2	Background theory	7
3	Methodology	10
4	Analysis	11
4.1	Analysis of social class in <i>Pride and Prejudice</i>	11
4.2	Analysis of social class in <i>Jane Eyre</i>	15
5	Comparison	18
5.1	Characterization	18
5.2	Treatment of theme	18
6	Conclusion	20
	References	21

1 Introduction

Literature throughout history has been one of the best tools to express thoughts, ideals, attitudes, and criticism towards different aspects of life and society. It not only promotes social change, but it also preserves cultures and their traditions. Literature frequently questions presumptions and beliefs, forcing one to consider other viewpoints of the world that may have not been previously perceived. It also opens doors to new worlds that are worth discovering if one seeks to understand and acquire new perceptions, new ideas and new inspirations.

In my thesis I attempt to explore and delve deeper into the theme of social class in as I attempt to answer the questions on social class, how are social class and social mobility manifested in Jane Austen's (1813) *Pride and Prejudice* and Charlotte Brontë's (1847) *Jane Eyre*? I also attempt to explore how the British society was divided along class lines and how these classes and their interaction are represented in the novels? Due to the books focusing on female protagonists I focus on them and attempt to understand what was the agency of women at the time, what rights did they enjoy and what sort of setbacks did they have to face simply because they identified as women?

Jane Austen, belonging to the movement of literary realism, brings to the readers a realistic view of everyday life of people that belong to the working class within English society. Known for her honest, genuine and relatable depictions of societies, she has influenced not only her contemporaries but also people of the 21st century.

One of Austen's most well-known novels is *Pride and Prejudice* (1813). The novel explores the themes of prejudice, reputation, family and class throughout its pages. Its plot follows the ups and downs of Elizabeth Bennet's, a woman of good social position yet not equal to nobility, and Fitzwilliam Darcy, a man of great wealth and of noble birth who in the beginning, only saw Elizabeth as a woman of inferior birth from a family of disagreeable behaviour. Throughout the plot they slowly overcome pride and prejudices before uniting.

Similar to Austen, Charlotte Brontë along with her sisters, has also been recognized as revolutionary early feminists in literature history, dealing with the limits forced on women in the British society of mid-nineteenth century. She often approaches these issues in a way that is seen as rebellious (Crowther 2020, 3). Brontë is known to challenge societal norms and the silence forced upon women's voices. She is fuelled by her Romantic spirit of protest, by

displacing the masculine centre of Romanticism in literature and engendering a feminized version of the movement (Brown 1996, 1).

A well-known novel of Bronte's is *Jane Eyre* (1847), the plot of which revolves around Jane's life, a simple girl who goes through the ups and downs that come with life. Her life isn't easy at all - her abusive Aunt Reed, the circumstances at Lowood school which were far from homely, her love for Rochester disrupted by his secret marriage. Despite all of the hardships, Jane perseveres through everything, eventually getting her happy ending.

This thesis is divided in 6 sections. After the introduction, the second section brings to the reader essential information on both novels and their authors. I also introduce the concept of class, giving more insight into its history. The third section of my thesis, explains the methodology used towards my research, how did I conduct it and what sources did I utilize to aid my key points. Sections four and five are dedicated to the novels' analysis and discussion. Lastly, the sixth session concludes my thesis, summarizing my main points and restating its central message.

2 Background theory

Jane Austen and Charlotte Brontë, even though from different eras and backgrounds, have written literary classics that are still well-known to this day. Not only have people read, discussed and have made the novels research topics for various purposes but they have also made movie adaptations of the novels and even spin-offs such as *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* by Seth Grahame-Smith (2009) and *Mr Rochester* by Sarah Shoemaker (2017).

In my thesis I will specifically focus on *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) and *Jane Eyre* (1847). For both novels, I aim to at first give a brief overview with the purpose of familiarizing the readers with the novels' main ideas, before the analysis in section 4. I will focus on Elizabeth Bennet and Jane Eyre's experience with individuals of higher social status and social mobility from their own perspective. In my analysis, I will also attempt to include the concept of social mobility and for this too, I will illustrate with passages taken from the novel. After completing the analysis of social class and social mobility based for both novels, I will give an overall comparative analysis of both the similarities and the difference between the settings of the story, the protagonists of the novels, Elizabeth Bennet and Jane Eyre, and lastly and most importantly the styles used for the portrayal of these themes and concepts.

The origin of social class as a concept can be traced all the way back to Ancient Egypt, if not even further back (Candelora et al. 2022, 62). Ancient Egypt is a particularly apt example of social stratification as its society was structured in the shape of a pyramid with each of its levels being distinct from the other levels.

The structure of British society, dating back to the 18th and 19th centuries, had a social structure that was followed and divided in different classes, based on people's living and material conditions such as, wealth and education. According to Wright (2015, 3), the population's perception of an individual is based on the individual's own attributes such as age and their material conditions such as: whether they live in wealthy gated communities or live in dire poverty, whether they have an adequate income or an extravagant wealth. When these different attributes of individuals cluster together, classes are formed (Wright 2015, 4). These classes are then established on the basis of what kind of material conditions these individuals live in and what attributes they possess: middle class who have enough education and mid-level income, upper class who have a high income and valuable talents that enable a

life apart from the ordinary people, the lower class who lack the attributes to live securely above the poverty line (ibid.)

During the era, also known as the Georgian era (1714-1837), Corfield (1987, 3) explains that the organization of classes within society at the time was up for debate. The main topics of this debate being the number of classes society should be organized in and of what nature should these classes be. This was until what Corfield (1987, 3) calls “qualifying adjectives” came into the language and it was decided that they would be used as labels for the different classes. Examples of such labels were adjectives, such as: upper, middle and working class. She explains further that there have also been variants, such as: higher, middling and lower class (ibid.).

Classes during the Victorian era (1820-1914) had a similar division to those in the Georgian era. Firstly, came the upper class with no manual work experience and inherited lands. The middle class which grew in number during the era of industrialization. Due to the improvement, along with the development of cures to plagues, such as cholera and tuberculosis. The increasing number of the cured brought, as a result, the growth of population size and its en masse migration from rural areas to the urbanized city of London and then the lower class which did all the work for the higher class. In 1845, German philosopher, Friedrich Engels, wrote a book named *The Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844*. According to Engels’ ([1845] 1887, 185) observation, specifically referring to the Liberal side, the bourgeoisie lives a selfish existence where all the conditions of life are measured by money and what does not result in profit or some sort of material benefit is nonsensical. In the society Engels describes in this study, “money determines the worth of man and makes him ‘worth ten thousand pounds’ and ‘of the better sort of people’ and what he does is worth something in his social circle” (Engels [1845] 1887, 185). As for the poor the people of lower class, they lived in miserable conditions. Such conditions are described in the instance of an epileptic dying due to being suffocated in his own bed, while nobody came to his relief (Engels [1845] 1887, 194). In that same living space, six to eight children would sleep in one bed. This goes to show that whether in life or death, the poor and unfortunate are dumped and left behind like infected cattle (ibid.).

In the eighteenth century, according to Keister’s contemporary approach to class (2012, 308), during the Industrial Revolution a small group of the nobility were known as lords. They controlled the resources with many of the lower class people depending on them for survival.

These people were also known as serfs, a group of people working for these elites who in exchange received protection and a small share of the fruit of their labour.

Although looked down upon due to the norms and laws in a hierarchy that was endorsed by powerful lords and the Catholic church, social mobility (both upward and downward) was possible. Social mobility refers to the gradual change in social status of an individual or of a certain group of people and it can go either way (Keister 2012, 295). It can be vertical, going upwards towards the elite or downwards toward the least fortunate class of society. The progress of social mobility can also be horizontal, also known as lateral mobility. In this instance, contrary to the case of vertical mobility, it does not go to any of the extremes but rather stays sideways or at the same level. An example of such movement can be changing from one occupation to the other. Social mobility could also be achieved through marriage, but it is a rare occurrence in society (Keister 2012, 296).

3 Methodology

My thesis' overall design is qualitative, and it will be conducted in the form of close reading. I utilize the concepts as I read the novels and then attempt to explain how the concepts I have found, such as social class and social mobility, are manifested in the novels. In my thesis, I aim to assess and compare the themes of social class and bring forward examples of social mobility in the novels *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen and *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë. My plan for the analysis is to start by examining social class and social mobility, analysing how they appear in novels and then illustrating further with excerpts from the plot of the novels.

Rather than the style of the authors, in my thesis I aim to focus on the moment of the plot that they are describing and how does that moment relate to the concept of social class. After analysing, I then aim to compare the views of Austen and Brontë, focusing on the similarities and differences between the portrayal of social classes in the novels. I focus on how these classes are portrayed in the writers' own style, and what are some key characteristics of the characters of different classes. Since the main characters of the novels are women, in my thesis I specifically focus on the women and their rights, along with the expectations society placed on them based on the social class they belonged in. I will also analyse the way the writers depict social mobility, giving it a definition at first and then delving deeper into what has been said about the concept.

I chose this topic as my research because I thought it would be an interesting theme to analyse and compare due to how similar yet so different the two writers Jane Austen and Charlotte Brontë are. They are both writers who belong to the genre of realistic literature, yet they belong to two different eras and two different generations. Aside from the novels which will be my primary sources, I will also be using previous research to support my claims and provide additional insight into the respective historical, cultural and social context of the two literary pieces. I will also delve deeper into the significance of social class within a larger framework.

4 Analysis

4.1 Analysis of social class in *Pride and Prejudice*

Pride and Prejudice (1813) by Jane Austen is one of the most well-known novels of English literature. The story is set in Regency England, and it revolves around the themes of love, social class and growth as an individual.

The main characters of the novel are the modest and middle class family of the Bennets, particularly Elizabeth Bennet who is the second eldest daughter of the family. She is an independent and intelligent young woman who challenges the norms and expectations society holds for her. Mr. Darcy on the other hand is a proud man who belongs to the higher class of the aristocracy and is initially perceived as arrogant. After they catch each other's attention, many misunderstandings and instances of pressure from society unfold throughout the plot until they finally decide to leave pride along with the prejudiced opinions aside and unite in marriage.

A moment of such prideful and pompous attitude among the higher class can be encountered during a moment of conversation between the members of the Bingley family and Mr. Darcy about Jane Bennet, along with Elizabeth Bennet and their family in the mix. They talk about how nonsensical it is that Elizabeth walked the whole way to their estate just to visit Jane during the time she was sick. Throughout this conversation, Mr. Hurst, a man known to value feasts and card games, comments:

I have an excessive regard for Jane Bennet, she is really a very sweet girl, and I wish with all my heart she were well settled. **But with such a father and mother, and such low connections**, I am afraid there is no chance of it. (Austen [1813] 2019, 27; emphasis added)

It is worth noting that the second sentence cancels out all the good traits of Jane that Mr. Hurst mentioned and highlights that the company she is surrounded by is unacceptable and nowhere close to what is considered high class.

Although Jane is a very agreeable character in the Bingleys' eyes he still bases her value as a member of society on the behaviour of her parents, which he does not find to be at all civil and refined. In addition, he also bases her value on the number and quality of connections Jane has within society. This just goes to prove that in Austen's era people were defined

heavily on their background, status and wealth rather than their own personal qualities. With such a comment towards Jane, Mr. Hurst is not only showing his prejudice towards a person of lower social class but is also indirectly discouraging Bingley to propose marriage to Jane by stating that the attitude that he shows through this comment would come naturally to him due to the way he comes from in a family and bloodline of high status. Their lifelong privilege has led them to develop a contempt towards the population of lower status that do not belong to their level of social class. However, in the occasion that they had not been aware of Jane's social status, her background would not have been an issue nor a cause for biases to surface.

Similar behaviour can also be observed in Darcy's aunt's, Catherine de Bourgh's lines when she too shows a distaste towards not only the idea of Darcy and Elizabeth being united in marriage but also towards Elizabeth as an individual. This attitude towards marriage between classes is ingrained into de Bourgh's character to the point that it comes naturally and is not expressed in a direct way. It is rather expressed in the way lady Catherine interrogates Elizabeth about her family and education, later expressing her disapproval of Elizabeth's answers by calling her an individual of "inferior birth" (Austen [1813] 2019, 264). The concept being a reference to Elizabeth's birth in a family of low rank and not her appearance or intelligence.

Darcy also had shared the same beliefs as his aunt, Lady Catherine, not only regarding social mobility but also the confidence in his status as a man of the English elite, with both the wealth and the position within the society to prove his claim.

Social mobility is a common phenomenon that occurs when one moves up in status either by gaining riches and reputation, or by marrying someone rich and reputable, as occasionally done by members of the British society during the 19th century. This social phenomenon is mentioned at first in the instance when Lydia Bennet married George Wickham, Mr. Darcy's childhood friend of depraved nature. As a result, she became the wife of a wealthy man.

In Austen's era, income was a very important criteria when choosing a suitable husband for the daughter of a family (Levine 1989; Perkin 1989; Steinbach 2012). Femininity in that era meant that women were to be dependent and subordinate to their husbands (Steinbach 2012, 133). They were expected to be home oriented with their main focus being the maintenance of the household and taking care of the children rather than joining their husbands in labour and

other tasks outside the house (ibid.). In summary, women were destined to depend on the men in all aspects of life (ibid.).

What made things even more difficult for women at the time, in addition to the lack of independence and rights, was also the right to divorce. This right was not passed as legitimate until 1857 meaning that up until that year women could get easily stuck in unhappy marriages. They could always leave and physically the marriage, however they would still be legally bound to their husbands, and he would still own their properties (Steinbach 2012, 137).

Elizabeth belongs to a community of such beliefs. She is only to inherit her parents' estate if she accepts Mr. Collins's proposal. Through Elizabeth's story, Austen gives the reader a glimpse into the expectations that society holds for women of Elizabeth's age and status. In contrast to those of Elizabeth's social status, women of higher status, such as Catherine de Bourgh and the women of the Bingley family, were more financially independent and in a less subordinate role. Women of upper class could always put their funds in a trust, separate and independent from their husbands (Steinbach 2012, 137). This privilege, however, gives a sense of superiority to women of middle class and makes women of higher status more reluctant to accept marriage and among classes, encouraging classicism further. Many of Lady Catherine de Bourgh's lines indicate such distaste and feeling of superiority. For example, there are moments in the novel when she refers to Elizabeth as "a young woman of inferior birth, of no importance in the world, and wholly unallied to the family" and yet is smitten with Darcy by referring to him as "my own nephew" in the same context (Austen [1813] 2019, 264). These labels that Lady Catherine uses show and emphasize not only her anger and her view of social mobility being an unacceptable concept and a scandal within the higher society, but also her biased opinion on those of are born into a lower social class.

The problem in society's eyes and also in Darcy's opinion about himself was that he had fallen for a woman who was far from being in the same status as him and did not have any interest in land, money or rank nor did she see Darcy as a superior who deserves respect simply because he had a high position compared to her and many other people within the society that they lived in. This opinion of hers regarding him bothers him, even more so when she rejects his first proposal:

I have never desired your good opinion, and you have certainly bestowed it most unwillingly. I am sorry to have occasioned pain to anyone. It has been most

unconsciously done, however, and I hope will be of short duration. The feelings which you tell me have long prevented the acknowledgment of your regard can have little difficulty in overcoming it after this explanation. (Austen [1813] 2019, 142)

At this stage of the novel, Darcy's feelings for Elizabeth turn from smitten to bitter stating that he could never rejoice in the inferiority of her connections:

Could you expect me to rejoice in the **inferiority of your connections?** - to congratulate myself on the hope of relations whose condition in life is **so decidedly beneath my own?** (Austen [1813] 2019, 144; emphasis added)

It is worth noting that Elizabeth, being the proud and intelligent woman she is, does not care for the opinion of Mr. Darcy, nor does she seek his approval of her background. In the contrary, Mr. Darcy seems to be offended by the likes of her giving him this sort of attitude. In his opinion, Elizabeth should be grateful to him for risking his own status as a man of high status and lowering himself to the lower class people that she associates with. This opinion of Darcy's comes because of society's code of conduct at the time.

One can also say that the people of lower rank also have a similar attitude towards the members of high society, expressing distaste for their attitude which is far away from polite when it comes to interacting with people of other classes that do not exceed their expectations. People of "lower ranks" often criticize the members of higher society, just like Austen herself who wrote *Pride and Prejudice* as a satire mocking how pretentious and judgemental people of higher status can be.

Such an example is the instance in the plot of the novel when George Wickham talks about how he does not like Darcy's character. As Darcy's childhood friend, he was supposed to share the inheritance of Darcy's father who raised Wickham as his own child and as Darcy's brother as a promise to Wickham's father. However, Darcy forbade him from taking his part of the inheritance and left Wickham penniless. In the novel, Wickham discusses Darcy's proud and disagreeable character with Elizabeth, stating:

The world is blinded by his **fortune and consequence**, or frightened by **his high and imposing manners**, and sees him only as he chooses to be seen. (Austen [1813] 2019, 59; emphasis added)

In his opinion, the only reason Mr. Darcy is seen as an agreeable character in society is only because he is wealthy and of high status, features that society seems to value and admire. Which is true in Darcy's case because although he is a proud man who can be arrogant at times, society still admires him as seen in passages:

The gentlemen pronounced him to be a **fine figure of a man**, the ladies declared he was **much handsomer than** Mr. Bingley, and he was **looked at with great admiration** for about half the evening, till his manners gave a disgust which turned the tide of his popularity; for he was discovered to be proud, to be above his company, and above being pleased; and not all his large estate in Derbyshire could save him from having a most forbidding, disagreeable countenance, and being unworthy to be compared with his friend. (Austen [1813] 2019, 8; emphasis added.)

This is how Austen introduces Mr. Darcy to the reader and proves Wickham to be correct in his image of Darcy, although it was a prejudice and a statement made from spite. In Wickham's opinion, Darcy is so proud of his status that it comes across as self-congratulatory to others around him who share his social standing. He thinks way too highly of himself.

4.2 Analysis of social class in *Jane Eyre*

Jane Eyre (1847) is a novel written by Charlotte Brontë. It follows the life of Jane Eyre and similarly to *Pride and Prejudice* it encompasses the themes of love, social class and personal growth. Mistreated by her aunt after becoming an orphan and later facing the same unfairness in her school, Jane finally becomes a teacher and finds a career, romance included, in the Rochester estate. After many hardships and shocking events, she marries Mr. Rochester and reaches her goal in life to be an independent and happy young woman in a society that she thought was unforgiving and cruel. The novel is valued not only as a story of a woman, who defies expectations that society pressures her to exceed, but also as a intricate description and analysis of human emotion.

I was glad of it: I never liked long walks, especially on chilly afternoons: dreadful to me was the coming home in the raw twilight, with nipped fingers and toes, and a heart saddened by the chidings of Bessie, the nurse, and humbled by the consciousness of my physical inferiority to Eliza, John, and Georgiana Reed. (Brontë [1847] 2019, 7)

Jane does not describe her inferiority as the reader would expect, related to rank, but physical. This points out that she is aware that she is much smaller and slighter especially compared to John Reed, her cousin, who in Jane's words is:

Large and stout for his age, with a dingy and unwholesome skin; thick lineaments in a spacious visage, heavy limbs and large extremities. (Brontë [1847] 2019, 9)

Due to the lack of physical strength, Jane faces a lot of physical abuse as well from John's side, who due to not only her inferiority in status but also in a physical aspect, feels superior enough to hurt her in any instance of disobedience. Such a moment is shown when Jane was found reading one of the books from the family's bookshelf and after John points out her inferiority and how she is not allowed to have anything shared with her due to her being of lower status:

You have no business to take our books; you are a dependent, mama says;... (Brontë [1847] 2019, 10)

As if the emotionally abusive nature of that sentence was not enough, he also throws the book at her. The impact of the hit did not leave only a nasty injury but also an emotional trauma that affected Jane deeply. After being taken away to an isolated room as punishment for something that was not her fault, Jane looks into the mirror. She inspects her injuries and bruises and refers to herself, in Brontë's (1847, 21) words, as a strange little creature. The figure is a strange one because it is not familiar anymore. It is her abused and traumatised self she is looking at while desiring from deep within an unharmed self living in freedom, far from her hellish reality.

In her lines, Brontë also describes the fighting spirit in Jane by including moments of rebellion.

“Wicked and cruel boy!” I said. “You are like a murderer – you are like a slave-driver- you are like the Roman emperors!” (Brontë [1847] 2019, 11)

According to (Vanden Bossche 2005, 59), in these moments of rebellion, Jane employs a radical discourse which represents the inter-related concepts and images of slavery and liberty. After drawing parallels in her own mind during the hardships in the household, Jane refers to the specific rebellions against the tyranny of emperors as a parallel of her experience in the Reeds' household. In the same passage she admits to having read Goldsmith's History

of Rome and formed her own opinions, along with parallels, on Nero who forced a leader into slavery and ended a reign along with the rebellions. Such a metaphor, according to (Vanden Bossche 2005, 59) refers to the relation between the ruled and the ruling elite. Like the ruled, Jane desires freedom in the form of social inclusion.

Later in the novel, after experiencing not only personal growth but also intellectual growth through the education she receives, Jane becomes a governess in the Rochester estate. This might have been considered a privilege for women of the Victorian because of having such a small handful of roles, like their predecessors in the Georgian era. The roles that society expected them to fulfil were two: 1) housewives to care for the home and 2) mothers to care for their children. Working as any other role or profession was looked down upon and after 1869 when women entered the labour force, they were often harassed and restricted not only in their (social) classes but also in the workplace. The law discouraged women from entering the work force and even then, they were overworked due to the low wages. As for women of the higher status, they could have easily joined the work force and help the fellow women. However, they refused to share such a lifestyle and preferred being 'idle women', a term referring to women who simply did not work even though they also had job options. They just simply refused to be grouped and work together with the 'problematic others', as explained by Barrett (2013).

5 Comparison

5.1 Characterization

The two main protagonists of the novels experience the society they live in through different perspectives and have different paths that they follow to upward social mobility.

In *Jane Eyre*, Jane is depicted since her childhood until the end of the novel as a girl with a strong sense of self-worth and independence who challenges social norms despite being in disadvantage due to her social background. Despite such injustices and constraints, she challenges the limitations of her class through perseverance, eventually acquires wealth by inheritance and as a result, progresses upwards in social mobility. Through Jane's experience, Brontë asserts the message that one must strive for individuality and finding their own path to happiness and fulfilment. She emphasizes the possibility of progression in social mobility while also critiquing the belief that an individual's worth is determined by a person's status.

In contrast to Brontë, Austen critiques society through satirical observations and witty dialogues that give the novel a light humorous tone. In *Pride and Prejudice*, although living a different reality from *Jane Eyre*, Elizabeth Bennet is also independent-minded and determined to assert herself in a society that wants to 'mould' her into the woman they expect her to be. However, differently from Jane, Elizabeth has a different journey of personal growth to pursue. She must overcome and navigate her own prejudices (specifically towards Mr. Darcy) along with misconceptions as she explores just how complex love and friendship can be. While Elizabeth also navigates the limitations she faces as a woman and as an individual of social status, she also faces the pressure to marry a man her family approves of. She is expected to leave happiness aside and focus on the goal of securing social status and financial security.

In both novels, the characters stay true to what they believe in as they accurately portray society and the challenges it presents to women who do not belong in the privileged circle of women of higher status.

5.2 Treatment of theme

Austen and Brontë both had different methods of treating the theme of social class. Brontë treated the progression in social mobility as one's journey of personal growth imbued with a heightened emotional depth. While telling Jane's story of upward mobility, Brontë also takes

the time to criticize class oppression and the oppressive nature of the class system, an experience that the individuals of lower class shared. In the novel, Jane faces such injustice on several occasions along the plot, ever since her early years of childhood when living with her relatives who treated her as nothing more than a servant instead of a member of the family. While not being the focus of the story throughout the novel, the Reed family is still a crucial portrayal of the upper class. They are as entitled and arrogant as expected due to their status which is evidently higher than Jane's and has given them a feeling of superiority. A superiority that Brontë clearly opposes through Jane, who openly challenges the belief that social status equates to moral superiority.

Similarly to Brontë, Austen also criticizes the notions of society, manners and hypocrisies. However, differently from Brontë, Austen asserts her critiques and opinions through a plot of romance and personal growth with nuances of satirical comedy in the plot. While not enduring the same perils that Jane Eyre does, Elizabeth Bennet is also seen as "less human" due to her lower social status, especially by the Bingley family and Catherine de Bourgh, the family of the man she falls in love with. She faces her own perils. However, Austen, unlike Brontë, does not go in depth about Elizabeth's emotions nor does she attempt to give a reader a glimpse into the character's thoughts through internal monologue. Elizabeth's frustrations with society are expressed through her actions, her show of intelligence that exceeds that of her peers and her witty comments which in return, frustrate society who constantly tries to mould her into the woman they prefer her to be.

6 Conclusion

Although the plots and protagonists of the two novels differ, they still portray and symbolize the beliefs that both Jane Austen and Charlotte Brontë wrote about in their own individual styles. They both supported and pushed forward feminism, a movement that did not exist at the time nor would it be encouraged or even conceptualized. The two writers not only strived for women's rights and freedom from society's constraints but also for realism and accurate portrayals as seen in their literature.

In their own respective novels, Austen and Bronte introduced characters who stay true to what they believe in as they accurately portray the society from a realistic perspective. They face the challenges that it presents to not only women but also those of lower status who do not belong in the privileged circle of the wealthy. Elizabeth and Jane's frustrations with society are expressed through their actions, their show of intelligence that exceeds that of their peers which in return frustrates the society constantly trying to mould them. The world at the time had a standard in which all women were to adhere to: keepers of the households and an ever present caring figure to their families. They were to have no rights to join the man in activities outside the home, nor to participate in any decisions concerning finances. Everything was left in the trusted hands of the man of the house, who provided, was educated enough to make the decisions, inherit estates, and had also seen more than the woman would ever see within the home's four walls.

Even though the concept of social mobility is portrayed and has worked out for the best in different ways, Elizabeth moving up the social rank through marrying Mr. Darcy and Jane through her hard work in educating herself and perseverance, the message remains the same in both novels. Women faced a lot of challenges due to their gender and their status. While being possible even though looked down upon, social mobility was not an easy feat to pull off nor was it encouraged in any way. Women could easily be left without a penny or a family if they did not rush to get married.

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