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**Between and Beyond the Lines: Teaching Austen through  
the Lens of Gender to First Year University Students of  
English in Mascara**

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Magister in Applied Linguistics and ESP**

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## ***Abstract***

*Between and Beyond the Lines* is a research that approaches Jane Austen's novels *Pride and Prejudice* and *Sense and Sensibility* from a fresh gender dimension. The duality of men vs. women is invested at the heart of the novels sessions taught to groups two and four, first year students at the University of Mascara as part of a didactic experiment.

While it is detected that literature remains by far the subject with least attractions to learners, it is disregarded as boring, condensed, ancient and uninteresting overall. This research puts forward a new strategy to attract learners' attention, engage them more in the classroom and fuel their passion for literature. The fresh perspective of gender invites learners' thinking and involvement inside the classroom as well as it activates their curiosity into the text being taught.

On the way to find answers, this work has been divided into four chapters. The first one which is introductory serves as a review of the literature carried through a lens of gender. Chapter two goes beyond the lines of Jane Austen's novels. It sets on the journey to survey learners' general views with regard to literature-related issues with the use of the pre-questionnaire. A series of five sessions follows where **PP** and **SS** are brought into groups two and four with gender as the key element of teaching both novels. Chapter three comes to investigate the efficiency of the teaching experiment with an opening crossroad session followed with the post-questionnaire. The final chapter is an attempt to offer solutions for the issues and problems detected during the study or pointed by the students.

**In loving memory of our precious Dr Benali  
Rachid; may his soul rest in peace...**

**To my dear so much dear students, in groups two  
and four, who helped me endlessly and tirelessly,  
faces adorned with beautiful smiles...**

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## ***List of Abbreviations***

**Brit Lit:** British Literature

**EFL:** English as Foreign language

**ICC:** Intercultural Communicative Competence

**L1:** First language

**L2:** Second language

**LC2:** Second Lingua-culture

**PP:** Pride and Prejudice

**SS:** Sense and Sensibility

# General introduction

Literature is said to be that fearsome classroom where a stern teacher takes the stage and gives lengthy accounts of indecipherable ancient texts. Literature, thus, remains the subject most dreaded by the student and the teacher alike. The former cannot go beyond the reading complex and the language deficiency while the latter stands clueless as to how to undo learners' fears. The dissertation at hand comes to look into the literary predicament, how far it goes, why students dread literature so much and what teachers can do to remedy the many issues arising as consequence.

Have you ever heard of the *something old something new* tradition? This research follows in the same line in the way it espouses two relatively *old* texts of literature with a fresh gender perception and a novel concept of teaching literature. A single text may receive a myriad of interpretations. Several attempts may be carried on, to dissect, to analyse, one view may be rejected, the other embraced, accredited by this, criticized by that. And it is, in fact, all these liberties that one can have with a text that make literature never fading appeal. Researchers and curious minds endeavour to decode and decipher such novel or poem as having such and such meaning. In the end, as few or many the attempts are, and as mild or wild the interpretations get, none resembles that of the other researcher.

The literary texts selected to practise all those liberties of dissection, analysis, rejection, acceptance, credit and criticism are none but *Pride and Prejudice* and *Sense and Sensibility* for the acclaimed British novelist Jane Austen. Both novels take on different readings that examine the gender equation closely and perceive how the factor affects every aspect of the lives of both sexes. With a dainty touch of pure female delicacy, Jane Austen has so magnificently put all manifestations of her time, her surroundings and her contemporaries into vivid lines of literature. And it is this trait of her writings that is so breath-taking, so enamouring to lure readers and enchant fans forever and ever.

The beginning is with the title itself, between and beyond the lines. What is to expect? *Between the lines* side of this research uses the novels of Jane Austen, **PP** and **SS**, as corpus. It reads into the reflections of her words and the interpretations of her lines from the lens of gender. It offers a fresh avenue of interpretation and sheds some light on a different angle of investigation built around the dual man versus woman perception of the novel. Each particular to be included within this dimension will conform to this gendered duality. *Beyond the lines*, however, does not rely on the novels as chief origin of information. It opts for a didactic dimension where the texts are brought within the four walls of the classroom to undergo a trial of experimentation. The investigation would extend to a miscellany of activities that reads further than the lines of the novels into a teaching experiment that puts some claims, issues and techniques under test.

It is generally acknowledged that behind every research there must be an incentive motivation that ensures a continuing rhythm and keeps the hard work going. The study at hand has a strong drive that is never to drain. It is common to hear of those '*love at first*

*sight*' moments, in this case, it is a *love at first read* moment. I fell for every literary text my hands could reach, though not much have my hands reached. I was, and still am, enamoured with what seems like a fount of marvels that bewitch the heart and soul. To put it in simpler words, I am an avid admirer of literature, and it pains me that so many people are not. I have attempted to mould my love and passion into possible ways to reverse that. The second major point related to motivation would be with regard to the choices made: Why Austen? Why **PP** and **SS**? It might as well have been another author and other literary texts and the study would still be approached from the lens of gender and carried the same way, with minor adjustments to fit it. It is Austen for she is an authoress who reflects the human nature into its minute details and in its most transparent states. It is **PP** and **SS** as they have, to a greater extent, the same storyline which, in a way or another, can be simulated to local contexts and thus made relatable to students.

However, my experience with literary syllabuses at university was something of a disappointment. I just could not detect that same love or bewitchment within the bulk of other hearts and souls. It turned out that literature is underrated as the old store of antique writings. I observed that students have developed a sort of phobia toward literature; it is their least favourite subject. Teachers, as well, are in constant search for ways to put an end to such an anathema.

The questions that this research raises help delineate a clear path to follow in each chapter: How are the novels read through a lens of gender? What are the common prevalent gender features in both novels? What are learners' views with regard to literature and Brit-Lit classes? What are the major difficulties they face? How to revive their interest? How to nourish their motivation? How to offer them a literature classroom

they would not miss? How to use gender dualities to achieve such an end? What are the techniques and strategies to implement? What remedial solutions to offer? Answers are offered along the way of this dissertation.

The researcher contends the claim that literature goes a little beyond mere fiction. It is rich with more than refined language and imaginary characters; it reflects societies, civilisations and modes of life. Jane Austen's novels bring such claim to best advantage when cast under the light of gender. There is something about that woman-man duality that spices things up whenever present. Bringing the gender equation to the forefront can be a fresh way to resurrect interest, beyond same-old-things, in literary texts anew. It may be inviting for learners to consider the other *face* of literature; a world of infinite horizons for research and investigation.

As much as any other research, the one at hand is based on concepts and terms that are key to its understanding. Patriarchy, stereotype, victimisation are to be clarified according to referential sources within gender highlights. Further concepts that are proper to the researcher's class and teaching ways are demystified as well, at time in footnotes. It is an attempt to undo all mysteries and confusions away and a way of giving sufficient background for readers not to feel at loss.

To put all these ideas, aims, questions, and steps into use, this research is divided into four chapters. The first one is purely introductory. It serves as a database that readers might refer to when in need to clarify a point or relate to another. Literature review is the only stop in the *between the lines*. Thanks to recurrent readings of both novels, a number of observations have been made. As already stated above, this project intends to read the novel through the gender *lens* as well as casts its characters into distinctive male and

female moulds. It will investigate how patriarchy, victimisation and stereotypes related instances are reflected in the novel and interpret these representations as favourable or unfavourable, negative or positive, universal or specific. The bulk of examples and illustrations are taken from **PP** and **SS** so as to back up claims and viewpoints. Further guide is sought from other researches made on Austen's novel, her life, and gender theories for a thorough interpretation.

Chapter two starts *the beyond the lines* part of this study. The *journey to a literary destination* extends over five stops. The first two are descriptive of the population of participants in the *journey* and the research instrument to be used. A pre-questionnaire of twenty-five questions, thus, follows to survey learners' opinions about literature and Brit-Lit-related issues. Once the pulse is felt, it is time to analyse and interpret the findings. The pre-questionnaire answers are later used to devise five different novels sessions to be taught in groups two and four, Oral Expressions class, by the researcher herself. The researcher has taken the chance to introduce her learners to the novels **PP** and **SS**, a novel for each group, in the form of five different sessions that included a miscellany of activities.

The third chapter carries on the didactic experiment that has been inaugurated in the previous one. Session six, unlike the other five ones described in chapter two, saw the coming of participants from groups two and four together for a gender-centred discussion. The crossroad session is concluded with the distribution of the post-questionnaire. Forty-seven questions are designed to detect respondents' opinions about the sessions, the teaching, the activities and everything that took place during the novels sessions. Once again, questions range from close-ended, to open-ended in addition to

value questions as well. The researcher aspires to capture students' feedback as credible as can be. Once the results are examined for both novels in both classes, it is time to draw conclusions for the most prominent issues marked by respondents.

Final destination is that where all loose ends are tied. Chapter four opens with the limitations of the research, the downs met with here and there, to preserve its credibility. Recommendations follow as the closure to both the chapter and the study. The researcher strives to put her own vision of what a literature class ought to be into words. Suggestions, conventional and unorthodox likewise, are made so as to restore literature to its previous glories, to ignite the fading passion of students, to fuel the dying fires of motivation, to re-flame the melting desire for reading cherished poems, acclaimed novels and epic drama.

This dissertation aspires, foremost, to seek ways to resurrect students' interest in literature inside the classroom and to inspire them to consider different angles of interpretation. The researcher puts forward two questionnaires and a set of sessions to achieve her ends and put her aspirations into effect. The researcher encourages her students, and many others, to look at the many other new ways to read two-hundred years old novels, **PP** and **SS**, through the lens of gender and to contemplate how they could relate to them, and foremost to cultivate a spirit of inquisitiveness and a readiness to sail the uncharted seas of literary writings with unfailing enthusiasm.

As the study moves from one chapter to the other, it is not bound to be purely literary, it is intended it to be rather multi-faceted. As it progresses, the research is to comprise hints from Austenian arena, literature, bits from civilisation, and tinges from history, then it derives into the classroom and takes on a didactic dimension. It shall

likewise include some reference to psychology and gender. The aim behind such an encompassing miscellany is to encourage and to show those *literature-phobic* students that there is more to it than poetic verses and lengthy prose. It is a whole world filled with life and ready to be explored.



# *Between the Lines*

# *Chapter One*

## *Literature Review*

# Literature Review

## *Introduction*

Academic tradition has it that every research to be carried on is to be supplied with an account of major previous publications. The chapter at hand provides a referential database that comprises hints on the authoress' signs of feminist inclinations, gender readings of her novels **PP** and **SS**, and an in-depth gendered analysis.

Before setting off on the journey of accounts and research, some questions are to be answered: Why Jane Austen? And why choose these two novels? There had to be a literary figure, a poet, a novelist, a playwright, as there needed be a literary text, or texts. It could have been Chaucer, or Dickens, as it could have been a Bronte or Woolf, Achebe, and even Fadia Faqir. And it could have been one of their masterpieces and this paper would still be conducted in the same way: an analysis approach with a gender perception to cast on the different characters. **PP** and **SS** being *class-proper*, *context-proper* in so many ways, to be later disclosed, have been the pick.

The preliminary paper to this thesis included **PP** only. The present paper extends to **SS**. So, why choose **SS** and not another Austen novel? In addition to **PP**, **SS** is Miss Austen's only novel with a compound title, which follows in the same line of story, to a

less or greater extent, as **PP**. Both novels are about a family of female heiresses only who live with the constant fear of losing the roof they have over their heads along with other fiscal possessions, the very instant their father, the direct patriarch, kicks the bucket.

In a way, **PP** represents *the prelude* and **SS** *the encore* though the latter was published first. But according to James Leigh, Austen's nephew, **PP** was "*the first finished, if not the first begun*" (James Leigh, 2002: 43), so it is very likely that Jane Austen got her inspiration to write **SS**, with different twists and focal points, from **PP**.

## 1. Jane Austen: A Feminist in disguise

This part is not a mere biographical<sup>1</sup> record for Miss Austen's life or a serial enumeration of her many accomplishments; her reputation goes beyond the firmament of fame as the "*first major woman novelist*" (Jean Briat and Annie Lhérété, 2001: 190). It is rather dedicated to account for the authoress' characteristics and what makes this particular literary figure of the nineteenth century so peculiar, so unique. So unique is Austen that she has, in many instances, been put head to head with the greatest man who professed the art of the pen, William Shakespeare. Baron Thomas Macaulay is one, among many names, who has voiced the comparison as he claimed that:

*"Shakespeare has had neither equal nor second. But among the writers who have approached nearest to the manner of the great master, we have no hesitation in placing Jane Austen, a woman of whom England is justly proud"* (1854: 413).

Born to a Reverend and a rector's daughter, Jane has cultivated an insatiable thirst for reading books, bought or borrowed by her family, be they novels, poetry, histories, biographies, (Le Faye, 2002). It was, however, her pen, and her own books, that have established Miss Austen as one of the greatest writers of the novel and English literature.

When writing, Jane Austen seems to have drawn limits and boundaries not to go beyond – those she so willingly made, and those she had to make. The world of her

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<sup>1</sup> Refer to appendix 02 for Jane Austen's major life moments.

novels was restricted to a narrow society with minimum number of families involved “*Three or four families in a country village is the very thing to work on*” (James Leigh, 2002: 76). On the other hand, it is obvious that the authoress has deliberately kept away from certain matters as she herself admits it in *Mansfield Park* “*Let other pens dwell on guilt and misery. I quit such odious subjects as soon as I can*” (Austen, 2007: 649)<sup>2</sup>. Furthermore, and though Austen has lived in a time of a most tumultuously agitated nature (Napoleonic Wars, American War of Independence, Slave Trade, French Revolution...)<sup>3</sup>, she never dealt with politics in her works, at least not explicitly. Critics have not missed such faults, and while Maunder (2010: 18) described her novels as being “*divorced*” from Austen’s time and surroundings, Steiner went far into calling them “*extra-territorial to history*” (1998: 09).

It is mostly believed that these deficiencies are due to two major reasons which can only imply that Austen meant to stay credible to herself and to her readers. The first is the plain fact that Jane Austen did not have much knowledge and could not get further insights into such matters and events. Then, it is a matter of principles and beliefs, the quotation above from *Mansfield Park* attests to it. Jane Austen stood firmly against what she thought as demonstrating selfishness and individualism of the human self. Loathsome as it is, self-centredness, she believes, usually results in bloody wars and irrational conflicts.

*“She denounced the perils posed to a society of order and solidarity, the ravages caused by selfishness and individualism.”*

(Alamichel, et.al, 1995: 149)

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<sup>2</sup> All quotations from Jane Austen novels are taken from The Barnes and Nobles 2007 edition *Jane Austen: Seven Novels*. **SS** was published in 1811, **PP** in 1813, and **Mansfield Park** in 1814.

<sup>3</sup> Refer to Appendix 03 for major political, social, literary events during Austen’s lifetime

These *missing pieces* of Austen's writings might have gone unnoticed during and post her death, but could not escape the critical eye of recent researchers. Todd Janet (2005) has compiled forty articles that deal with every context that features in Jane Austen's writings. Rajan (2005) emphasizes contemporary concerns and endless question marks about **PP** authoress:

*“Where Austen stands on a number of contemporary issues - the Revolution, war, nationalism, empire, class, 'improvement', the clergy, town versus country, abolition, the professions, female emancipation; whether her politics were Tory, or Whig, or radical; whether she was a conservative or a revolutionary, or occupied a reformist position between these extremes: these are among the questions with which recent Austen scholarship has been deeply engrossed.”* (Rajan, 2005: 101)

So far, Jane Austen seems like a *docile* woman of the nineteenth century, the kind who would bow courteously, smile warmly and converse cordially. A careful reading of Austen's writings, letters and biographies reveals the renegade behind the mask of docility. Jane Austen is a Feminist? Homely, sweet, and virtuous has been the traditional view. Rajan (2005) contends the claim that Austen's contemporaneity to Mary Wollstonecraft is a fact not to be overlooked. This historical location along with “*the centrality of female protagonists in her fiction and the thematic preoccupation with courtship and marriage as the central predicament of women's lives in her novels*” (Rajan, 2005: 103) are signs of Austen's feminism.

As a young woman living in Regency Era, Austen has witnessed the idealistic, if not the slaving, vision society painted for women of her time and she made sure to reflect that in her works. Chapter eight in **PP** features a conversation where the characters taking part list the criteria that make an *accomplished* woman. While Charles Bingley enumerates common accomplishments:

*“It is amazing to me...how young ladies can have patience to be so very accomplished as they all are... They all paint tables, cover screens, and net purses.”*

(Austen: 2007: 220)

His sister, Miss Bingley, extends the description and narrows the eligible candidates:

*“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”*

(Austen: 2007: 220)

SS features similar descriptions of female accomplishments as when Mrs Ferrars and her daughter Mrs Fanny Dashwood try to get the best out of Elinor and Marianne. Mother Ferrars and her daughter tease the two Dashwood girls by enumerating the endless accomplishments of Miss Morton and how she *“does everything beautifully”* (Austen, 2007: 123).

As if women have nothing else to do but to be *accomplished*. Such unfairness is what Austen has sought to undo. She wanted her heroines to be learned to prove that education is an advantage not a draw-back. She voiced women concerns about the unjust system of inheritance –patriarchy. Readers cannot help but feel sympathetic to the Miss Bennets who would be left without a roof over their heads nor a penny to their name the second their father dies as patriarchal regulations dictate that the prospective heir shall take all possessions before the dead man’s body cools in his grave.

Marriage for women was, back then, a brainstorming task. They had to get a husband to be secured and provided for, no matter how hateful the suitor might be;



rejection was no choice. Austen portrays that through Charlotte Lucas who spills the beans before Lizzie that it is not about love when you have no prospective at home:

*“I am not romantic, you know; I never was. I ask only a comfortable home; and considering Mr. Collins’s character, connection, and situation in life, I am convinced that my chance of happiness with him is as fair as most people can boast on entering the marriage state.”* (Austen, 2007: 267)

Miss Lucas finds herself in a predicament; her plain looks, her old age, and her impoverished family, all was to her disadvantage. She was looking for a survival rope, a dim light of hope to grant her the least of a dignified life, which she cannot have under the same roof as her brothers and their wives. Had it not been for Collins’ proposal, she would have grown into an old maid at the service of her sisters-in-law. Collins, with all his defects, was Charlotte’s saviour, and marriage was her escape to a life of dignity.

*“Without thinking highly either of men or of matrimony, marriage had always been her object; it was the only honourable provision for well-educated young women of small fortune, and however uncertain of giving happiness, must be their pleasantest preservative from want”*

(Austen, 2007: 266)

Jane Austen here reflects the limited options open to women of her time, an escape has not always been possible, and if so, might not be favourable. Back in Regency era, a woman could only marry *well* if she was of some fortune that would make her dowry a temptation if her looks fail to pull the task. The authoress knew that all too well, she herself was denied the chance of marrying the man she was in love with, Tom Lefroy, for the mere reason that he *“could not afford to marry a penniless woman”* (Fergus, 2005: 07).

Mrs Bennet, with all her foolishness and endless chattering is excused, after all, when a woman has five daughters, what else could occupy her thoughts apart from seeing them well settled, and that, as readers, we understand. Austen shakes that belief as Lizzie remorselessly rejects two proposals, that of Mr Collins and Darcy. Collins, the heir and

saviour of the Bennet family would not do, and Darcy's charms and 50.000 pounds would not charm. Austen understands that for she has herself been there once, she rejected a wealthy suitor for she knew that "*Anything is preferred or endured rather than marrying without Affection*" (Le Faye and Austen-Leigh, 2004: 219).

It is often *voiced* that money cannot buy happiness, but it can buy comfort and easiness and Austen knows it better. Having lost her father, Jane, along with her mother and sister Cassandra, was left to live on a meagre outcome her book sales secured, which on its own would barely suffice for food. If it were not for her brothers, all three women would have starved to death. So, when we read of Mrs Bennet insatiable money-wanting and unceasing talks of yearly incomes and thousand pounds, we are again to understand and excuse her obsession.

Mellor (2009) claims Jane Austen to be an advocate of women's rights much as was her precedent, Mary Wollstonecraft,

*"Austen frequently quotes A Vindication in her novels, even though she never dared to acknowledge openly her debt to Wollstonecraft [...] In Jane Austen's circle, no respectable woman could publically avow her agreement with Wollstonecraft's opinions."*

(Mellor, 2009:80)

Jane Austen contemporized a time of restraints, laws of unfairness, a society of pre-judgements, a people of agelessness. Within all the inhibiting constraints that bound her to adhere, to consent, and to keep silent, she still managed a way, through her novels, to break the rules, to say *No*, and to voice her thoughts in a way no one could suspect, at least back then.

## ***1. Gender and discourse: infinite interpretations***

Gender has proven to be the spicing ingredient to recent research and studies. There is something so inviting about those endless man vs. woman, male vs. female dualities that draws curiosity and attention. In some way, gender has become something of a melting pot that sweeps almost all fields within. Over the years, researchers have shed a gender light on politics, economics, culture, social studies, religion, media, law, art and literature to name but few.

Tradition has it that a novel is to be read as a bedtime story, a fairy-tale that leaves a smile on lips and drowns hearts in dizzying dreams. Being stamped as works of fiction usually narrows a novel into mere imaginary events with fictitious characters. However, and at times, there is more to a work of fiction than fiction itself. Truths and facts give away as the reader pages through the lines and passages.

Jane Austen writes beyond the smiles drawn on lips and the dreams drowning hearts. Miss Austen writes to tell stories of real people she has contemporized, of real places she has visited, and of realities she has witnessed and had to tell of. **PP** and **SS** account for the people, the places and experiences.

### ***1.1. PP and SS: beyond the ever-after***

This part reviews the literature conducted from a lens of gender on both novels, **PP** and **SS**<sup>4</sup>. It goes beyond commonly known happy endings of Miss Austen's tales into gendered interpretations. **PP** and **SS** prove to be more than an ever-after happy tale as they take a fresh interpretational angle, that of gender. Jane Austen manifests a piercing sight and an ability to observe the odd and the particular, to capture such details and instances as would escape the eye and she has poured out the whole into words. Aware of it or not, Miss Austen has, in the process, managed to depict contrastive descriptions of both her male and female personas.

**PP** pictures that state of anxiety, of apprehension, of never-fading unrest; it depicts the watch for what the future holds, what the next hour has in store, what or who the door-bell announces. The reader is made witness of all the hysteria and frenzy that comes with the attempts to execute emergency plan: marry the girls before Azrael pays old papa a visit. That is when real action begins: How to marry five daughters? Who would make an eligible son-in-law? And how much is this who worth a year? Husband-hunting game is on, and pounds-obsessed mommy Bennet pronounces that the latest neighbour, who had not, by then, had the time to unpack his bags, should make an agreeable husband for one of her daughters.

**SS** kicks off to the nightmare most dreaded by the Bennets in **PP**, the death of the father. At once, and by rule of patriarchal laws of inheritance, all possessions were passed to an already well-endowed half-brother. A whole dramatic scenario takes place, as there were no prospective alternatives for the young ladies and their mother. No plan B was thought of, as result, readers see the Dashwoods struggle to come up with a solution fast. Again, it seems that marriage is the key to the situation. However, and unlike matrimony-

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<sup>4</sup> Refer to Appendix 04 for novels' summaries

obsessed Mrs Bennet, Mrs Dashwood is more of a sensible woman who takes affection and happiness as prior to any other worldly advantage related to fortune. We are at once made privy of the long feared destiny in **PP**, what to do? Where to go? How to survive? Whose help to seek? No other two Jane Austen novels offer the same intersection of events and story line as **PP** and **SS**.

The novels tell of privileged men and marginalized women, of a male-biased system and female-incapacitating law, of a reprehensive society and incomprehensible parents. Readers find out about patriarchy, a man-made, man-friendly code that favours all 'he' over the detriment of any 'she' in terms of inheritance and financial matters. As the reading proceeds, it is further revealed that a man typically behaves, acts, speaks in such and such ways, while a woman, on the other hand, carries her behaviour, actions, and speeches in different ways forming distinctive stereotypical images for both sexes.

One of the key readings of Austen's writings through a lens of gender are those of Margaret Kirham, *Jane Austen, Feminism and Fiction* (1983); Mary Poovey, *The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer* (1984); Claudia Johnson, *Jane Austen: Women, Politics and the Novel* (1988); Peter Knox-Shaw, *Jane Austen and the Enlightenment* (2004). These works, and others, make the *modern* readings of Austen's novels away from the traditional ones. They bring out new interpretations and new perspectives to understanding the authoress in a twenty, twenty-one centuries context.

Gilbert and Gubar (2005) reasoned that Jane Austen was fully aware that male superiority was anything but fiction. The authoress dramatized the extent to which female survival, back in Regency Era, was highly dependent on gaining male approval and protection for it was in men's hand that economic, social and political power lay.

*“Whereas becoming a man means proving or testing oneself or earning a vocation, becoming a woman means relinquishing achievement and accommodating oneself to men and the spaces they provide.”*

(Gilbert and Gubar, 2005: 63)

Through **PP** and **SS** Austen seeks a chance to reflect her own anxiety about her own sex, to pour in her doubts and her fears as a woman first and then as a writer. Gilbert and Gubar contended the claim that Austen depicted not only her own predicament, but that of all women of her time who were going through the same experience themselves, confused and trapped in *“in the contradiction between their status as human beings and their vocation as female”* (2005:64).

In a contribution under the title *Feminisms*, Vivien Jones (2009) went back to Mr Collins’ proposal to Elizabeth. Lizzie was desperately trying to convince him that her *No* was a real *No*, not some female practice to increase his love.

*“Do not consider me now as an elegant female intending to plague you,  
but as a rational creature speaking the truth from her heart”*

(Austen, 2007: 258)

Jones declared Elizabeth’s response as her right to autonomous choice and identified her answer as being made *“in Wollstonecraftian terms”* (2009: 284). And although Lizzie is far from being economically independent, she still staked her chances and rejected the man who is to inherit her father’s estate and money. It was clearly not about looks or money to Miss Bennet, for she turned down yet another, far more eligible, suitor, Mr Darcy. Elizabeth had to overlook the many temptations of such an offer, a large estate, a great yearly income, and a charming man and say *No* again. She would not fall for worldly advantage where there were no feelings, and where Darcy had just undermined

her and her entire family. By doing so, Jones argued that Elizabeth rather “*asserts her moral and intellectual independence*” (2009: 284).

Missy Dehn Kubitschek (2003) emphasized feminist appreciation for Austen’s nuanced representation of Miss Bennet. While the authoress has delineated Charlotte Lucas as the maiden who seeks shelter and dignity in a marriage of whatever sort, her best friend Elizabeth refuses to follow in her footsteps. While social deprivation weighed heavily on single relatively poor women, hooking a man seemed their only solace. However, Miss Bennet dismissed the idea and preserved her self-respect which has kept Mr Collins and Mr Darcy astonished. Both men proposed to Elizabeth with an assured confidence of her *Yes*. Collins told Lizzie shamelessly that in spite of her beauty, “*it is by no means certain that another offer of marriage may ever be made*” her (Austen, 2007: 258). On the other hand, Darcy was all conceited in the avowal of his strong attachment.

Elizabeth:

“... could easily see that he had no doubt of a favourable answer. He spoke of apprehension and anxiety, but his countenance expressed real security”  
(Austen, 2007: 300)

Elizabeth’s free will and self-assertion is also present with fellow women. She keeps her right of silence before Lady Catherine de Bourgh, an intimidating character who bosses everyone around her.

Kubitschek then moved to the stereotypical images reflected in the novel. She defended women writing that stereotypes do not apply on the fair sex only; men also fit the moulds. According to Kubitschek (2003) both sexes have faulty representatives, and if we are to describe Mrs Bennet and Lydia as weak and irresponsible, we should not overlook the fact that Mr Bennet and Mr Collins evince the same images of weakness and

irresponsibility. Kubitschek concluded her article with a list of women stereotypes that characterize the different females in the novel.

*“Mrs. Bennet represents the silly, unreasonable female chatterbox; her daughter Lydia presents a younger manifestation of the same problem, the boy-crazy adolescent. Their opposite, Jane, exemplifies the ideal, the virtuous woman always considerate of others, always reserved in expressing her feelings. Mary Bennet is the ridiculous, half-educated female pedant; Lady Catherine, the bossy, rich, old woman.”*

(Kubitschek, 2003:238-239)

### ***3. Between the lines: A Gender Analysis***

Archaeologists, linguists and historians may dig as well as they please. They may attempt to extract truths of still rocks, ancient epigraphs and some signs and symbols they gather. And they may end up finding something; in fact, they will find things. But, they will only fancy satisfaction of such poor sources.

*“Social historians of today can’t describe people of the past, the only thing they can do is to describe the conditions in which people lived.”*

(Trevelyan, 1944: 219)

So why not put the dead leaves and motionless stones aside, and indulge into a real scenery full of life and colours; literature. For so much time past, and much time to come, literary texts have, to a great or lesser extent, reflected ancient civilizations and brought old people back into life.

No longer confined between the pages and the lines is the feeling that gives away when reading **PP** and **SS**. It is that feeling of swaying in an endless space, of moving from one place to another, of roaming prestigious courts and humble dwellings, of walking down vast hills and up majestic mountains. Readers can see and feel the people within each story, attend their daily toils, laugh at their silly blunders and sympathize



with their devastating losses; the reader takes part in their talks, disputes, their joys and distresses, their leisure and hardship.

*“All who crave to know what their ancestors were like, will find an inexhaustible fount of joy and instruction in literature ...”*

(Trevelyan, 1944: 219)

Within Austen’s novel, readers can identify themselves with the people of tens of years ago. Miss Austen has simulated with delicate minuteness the class, the people, and the language which she contemporised.

The gender analysis aims at highlighting, in form of man-woman dualities, the intricacies of the society and the people. Detecting all social reflections the authoress has manifested in her novel may end up in a lengthy writing of fastidious detailed accounts. Therefore, patriarchy is to be a sample representative of the nineteenth century. How the characters reflect the men vs. women dichotomy in terms of the dominant social system is the part entitled: Patriarchy: the holy code.

The part concerned with the characters follows into two different points. The first brings out what is to be termed the *victimisation circle*. It focuses on the genders ongoing struggles with each other, the twists and the dramas that lead man and woman to wrong each other, and the reasons why they love at times and hate at others.

Stereotypes come last in an attempt to examine what was considered as typically masculine and feminine during Regency era. One may argue that such a term had not been yet known to Jane Austen. The novelist may not have encountered the word ‘*stereotype*’ during her lifetime, yet, she seems to have possessed a piercing eye that managed to observe all oddities and peculiarities in the men and women of her time. She had an unmatched talent in deciphering the states of mind and the matters of heart when

thoughts and feelings are undecipherable to others. It should be here noted that due to constraints of time, it could not have been possible to extract all the opposing stereotypes found within the novel. Two samples will be representative for this study.

For further probing into this theme, and for those whose curiosity exceeds the pages of this paper, works such as: Le Faye, *Jane Austen: The World of her Novels* (2002); Todd Janet, *Jane Austen in Context* (2005); Boom Harold, *Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice* (2005); Baker William, *Critical Companion to Jane Austen* (2008) would satisfy. These extensive researches provide ample description of Austen's time and society: politics, culture, fashion, transport and travel, jobs and occupations, cosmetics, money, food... and much more.

### 3.1. *Patriarchy: the holy code*

No two would disagree in agreeing that the first thing that comes to mind at the mention of the word *patriarchy* is *man*. Yes, man has had his way since...pretty much since forever. And although the scale is not quite man-biased nowadays, it used to be so in Austen's days.

Austen's society has been more of an andro-centric<sup>5</sup> community where man has the final say in all matters while women sit in corners and watch in silence. *PP & SS* echo evident instances of *patriarchy*. It is necessary to define the word *patriarchy* before proceeding further into the analysis. The word originates from Greek *Patria* meaning father and *arché* meaning rule, thus rule of the father who is referred to as *patriarch*, the

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<sup>5</sup> *andro-centric*: revolving and centered around men.

supreme head and ruler of the family. A more reliable definition is given in *Hutchinson*

*Encyclopaedia*:

*“form of social organization in which a man heads and controls the family unit...*

*The definition has been broadened by feminists to describe the dominance of male values throughout society.”* (Anson, et al, 2001: 821)

### 3.1.1. *Entail and Inheritance*

From the moment both novels’, **PP** and **SS**, events set off to a start, we encounter a word that is dreadful to the Bennets and Dashwoods, entail. An *entail* was, back in Regency time, a legal device used to prevent a landed property from being broken up, and/or from descending in a female line. *Oxford Dictionary of Law* offers a specialized definition:

*“An equitable interest in land under which ownership is limited to a person and the heirs of his body (either generally or those of a specified class.”*

(Martin. E., 2003: 175)

Entailed property is usually inherited by male primogeniture<sup>6</sup> of the original owner through the eldest son. This actually implies that a man of wealth and estates would leave all to his first son and his successors after him, the other sons, if found, have no chance to inherit until all the male descendants of the eldest son die. This is why the five Miss Bennets would be disinherited once their father dies for there is a Mr Collins, the next

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<sup>6</sup> Primogeniture: *“legal principles by which males are first in priority of inheritance, older sons are preferred to younger ones”* (Martin, E. 2003: 229)

descendant of the male line of heirs, who is described by Mr Bennet as a “...*person whom I never saw in the whole course of my life*” (Jane Austen, 2007: 232).

In the Dashwoods' case, it is John, their half-brother, who takes over all possessions that once belonged to Mrs Dashwood and her daughters; except the silver plates to the detriment of Mrs John Dashwood. Women, thus, have the right to inheritance in the sole case where there are no male heirs. In such case, primogeniture does not apply, i.e., no daughter is preferred over the others, they are all equal heiresses.

Mr Bennet who has produced only female offspring, would leave the bulk of his possessions to the next male heir, while the girls are left comparatively with nothing. Yet, Mr Bennet's hands are tied; he cannot alter the law in favour of his girls. It is true that he could have taken a business that would secure a yearly income to be spared for a later stage time of his life. Instead, Mr Bennet got used to locking himself in his library reading. Apprehension, thus, takes its toll on the family's daily concerns, what would become of five helpless women?

Unlike distant Mr Bennet, Mr Dashwood is disquieted and troubled from over thinking of a plan B that would ensure his wife and girls the dignified life they are used to. His uncle has left a will that entailed most of his legacy to the four years old Henry, the son of John. Mr Dashwood, thus, is left with the hope that he'll survive long enough to secure few more thousands for his lady and daughters. His health fails him. As there is no way around the will or the law itself, Mr Dashwood addresses his son and heir with his fears and concerns. On his deathbed, Mr Dashwood endeavours to have John promise to provide for his half-sisters and step-mother.

Jane Austen conveys Mrs Bennet's helplessness. Although Jane and Elizabeth repeatedly attempt to explain the nature of an entail, which was beyond her understanding, Mrs Bennet:

*"...continued to rail bitterly against the cruelty of settling an estate away from a family of five daughters, in favour of a man whom nobody cared anything about."*

(Austen, 2007: 232)

When Mrs Bennet speaks of marrying her five daughters, when she jumps off her bed once hearing that Lydia is a wife, when she congratulates Jane first on the carriages she will acquire and second for marrying, she is only seen as a mother who takes her children's best interest at heart and whose only business is to see them secured from an obscure future.

Mrs Dashwood, on the other hand, is not seen in much agitation, at first, because she was "*convinced her that their (**hers and her daughters**) welfare was dear to him (**John, her husband's son**), and, for a long time, she firmly relied on the liberality of his intentions.*" (Jane Austen, 2007: 09). John is expected to make amends to the Miss Dashwoods and their mother for having their home and possessions entailed to his baby son.

As much unfair as entail and rules of inheritance might seem, especially in such case as that of the Miss Bennets and the Miss Dashwoods, the law has a good reason<sup>7</sup> behind it. If the five Bennets were to inherit Longbourn estate and the three Dashwoods that of Norland, they would naturally all get married, then, the estates and the money would pass on to their own children. In other words, the Bennet as well as Dashwood

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<sup>7</sup> As stated in British Law back in Regency Era.

patrimony would cease to exist and become part of the husbands' properties. Entail and Primogeniture have been introduced to ensure the survival of a lineage.

### **3.1.2. Patriarchy in action**

The British society, so Christianized so into biblical regulations, has not been that Christian when it comes to actual practice. The bible preaches for equality between the sexes, for them to find a homogenous atmosphere to live in. It preached that:

*“...woman was taken out of Adam; not out of his head to top him, nor out of his feet to be trampled underfoot; but out of his side to be equal to him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be loved.”*

(Matthew Henry, 2002: 161)

Social norms have never been that biblical, however, and men and women are never regarded as potential equals. The Regency era has advocated for man's superiority over the fair sex be they mothers, wives sisters or daughters.

Patriarchy is present in Miss Austen's **PP** where man rules with an iron fist underneath his gloves. The Miss Bennets are not anywhere safe from the unfair tides of patriarchy. As the trials opens, Mrs. Bennet is in the middle of exhaustive thoughts, how to marry her five daughters. We see her stalking the eligible bachelors in the neighbourhood and by eligible Mrs. Bennet would settle for no one worth less than five-thousand a year. Such obsession might be interpreted as greed; however, as we read more we find out it is not so. In fact, the five Miss Bennets are in danger of having their house and farm entailed. That is why Mrs. Bennet strives to save her daughters from a likely destitution if their father dies. Patriarchic law protects women as long as the patriarch, the

father in this case, lives; otherwise they better profess some husband-hunting before they turn fifteen.

When Mr. Collins arrives at Longbourn, he declares his intentions of marrying one of his cousins so as to redeem some of the effects his inheritance will have on them.

*“This was his plan of amends – of atonement – for inheriting their father’s estate; and he thought it [...] excessively generous and disinterested on his own part.”*

(Jane Austen, 2007: 237)

Mrs. Bennet is quite overwhelmed with such ‘generosity’ and is desperate to convince Lizzie to accept his offer; she even threatens not to talk to her if she does not marry Collins.

When Darcy proposes to Lizzie and asks for her father’s blessings, patriarchy is there. Mr. Bennet attempts to give Eliza some father’s matrimonial advice when he asserts to her that she could not be happy *“unless you looked up to him as a superior”* (Jane Austen, 2007: 399). *Look up* and *superior* can only mean one thing, women escape the rule of their fathers and brothers only to be entrapped under that of their husbands. Woman is still subjected to the dominion of her husband whom she is supposed to share her life with in good times as in bad ones. Even in such a case as Darcy and Lizzie’s, lovers, the woman has to regard her partner with superiority.

Mr. Bennet, the supposed epitome of patriarchy in *Pride and Prejudice*, is not a patriarch after all. As head of a family and a father of five daughters, Mr. Bennet never takes matters into his own hands. He is rather oblivious and negligent of his duties towards the women dependent on him. The nonfunctional patriarch remains idle, and instead of taking a profession, shuts himself down reading books in his peaceful library.

*“In Pride and Prejudice until the very end Mr Bennet consistently retreats into his library to protect and prolong his patriarchal inadequacy and inaction.”*

(Wall Cynthia, 2009: 111)

As the father falls short on expectations, the mother fills in for him. Matriarchy takes in the place of patriarchy. It is Mrs. Bennet who undertakes the task of providing for her daughters; she provides them with husbands, at least it is what she attempts.

When Mr. Dashwood dies, his wife and daughters are dependent on the eligible heir, his son. All property is entailed to John Dashwood while the women are left houseless overnight. The three Miss Dashwoods along with their mother cannot manage on their own. When their step-brother unites himself of any duties towards them, they are dependent upon another male to secure a shelter. Mr. Middleton saved them from destitution but somehow entraps them into his patriarchal web. While being able to turn down other people's offers for a stay over, or an obliging invitation, the Dashwoods cannot decline Mr. Middleton's. Marianne voices her complaints about his repeated invitations; Elinor hushes her and reminds of how '*kind*' he has been to them.

Jane Austen depicts the character of John Dashwood, presumptive heir of Norland Park, as of a defected patriarch. He refuses to take responsibility for his sisters which throws them into the path of troubles and werewolves<sup>8</sup>, John Willoughby and Lucy Steele. Fatherless and houseless, the Dashwoods are at the mercy of odds. Marianne exploits the freedom given her in the absence of a patriarch, no one to censure her actions. Elder sister Elinor counsels Marianne to be more discreet, to mind the

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<sup>8</sup>A werewolf is a human monster that changes his appearance into and from a wolf. In the case of Willoughby and Steele, they are similarly deceitful and manipulative. They are first depicted as mild humans, but the novel trials expose them for the wild persons they truly are, i.e., werewolves.



conventions of propriety, but young Miss Dashwood could not see fault or improper in her behaviour towards Willoughby.

There has been a great chance that she might have been seduced by Willoughby had he not fallen in love with her. Marianne could have experienced the same fate Eliza has, being ill-used and deserted. Still, she could have never been approached by Willoughby had there been a father or an ablest brother by her side who would, at least, confront the runaway lover. Willoughby has seized such an opportune circumstance and “*performed the role of Marianne’s lover while having no intention of marrying her*”, (Sarah Ailwood, 2008: 111).

Eliza, Colonel Brandon’s ward, suffers the absence of patriarchal restraints due to the liberties given to her. Since there was no one to whom she owes her allegiance, Eliza assumes it right to take matters in her own callow hands and run away with Willoughby. Such abundant freedom results in Eliza’s scandalous doom; she is seduced and abandoned with child.

### ***3.2. Gender relations and the circle of victimisation***

Since the dawn of humanity, since the very beginning of creation, Adam and Eve, and the billions of their descendants, have involved into a relation of undefined terms and temperamental changes. Remember the story of the apple? It has marked man-woman's relationship as that of a victimisation; Adam has been victim of Eve, so they say. The Adams and Eves that follow have had their share in the endless circle of victimisation, wronging each other in one way or the other.

When both novels' events are to be looked at from near, it is detected that almost all characters are victims of some or victimizers of others, victimisation, thus, is at the heart of the plots of *Pride & Prejudice* and *Sense & Sensibility*. It cannot be denied that such a perception may not be obvious enough for some, if not most of those who would read and incept the paper at hand. May I, then, bring back to minds that literary works provide open doors to endlessly countless interpretations, as odd or improbable and as unanimous or singular they might be.

#### ***3.2.1. Insatiable money-thirst***

Money makes the world spins around, it is said. Well at times, it does a lot more than spinning. George Wickham has got the looks and charms, but lacks a few thousand

pounds, and that is no good news for a man his age. The spirit of youth calls on him to live the life he deserves, or thinks he does. As robbing a bank has probably been no option back in the Regency Era, plan B dictates that the young officer should get himself an eligible bachelorette, find a rich heiress, or hijack<sup>9</sup> one if his enamouring gaze fails to woo her. Once the scheme has been made, it is not hard to find a prey; Georgiana Darcy is to be his victim and saviour. A young girl of no more than fifteen, Miss Darcy has fallen easily into Wickham's trap and bought into his well-put shows of affection.

Wickham is so blinded with his want of money that he never stops to ponder what the outcomes might be on the young damsel. On the contrary, his mind is quick, with a little help from the governess taking charge of Miss Darcy, Wickham has planned to elope with Georgiana, no second thoughts considered. His intention is to marry her for it is only as her *lawful wedded* husband that he could secure her money as his own.

*“Mr. Wickham's chief object was unquestionably my sister's fortune, which is thirty thousand pounds”*

(Austen, 2007: 307)

Unfortunately for George, all fortune is gone when Georgiana confesses the elopement schemes to her brother for fear of inflicting him. Disappointed and penniless as ever, Wickham keeps the chase going and joins the Militia. For a moment, he is believed to have fallen for Lizzie, but a non-privileged daughter among five would not do. Elizabeth, who is betrayed into the same belief, is seen taking matters in her own hands so as to charm the charming soldier. She has her hopes high for the Bingley's ball to do her move:

*“She had dressed with more than usual care, and prepared in the highest*

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<sup>9</sup> Hijack is not used for its literal meaning, seizing a plane, ship or vehicle; it is used to rather highlight the improbability of his actions, eloping twice.

*spirits for the conquest of all that remained unsubdued of his heart, trusting that it was not more than might be won in the course of the evening.*"

(Austen, 2007: 247)

*Gold-digger*<sup>10</sup> Wickham does not give his heart a say, he does not even flinch an eye as he fixed his attention on a potential heiress, a Miss King. Everyone is surprised with his choice that Elizabeth's aunt, Mrs Gardiner judges him to be "*mercenary*" (Austen, 2007: 281). With this much money-thirst at display, it is beyond astonishing to see Wickham elope with Lydia, another fifteen years old, who unlike Georgiana, is as broke as himself, and unlike Lizzie her older sister, is less pretty. Has he finally fallen in love? A rake that puts pounds over maids would not fall, not for a Lydia. Once again, Fitzwilliam shows up to amend for the damages and as the elopement has made the news in town, the only amend is marrying the two. It is true that Wickham has not wasted the chance of embezzling few hundred paid by Darcy to walk down the aisle, he would as well receive Lydia's dowry which does not exceed a hundred more, George ends up the worst way he could. The spendthrift he is, and the reckless Lydia is, that money would not last them months.

SS introduces another Mr Wickham under the name of John Willoughby. John makes his appearance as a *hero of a favourite story* (Austen, 2007), and is often described as *elegant* and *stylish*, he already has the perfect recipe to sweep anyone off her feet. Even Elinor, once described as cold-hearted, and her mother look at him with admiration.

When everyone is charmed with Willoughby, he disappears. Next time he re-surfaces, he is with his rich fiancée, Sophia! Not long after, he is found out to have

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<sup>10</sup> Gold-digger is slang for greedy person, seen strongly fit to describe the character of George Wickham.

already seduced a young girl of fifteen and deserted her with child. The only difference between him and Wickham is that he has loved Marianne. Alas! Money has more charms to him than love; after all, love would not pay the bills of the high lifestyle he has been used to. Willoughby ends up having his money thirst satisfied having acquired his wife's dowry, and his aunt's inheritance, but he is left to suffer the brunt of losing Marianne.

### **3.2.2. Deceptive Beauty**

A Chinese proverb says: *A woman's beauty makes fish sink and wild geese fall from the sky*". (Schipper, 2006: 68). It is deeply rooted in cultures around the world that a beautiful woman is a man's fatality. Over history, women such as Cleopatra, Guinevere, and Layla to name but few, have made laugh stocks and miserable beings out of great men, to ridicule and pity in books. Mr Bennet is a living witness.

A moment of those *bewitched* at first sight has cast Mr Bennet under the spell of then beautiful Mrs Bennet charms. With no much thought, as it is always the case, the man has declared the young woman's beauty a sufficient inducement to qualify her as his *lovely* wedded wife till death do them part... Not quite long after their nuptials, Mr Bennet comes to realize that good looks are all there is to his bride; she had nothing more to recommend her. Unfortunately, it was late to amend. The wretched victim has; thus, to live what is to become of his life biting his fingers in repent and remorse.

Mr Bennet has fallen victim of his short-sightedness; it has never crossed his mind that a book is never to be judged from its cover. Her beauty is deceptive, that of the face only, with no real value or valid reflection on her heart and soul. Mrs Bennet turns out to be *frost with no cupcake*, behind her pretty figure is an idle brain that functions only to

count eligible bachelors or their yearly income. She delights mostly in delivering news to her husband with over-zealous language and he would endeavour to listen. In fact, the man has done enough listening over the twenty-so years of their marriage, but at some point, he gets fed up and finds in sarcasm a way to escape her endless chattering.

*“You and the girls may go, or you may send them by themselves, which perhaps will be still better, for as you are as handsome as any of them, Mr. Bingley may like you the best of the party”*

(Austen, 2007: 201)

The once young and handsome turns to be a nag who constantly entreats people to have sympathy with her poor nerves, an alibi which Mr Bennet satirises:

*“I have a high respect for your nerves. They are my old friends. I have heard you mention them with consideration these last twenty years at least.”*

(Austen, 2007: 202)

SS portrays another Mr Bennet, Mr Palmer who married Charlotte for she was *“...recommended by so pretty a face”* (Austen, 2007: 158). Their marriage has revealed that the woman’s biggest achievement is a painting of no definable object, framed and hailed by her mother. Throughout the novel, readers can detect how gruff Mr Palmer gets towards his wife, he comments on almost everything she says, he interrupts her conversations, and shows no sign of respect to her opinions.

Jane Austen tells us through the eyes of elder Miss Dashwood that Mr Palmer has a sour temper for *“finding, like many others of his sex, that through some unaccountable bias in favour of beauty, he was the husband of a very silly wife.”* (Austen, 2007: 66). He, then, has to live with the consequences. In a similar fashion to Mr Bennet, Mr Palmer finds solace in derision and sarcasm unleashed at everyone and everything within sight.

But unlike Mr Bennet who is less expressive and offensive, Mr Palmer often boards blunt as he expresses himself in a too forward, often rude way.

Mrs Palmer is given the sole acknowledgment of good looks and seen as inferior to her husband who is described as having “*an air of more fashion and sense than his wife*” (Austen, 2007: 65). Mr Palmer grows aware of the many defects of his beauty-biased judgment and continually targets Mrs Palmer with insults at times, and crude inattention at others. Bitter Mr Palmer takes pleasure in contradicting everything his wife says, at times for the mere sake of contradiction. In chapter twenty, the Miss Dashwoods are invited over to visit the Palmers. Willoughby’s place, Allenham, is brought up during the conversation and while Mrs Palmer calls it “*a sweet little place*” (Austen, 2007: 66), her husband refutes the claim at once with sharp claims “*As vile a spot as I ever saw in my life*” (66).

Aware of her husband’s temper and sneer, Mrs Palmer always maintains a laughing face at everything he says and does. The Dashwood are astounded at Mr Palmer’s attitude when he does not even bother to answer his wife. Mrs Palmer, however, shrieks with laughter and comments: “*Mr Palmer does not hear me...He never does sometimes. It is so ridiculous*” (Austen, 2007: 64). It is as if Mr Palmer is punishing her, he has paid her attention once, and it did not turn quite well, he is not landing her his ears nor eyes anymore.

### **3.2.3. Abominable Pride**

**PP's** popularity remains inexhaustible almost two centuries after its publication, 1813. The **PP** mania can be seen everywhere: book clubs, magazines, associations, discussion groups, social networks...etc. With that been said, it should be noted that the novel owes its never dying fame to its leading characters –Darcy and Elizabeth.

It is worth noting that among the previous dualities that have been already discussed, the Darcy-Lizzie victimisation goes both ways. They both do each other wrong, mortify each other's feelings; both of them fall in the trap of their prides' evils. Nonetheless, it is Darcy we will be focusing on, maybe we will figure out some of his appealing enigma. Besides, he is the one who first inaugurates the victimisation and incites Elizabeth's prejudices.

While Elizabeth presents the *prejudice* part of the title, Darcy claims the *pride* to his character almost from the very beginning of the novel.

*“Pride’... is self-evidently one of the main themes of P&P, and it is pride that leads Darcy to behave impolitely towards the Bennet sisters.”*

(Morini, 2009: 111)

As Morini elucidates in the quotation above, Darcy's pride is projected on the Bennets, Lizzie takes her shot first. When the two meet for the first time, at the Meryton ball, Darcy is not impelled by Elizabeth, far worse; he has declined any wish of dancing with her and slighted her with his pompous vain looks. Darcy's haughtiness is put so hurtfully when he speaks of her:

*“She is tolerable; but not handsome enough to tempt me; and I am in no humour at present to give consequence to young ladies who are slighted by other men.”*

(Jane Austen, 2007: 205)



Lizzie who laughs it out while repeating Darcy's words before her friends is hurt deep down. Darcy's coarse vanity injures Lizzie's female ego in an unforgiveable way "*I could easily forgive his pride, if he had not mortified mine*" (Jane Austen, 2007: 211). Mr. Darcy's vanity prejudices Elizabeth's merits and targets her feelings in a way that will affect her judgments of him.

Darcy's "*abominable pride*" (Jane Austen, 2007:210) is contrasted with Lizzie's easy manners and open disposition. At their second meeting, Fitzwilliam's early opinions of Miss Bennet alter a bit, but not too promising. He finds something special about her, her easiness and playfulness, her black eyes, and her difference from others. Still, he does not give way to her charms; he still clings to his haughty perception for everything and everyone that after one good discovery "*succeeded some others equally mortifying*" (Jane Austen, 2007: 212). Although Darcy's attention is drawn to Lizzie's fine eyes, "*he had detected with a critical eye more than one failure of perfect symmetry in her form*" (Jane, 2007: 212).

Darcy's haughtiness disgusts everyone newly acquainted with him for he turns to be "*eat up with pride*" (Austen, 2007: 209) that not all his *ten thousand a year* fortune can amend or tone down. His vain remarks spared nothing and no one, not even dancing as he proudly claims that "*Every savage can dance*" (Jane Austen, 2007: 213). High social status and family breeding have shaped Darcy's vanity in a way he never questions to be wrong but, on the contrary, to have granted him every possible privilege to judge others uncensored. Morini supports such claims "*Nobody is openly offensive like the untamed Darcy.*" (2009: 114)

The *untamed Darcy* finally surrenders one of his shields, his heart, to Elizabeth, but not without surrendering his contemptuous pride, not a smart move on the part of a lover

who attempts to woo his beloved. Darcy comes open about his feelings to Lizzie in the proudest way there could ever be. He soon deviates from the romantic “*you must allow me to tell you how much I love and admire you*” (Austen, 2007: 300) to the injurious insinuations about Elizabeth’s family and connections.

*“His sense of her inferiority—of its being a degradation—of the family obstacles which had always opposed to inclination, were dwelt on with a warmth which seemed due to the consequence he was wounding, but was very unlikely to recommend his suit.”*

(Jane Austen, 2007: 302)

Darcy’s hurtful claims of superiority in contrast to Lizzie’s inferiority have been intensified by his assured countenance and confidence of receiving a positive answer to his proposal. In his own proud mind, he is doing Elizabeth a favour.

When rejected by Lizzie, Darcy does not give up, not without a more hurtfully proud something to say. He attempts at showing her that he is rightful in being vain, his disposition, and his social class –the landed gentry – provide him with sufficient motive to be so. He asks her in a most self-conceited manner:

*“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?”*

(Jane Austen, 2007: 301)

Darcy disdains the Bennet family’s class and connections. He thinks they show an impropriety and vulgarity of manner and behaviour exposing themselves to public ridicule and derision. He looks down to Elizabeth’s uncle, Mr. Gardiner, for being a lawyer. Upon hearing his wounding claims concerning her dear ones, Lizzie is beyond enraged, hurt and offended; her own pride and her family’s have been so tremendously demeaned by a *Richie-rich* from the Pempeberly estate. Miss Bennet jilts Darcy to avenge, even slightly, for all his contemptuous pride.

Morini Massimiliano sums the whole Darcy-Lizzie clash comprehensively in the following words:

*“At the start of their acquaintance, Darcy is haughty and openly contemptuous: amongst other things, he makes an uncomplimentary remark on Elizabeth when Bingley draws his attention to her. Elizabeth’s pretty figure, and her proud resolve not to be impressed by his self-importance, combine to make him fall in love with her. Yet, when he proposes to her – notwithstanding his social and patrimonial reservations – he does so in his habitual haughty style. Even as he is asking for permission, he is doing so in a commandeering manner, as shown by his choice of modal verbs expressing obligation (‘you must allow me’); and when Elizabeth charges him with Jane’s sentimental disappointment, he proudly asserts the correctness of his behaviour on that occasion, and does not refrain from comparing his kindness towards his friend Bingley to his unkindness towards himself.”* (Morini, 2009: 111)

Darcy’s upbringing has a major effect on his conduct, as he later explains in his letter that he owes it to Elizabeth for making him see the world from a different perspective. Mr Darcy undergoes a radical change that he asks same Mr Gardiner whom he once looked at as inferior to go fish with him. He even starts to take the wellbeing of people, other than himself and family, into account as we see him rush to the rescue of Lydia. Darcy goes as far as to put his own hurt pride aside, to grant Wickham money, get him a commission, and supervise his nuptials to Lydia.

### 3.3. *Gender stereotypes: typology of men and women*

Gender is stamped with the ever-fixed opposed duality, men versus women, which goes on infinite ends with descriptions of the like men are this, women are that, a man does this, a woman does that. These delineations though typical in nature, remain relative in judgment. Of the literary heritage that captures opposing female-male stereotypes, Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* depicts a most comprehensive one:

*“She wanted a son; he would be strong and dark; she would call him Georges, and this idea of bearing a male child was like an anticipated revenge for all the powerlessness of her past life. A man, at least, is free, free to explore all passions and all countries, to surmount obstacles, to indulge in the most exotic pleasures. But a woman is constantly thwarted. At once passive and compliant, she has to contend with both the weakness of her body and the subjection imposed by the law. Her will, like the veil attached to her hat, flutters with every breeze; always there is desire inviting her on, and, always, convention holding her back.*

*She gave birth one Sunday, about six in the morning, as the sun was rising.*

*‘It’s a girl!’ said Charles.*

*She turned away her head, and fainted.”*

(Gustave Flaubert, 1857: 79-80)

The quotation elucidates the broad lines for gender distinction. It sets men as being strong, powerful, and free in whatever they do; in contrast, women are depicted as powerless, thwarted, passive, compliant, subjected and confined to all kinds of social restraints. All these attributions can be summed up in one term *stereotype*.

The final stop in chapter two is to analyze and deduce the capital gender representations prevalent in the novel. The study aims at uncovering the distinctions that set *masculinity* and *femininity* apart, and the stamps that determine the differences between *men* and *women*.

Mary Talbot (2003) claimed that gender is distinguished into bipolar categories often referred to as the opposite sex. The essence behind these categorizations is to create credible stereotypes that help defining the polar groups. On the other hand, Cameron Deborah contended that “*Gender is a problem, not a solution, he is, she is*” (1995: 42). Setting female images and masculine ones can be quite problematic and sexist at times.

Before undertaking the analysis of the dominant pigeonholes in this Austenian novel, an attempt at comprehensive definition to the key word *stereotype* and its origins and uses is due. Stereotype is actually a combination of two words of different origins, the “*Greek stereos, solid and hard*” (Onions et Al, 1966: 868), and the “*French type or Latin typus, or Greek tùpos: impression, image, figure*” (Onions et Al, 1966: 973), hence solid impression or solid image.

Stereotyping affects all groups that may respectively be termed as diametrical: whites vs. blacks; jocks vs. geeks; blonds vs. brunettes; and foremost, men vs. women. Stereotyping gender enacts probabilistic beliefs that are held about gender, different groups, and individual persons.

*“To stereotype someone is to attribute to that person some characteristics which are seen to be shared by all or almost of his or her fellow group members.”*

(Brown Rupert, 2010:68)

And though they may be wrong or not entirely consistent, there is always an exception to a rule; stereotypes underlie a kernel of truth behind each one. Richard Lippa (2005) claims that stereotypes are not just about personality, they are likewise held about men's and women's physical traits (muscular vs. soft), social roles (provider vs. does house work), personal traits (competitive vs. caring for others), sexuality (has high drive vs. attracted to men). And though gender stereotypes are based on hearsay to a certain extent, there are actual observations of scientists and investigators as well to give them more credibility.

In light of what has been said so far, a nuanced medley of stereotypes that differs from physical, intellectual, emotional and biological is to be delineated. And whenever the novel itself yields not much explicit information, whenever there is little to extract from between the lines, there is reference to the investigations of other researchers.

### **3.3.1. PP: *Pestering wife vs. Stonewalling husband***

Jane Austen offers us a nuance of stereotypes that vary from one character to the other. **PP** provides a relatively reversed Masculinity-Feminity dichotomy where the man has to step back in front of the woman. Mrs. Bennet is "*the intrusive verbally pestering wife*" whereas Mr. Bennet is "*the avoidant, distant stonewalling husband*" (Richard Lippa, 2005:247).

In this duality, we will attempt the delineation of gender differences from a new angle, speech stereotypes "*to refer to the features which have become associated with and expected of men and women*" (Philip Smith, 1979: 109-10) as far as their

conversation is concerned. We aim at bringing forward the characteristics that set the two sexes apart in speech, what is typically male and what is to be termed as woman's talk.

When talking, Mrs. Bennet is all the time nagging and complaining and begging everyone to have "*compassion to her poor nerves*" (Jane Austen, 2007: 201). She can go on and on talking about silly things with nothing but gibberish to convey. She spends most of her talks gossiping about the Lucases' inferiority and their daughter's defected beauty, about others' low ranks and grievous misfortunes. She spends equal time praising Jane's many suitors, Mary's accomplishments and Lydia's liveliness. "*Women are [...] chatterboxes, endless gossips or strident nags.*" (Mary Talbot, 2003: 469); Mrs. Bennet fits all three.

Mrs Bennet's attitude, inappropriate and embarrassing as it is, is Mr. Bennett's rightful punishment for marrying her for her youthful looks. When they first met, Mrs. Bennett was a beautiful lady, an enough inducement for Mr. Bennett to fall in love and marry. Not quite enough an inducement it turns out as beautiful Mrs. Bennett has nothing more than beauty to offer. Like many other Austenian male characters, Mr. Bennet has joined "*in valuing beauty at the expense of sense, a far "too common" blunder*" (Auerbach Emily, 2009: 270).

Nagging is Mrs. Bennet's hobby, vagabonding is her daily activity, *neighbour's gossip* is her favourite show, and marrying her five daughters is her ultimate dream "*The business of her life was to get her daughters married; its solace was visiting and news*" (Jane Austen, 2007: 201). Intelligence never knew its way to her crippled mind, and logic never dared dropping by apart from the concerns and activities mentioned above "*Mrs. Bennet has very few other thoughts in her head*" (Waldron Mary, 2004: 39).

Mrs. Bennet opens the novel trials overzealously with a lengthy report of the latest news, Bingley's arrival. She, then, pesters her husband to pay a formal call at Netherfield to pave the way for further acquaintance, mainly for matchmaking "*I am thinking of his marrying one of them*" (Jane Austen, 2007: 200). Mr. Bennet consents for the mere sake of making her unceasing nuisance cease. Later, we see Mrs. Bennet, still chattering, teasing her husband with her matrimonial plans on behalf of Jane and Bingley, that soon? Darcy justly answers such a question:

*"A lady's imagination is very rapid; it jumps from admiration to love, from love to matrimony, in a moment."*

(Jane Austen, 2007: 256)

One of the features that stamp Mrs. Bennet's speeches is their contradiction to something she has already said or something she herself does or does not have. A good example would be her many objections regarding Lady Lucas. Mrs. Bennet claims that her neighbour is less refined in her manners and unpolished in her words when it is her character that is described as that of a "*vulgar woman who often talks more and more openly than she should*" (Morini, 2009: 108). Mrs. Bennet, with no blessing of sense nor intelligence, boasts of being superior to other women without reflecting on the distinction her superiority is based on.

Jane Austen says that Lady Lucas was "*not too clever to be a valuable neighbour to Mrs. Bennet*" (2007: 209), however, the authoress is rather being satirical. Miss Austen describes Mrs. Bennet as "*a woman of mean understanding, little information*", (Jane Austen, 2007: 202). These two quotations denote the inconsistency between what Mrs. Bennet is and what she thinks of others.

*"Much of Mrs. Bennet's foolishness, and the humor of that foolishness, consists of an inability to see the contradictions in her own thinking."*



Another trait of Mrs. Bennet's, as well as women's, speech is the use of questions. Almost from the very first line Mrs. Bennet utters, most her sentences are formulated into questions. When Jane receives a letter, her mother showers her with a cluster of questions "*who is it from? What is it about? What does he say?*" (Jane Austen, 2007: 225)

A more preferable type is tag questions. There is a record of Mrs. Bennet using them in her speech: "*They are wanted in the farm, Mr. Bennet, are they not?*" (Jane Austen, 2007: 225) illustrates Mrs. Bennet's attempt at insinuation to her husband for his consent. "*The country is a vast deal pleasanter, is it not, Mr. Bingley?*" (Jane Austen, 2007: 230) is another instance of tag questions use that reflects Mrs. Bennet urging need for Bingley to answer desirably.

*"...tag question, a favourite feature of stereotypical women's speech. Tag questions modify assertions into implicit pleas for confirmations. Their use carries connotations of powerlessness and indecisiveness as well as lack of intelligence."*

(Philip Smith, 1979: 134)

Philip Smith goes on further in his perception of sex markers in speech to noticing that women use "*more adverbs ending in 'ly'*" (Phillip Smith, 1979: 135). In chapter one, there is record of five adverbs ending in 'ly' that are attributed to Mrs. Bennet: *immediately; likely, certainly, only, merely.*

When Mrs. Bennet is not teasing her husband with her perpetual nagging, or ceaseless marital designs, she has time to talk to other women. There, she exhibits another speech marker. She dwells on the eligible bachelors for her daughters, those she likes such as Mr. Bingley and those she could not tolerate like Mr. Darcy whom she described as "*eat up with pride*" (Jane Austen, 2007: 209). She talks of wedding clothes even when wedding bells ring in her imagination only and she speaks about the "*very*

*plain*” (Jane Austen, 2007: 216) Charlotte, the poor Mrs. Long and her “*hack chaise*” (Jane Austen, 2007: 209), and Lady Lucas and her schemes to husband-hunt for her daughters; all fits the description that “*female conversations were about men, clothes, and other women*” (Philip Smith, 1979: 127).

Another favourite topic of Mrs. Bennet is money. She complains continuously about her misfortunes, related mostly to fortune. She behaves thoughtlessly in a manner that exposes her daughters to mortification and causes them disdainful looks. After all, the reason why Mr. Darcy’s first proposal has been messed up that way is due to reflecting much on Mrs. Bennet’s demeanour publicly.

*“The situation of your mother’s family, though objectionable, was nothing in comparison to that total want of propriety so frequently, so almost uniformly betrayed by herself”*

(Jane Austen, 2007: 305)

The chatterer Mrs. Bennet, and her fellow women, are “*patiently endured or kept in check by strong and silent men*” (Mary Talbot, 2003: 469); Mr. Bennet has to take up such a task. Mr. Bennet trifles not much when his wife is enthusiastically engaged in speech, and he rather seeks refuge in his well stuffed library. Books are his comforting shelter from his insufferable life and wife. Mr. Bennet does not put up with silly talks; he escapes all debates and discussions with a sense of satire and irony to conceal his unwantedness for confrontation.

*“He is a dry, ironical man who maintains a detached and sardonic attitude toward his witless wife.”*

(Poplawski, 1999: 80)

In his conversations with his wife, Mr. Bennet is the typical stonewalling husband. He tends to tease his partner with stalling sentences at times “*You want to tell me, and I have no objection to hearing it.*” (Jane Austen, 2007: 01) and satiric ones at others

*“I have a high respect for your nerves. They are my old friends. I have heard you mention them with consideration these last twenty years at least.”*

(Jane Austen, 2007: 200)

Mr. Bennet shows no sense of responsibility towards his family rather a recklessness of thought which is the reflection of his disappointed hopes and regretful mind. Consequently, his five girls are in danger of destitution in case of his death. He has been careless enough not to provide for their future wellbeing. When he talks of his daughters, Mr. Bennet has no scruples in describing them as *“silly and ignorant like other girls”* (Jane Austen, 2007: 201).

Mr. Bennet distances himself from his wife’s most prominent concern, marrying the five Miss Bennets. And when his eldest girl is heartbroken, he thinks it funny to have the second, Lizzie, experience the same *“let Wickham be your man. He is a pleasant fellow, and would jilt you creditably”* (Jane Austen, 2007: 273). Mr. Bennet is a thoughtless man in choosing his words, he does not weigh if they might hurt somebody, and somebody does get hurt. Mary, his daughter, is daunted most mortifiedly at the Netherfield ball when her father interrupts her singing. Mr. Bennet is so insensitive when loudly addressing her to stop *“you have delighted us long enough. Let the other young ladies have time to exhibit”* (Jane Austen, 2007: 251). Exposing his own child to derision and disappointment seems of no censure to Mr. Bennet.

Mr. Bennet remains avoidant to take matters serious; he does not even listen to Lizzie’s earnest plea to keep Lydia, the youngest daughter, from going after the militia. Instead, he grants Lydia his permission knowing she is only into going to flirt with good looking officers and dance with as many as she can. It is a way of disposing himself of one child, one responsibility, even if it is only for a while *“We shall have no peace at*

*Longbourn if Lydia does not go to Brighton*” (Jane Austen, 2007: 357). His thoughtlessness results in a most tainting scandal, Lydia’s elopement and undesirable marriage to Wickham.

Men and women, once again, differ in a certain something, this time it was their speech. The focus has been on a married couple, an endless nagging wife and a constant sardonic husband. Mrs. Bennet talks on and on to convey little information and gets overzealous at minor irritations, While Mr. Bennet prefers minimal speech which he envelopes with meaning, hidden and blatant. Their opposing stereotypes are well put in what follows.

*“Male speech was characterized as more attention-seeking (demanding, boastful, loud, forceful) [...] aggressive and frank [...] Female speech can be summarized as [...] enthusiastic, grammatically correct, but containing jibberish on trivial topics.”*

(Philip Smith, 1979: 135)

### **3.3.2. SS: *Don Juan vs. Poker Face***

Jane Austen offers us a nuance of stereotypes that vary from one character to the other. **SS** portrays a duality of a Don Juan<sup>11</sup>, a philander man who plants his charm seeds wherever he sets foot, versus a Poker Face<sup>12</sup>, a woman whose feelings can never be known unless shown; John Willoughby and Elinor Dashwood are the stereotypic dualities selected.

Willoughby is the typical womanizer whom all the ladies whisper about when he shows up somewhere, the Casanova to whom heads turn as he enters a room, and a Don

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<sup>11</sup>Don Juan is the leading character of Lord Byron’s poem *Don Juan*.

<sup>12</sup>Poker face is a face without any interpretable expression (as that of a good poker player).

Juan for whom hearts beat whenever he passes by; the very man no woman would wish to fall for.

*“Too good to be true. Willoughby is exactly the kind of man you should run a mile from, if you’re smart enough to spot who he is.”*

(Henderson Lauren, 2005: 181)

John Willoughby epitomizes the Byronic Don Juan who has women throbbing for him at every stop he makes. In the pursuit of his own happiness and pleasure, Willoughby shatters hopes, breaks promises and tears hearts apart. When he makes his first appearance, Marianne’s accident, John has already left a jilted woman behind. He has lured a young girl of no more than fifteen into his trap. When he was done with her, he parted her with promises that are never to be fulfilled and with a baby to see the light without ever knowing his father. He walks away to prey upon another victim without the least concern for the wellbeing of his last one. He never asks himself ‘Whom did I hurt?’ rather ‘who is next?’ a typical Casanova.

Elinor, on the other hand, has left a piece of her heart wandering in Longbourn; not in the well packed library, rather in the hands of the mysteriously charming Edward Ferrars. Nonetheless, she talks of it to no one. Elinor seems so heartless, emotionless, and her answer *“I think highly of him, I esteem him, I like him”* (Jane Austen, 2007: 19) makes one sympathize with Marianne’s indignation. Elinor locks all romantic feelings deep somewhere in her well-shielded heart.

Elder Miss Dashwood does not yarn for love and even if she does, she is discrete about it. When she tries to be more open about her feelings, we still get ice-coated words and an unreadable face; there is no sign of fervid affection. And when Marianne asks her older sister to show some affection, she gives her a most definite answer:

*“Believe them (her feelings towards Edward) to be stronger than I have declared; believe them, in short, to be such as his merit, and the suspicion—the hope of his affection for me may warrant, without imprudence or folly. But farther than this you must not believe.”*

(Jane Austen, 2007: 19)

Elinor sits still when told by Lucy Steele that she has been engaged to the same Edward whom she esteems and likes. She does not blink upon hearing such a devastating intelligence, nor sigh, and she does not shed a tear. Instead, she goes up to her room, reflects on what she has heard, and simply reconciles with idea as *not meant to be*. Elinor does not allow herself to think more of Edward and to drown in melancholy as Marianne does. She is able to meet him, talk to him without showing any sign of being affected. As if impenetrable and unmoved, Elinor never turns to her own bleeding wounds, she rather directs her attention and care towards others’ hurts *“Elinor was to be the comforter of others no less in her own distresses as in theirs”* (Jane Austen, 2007: 153).

Willoughby sets his mind on entrapping Marianne with his almost perfect qualities that makes him everything *“a young man ought to be”* (Jane Austen, 2007: 33). He embodies chivalry and charm –every woman’s dream – and Marianne falls head over heels into it. Don Juan here knows what a woman wants, and he gives her that and much more. He reads for Byron and Cowper, he recites poetry with a dedicated attention, he sings and dances in celebration of life, he rides horses and hunts; he is a prince charming. Actually, that should have given up his real character, he is a prince charming, and such princes exist only in fairytales; Willoughby was unreal after all. *And if someone seems too good to be true... well, he probably is.*

Back to Elinor, the Poker face, she remains stale; something a man does not appreciate much, and our authoress knows that

*“If a woman conceals her affection with the same skill from the object of it, she may lose the opportunity of fixing him.”*

(Jane Austen, 2007: 235)

It is not enough to tell the man you love you like reading the same books he does, not enough Elinor. But she is determined on looking at him, on being near him without the least appearance of agitation or discomposure, has she got an ice-box where her heart used to be? For long moments, she most definitely did. One could mistake her feelings towards Edward even after staring at her for a whole day; she does not wear her heart on her sleeve or her feelings on her face.

*“Without shutting herself up from her family, or leaving the house in determined solitude to avoid them, or lying awake the whole night to indulge meditation, Elinor found every day afforded her leisure enough to think of Edward.”*

(Jane Austen, 2007: 66)

One could also doubt the depth of her attachment because Elinor shows no signs of being affected when she lost Edward to Miss Steele. She has managed to hide it so well from everyone, and everyone is conned into thinking her to be contented without suspecting the least that she was miserably wretched; she kept it all to herself.

Willoughby, fortunately for Marianne, falls in love. However, Marianne is not fortunate enough; it turns out that love is not sufficient to subdue Willoughby's heart. He abandons love for wealth, feelings for money; he gives up heavenly eternity for earthly life. He marries another woman of more class and more riches and leaves Marianne to fret with laments of grief and regret. Again, John shows emotionlessness for the ravaging effects Marianne has to suffer. He does not even afford the trouble of explaining his deed to her and he is certainly too much of a coward to confront her. Willoughby does not wish to spoil his tranquility of mind; no Don Juan would stop to look behind at someone he jilted, he just moves on to the next one.

Unlike Willoughby who displays his feelings flauntingly for the subject of his love – rather say subjects – Elinor shows none. We are told of her no longer feeling unwell or uneasy. Later on, she receives Edward while Lucy Steele, his fiancée, is present. Mr. Ferrars holds Elinor’s hands once he enters the room and is about to say something when she interrupts him with all the formality she could afford to draw his attention to the other woman. Elinor, then, has to sit and watch them peering looks at each other; so unenviable a situation. No one would want to be in Elinor’s shoes and experience all she has gone through; to sit next to the woman whose hair-lock her beloved wears around his finger as a ring, to look at him, at her and realize he is lost to her forever, that she will never have what the other woman has; the love of a man. That is of a most torturing feelings a woman’s heart can suffer, but Elinor makes it seem so comfortable a pair of shoes with her majestic equanimity.

The opposing stereotypes, a remorseless seducer and an unmoved loving woman reflect to what extent a man can be heartless while a woman swallows her pains in silence. The Don Juan is like a traveler who moves from place to place to lure women and walks away with a new bonus in his jar of hearts, a new broken one. The woman Poker face, loves, loses, grieves, and celebrates, but does it all in an undecipherable manner; she is a good actress.

Men, who fit the stereotype, are full of promises and empty talk, Shakespeare has admitted that on their behalf. He knew that a woman in love, a discrete woman

*“... never told her love [...]*

*She sat like Patience on a monument,*

*Smiling at grief. Was not this love indeed?*

*We men may say more, swear more, but in deed*



*Our shows are more than will, for still we prove*

*Much in our vows, but little in our love.”*

(Shakespeare, 1947: 652)

A Don Juan, a Willoughby, has no conscience to afford him any regrets or sorrows; his emblem is *carpe diem*, only in his case it means to philander to the utmost. And there is the woman who puts her heart on the *silent mode* and presses *deactivation* option on all feelings that may give way to a service called love.

## ***Conclusion***

Chapter one is designed to introduce the most important literature made on the most important parts this study is concerned with: Jane Austen, **PP** and **SS**, gender reading of the novels, and a preview of literature ways of teaching, mostly those concerning the novel. It is only to be pitied that it could not be afforded to explore more works and get more insights. The literature reviewed herein provides enough data as would enable the proceeding of the next chapters.

Jane Austen was a novelist of neither an ordinary talent nor short-sighted vision. She had a piercing sight in watching the men and women of her time moving around her, and the ability to immerse deep into their souls, she could read their minds and decipher the language of their eyes. Miss Austen possessed a *supernatural* ability to notice the microscopically small particulars that others would never consider existing; she could hear the words that lips kept unsealed. She could read between the lines, to see the secrets, the enigmas, and the marvels of the human nature. She remains unequalled in reflecting what historians so humiliatingly fail to deliver, the society, and spotting what science for long centuries did not manage to spot –the people of those times.

# *Beyond the Lines*

# Chapter Two

*A Journey to a literary*

*destination*

# *A* journey to a literary destination

## *Introduction*

It is said that teaching is not something we do; it is rather a journey we take with students. Bringing Austen to class is made into a journey of many stops and stations, so as to insure that when final destination is reached, the *voyage* is worth the learners' while. Students would have undergone a different experience and earned new additions to their linguistic and personal accounts.

Chapter two is the first among three that go beyond the lines of Jane Austen's novels, **PP** and **SS**, into a more didactics-oriented experiment. One of the issues that are increasingly prevailing in our classes and universities is that students lack interest in literature. On the other hand, one of the undeniably crucial facts is that literature is the fount of a language, and it is the key to a fully-fledged linguistic acquisition (literature

enhances the four skills). However, it seems that most instructors are not able to communicate such importance to their students nor can they rouse their interest into the subject.

The researcher takes initial steps in tackling the issues within her own classes. A pre-questionnaire is designed to target general issues in a literature classroom. The aim is to check the learners preconceived ideas about the module, British literature, and to make use of the answers in putting together further plans.

The chapter at hand is about two major milestones in the beyond lines part; the pre-questionnaire and the didactic experiment. In the former, the researcher starts with defining the population that is to take the pre-questionnaire; who they are, why them, when and how are the questions to be answered at this point. Research instruments come next: *what are the means used to profile the learners? How are they put together?* All is poured into delineating the pre-questionnaire. Third station is about the pre-questionnaire itself and how it is delivered. The analysis of respondents' answers follows with the potential interpretations to go along with each finding.

The class sessions are to be part of the didactic adventure come next. **PP** and **SS** are introduced to students in groups two and four over the span of six different sessions. The researcher puts the suggestions made by the pre-questionnaire respondents into effect. The sessions help test some techniques for effectiveness and provide the experiment with a more practical dimension.

### **1. *Learners' profiles: Getting to know the respondents***

The question that would pop into mind upon referring to the pre-questionnaire (appendix 04) would be with regard to the line that reads year: 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> years. The initial aim of the researcher had been to survey all English majors, the three years of LMD and the remaining fourth year *Classique* students. However, and after some observations, the researcher judged the idea to be impractical and at times misleading in terms of results. The teacher wanted a spontaneous environment to conduct the research, and it would not have been the case had she guest-visited other classes during literature courses. Both the host teacher and students would have been too alert for the fact that there is someone observing them and recording their every move and word and it would be too uncomfortable for them to act *au naturel*. The goal of this study is to have credible answers to reflect true situations not some put-together fanciful wordings. Thus, only the researcher's own students were made subjects of the study.

The researcher<sup>13</sup> teaches Oral Expression to two groups of first year students, at the English Department of the University of Mascara. Groups two and four consist each of twenty learners, aged between eighteen and twenty-two years old, the majority are females. By March, the teacher has detected a huge progress made by students in both groups alike. They have transformed from shy, awkward, silent, passive members into more confident, often outspoken, dynamically active students. They become more involved in the classroom, taking part in activities, sharing opinions, and creative in their own projects. The researcher could judge that both groups have passed *survival level* and they would make good candidates for her study.

Oral Expression classes take place twice a week with a total of three hours for each group. Having them take the pre-questionnaire, and later the experiment, the teacher already knows that students in both groups will be present in her classes, thus, easier to access. The pre-questionnaire has been handed to both groups on the last day before spring holidays. Before doing so, the teacher explained that the nature of the questionnaire is literature-targeted to address certain issues. The aim behind introducing the questionnaire followed, to find out where learners stood out on many literature-related points, to detect the problems, and to have them reflect and offer their feedback.

Once the students in both groups were made aware of what the questionnaire is about, the teacher added that they have the choice whether to take it or not for it is voluntary. The teacher could see hesitation written all over learners' faces once she has revealed that the pre-questionnaire was about literature. Ten volunteers from group two along with ten from group four raised their hands consenting to fill the questionnaire.

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<sup>13</sup> The researcher/ the teacher are used interchangeably



Group four was the first to take the questionnaire. The researcher granted the respondents enough time to answer all questions and offered her help whenever someone needed clarification. When group two was in class, the teacher opted for a different choice. The students who volunteered to answer the questionnaire were given their copies to take home with them, so that they can think their answers through and give less empty spaces as in group four. Before they left the classroom, group two respondents were asked to take a look at the questionnaire and see if they would have any queries to be quenched by the teacher.

## ***2. Research instrument: Devising the pre-questionnaire***

On the way to survey students' opinions with relation to literature and Brit-Lit, the researcher had to use a set of instruments. First on the researcher's to-do list is to know where her students stand with regard to different points and issues. A questionnaire seemed like the right tool to use to achieve such an end.

Before receiving the respondents' copies, the questionnaire has been meant to be the only one to use, which is why the first version is entitled: Questionnaire. Later on, when the researcher sat down to read the answers and plan for upcoming phases of the study, the idea of adding another questionnaire post the class sessions came to being. The researcher, thus, refers to it as the pre-questionnaire.

The researcher has put together a questionnaire of twenty-five questions which range from close to open ended along with degree questions. The closed type of questions includes a set of ‘Yes’ and ‘No’ questions, while the open-ended ones offer students more freedom and space. Degree questions are evaluative in nature with parameters and scales to be used by respondents to assess the matters in question.

First questions are general and are aimed at tracing back the origins of the literary-phobia that has infected our classes. Later questions are directed towards more specific issues related to students’ Brit-Lit classes. Final questions give students the chance at how they would do things had they had a say in their education. The pre-questionnaire keeps to points that are familiar to students formulated in an accessible language.

### ***3. The pre-questionnaire: Feeling the pulse***

The first step in conducting this study is to take the general pulse of students and detect their views with regard to literature and British Literature classes more specifically. The twenty-five questions comprising the pre-questionnaire target different points of focus, general and specific serve so as to elicit the respondents’ feedback<sup>14</sup>.

The very beginning was with reading, do learners read? Eighteen out of twenty said ‘YES’ they do, two ticked the ‘No’ box. If students read, what do they actually read? Books, nine answered; novels, eleven claimed; newspaper, ten admitted; short stories, said six, and magazines wrote one student. The following question sought to investigate

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<sup>14</sup> To better preserve the ecology and credibility of the study, the researcher did not correct any mistakes/errors whatsoever made by respondents in the pre-questionnaire and the post-questionnaire alike.

whether learners kept on good reading terms with their mother tongue; so, do they read novels in Arabic? Twelve replied positively, while the remaining eight admitted the contrary. The former twelve readers in Arabic were asked to provide some titles so as to look into the quality of their choices. The list of novels included the Persian Ibn al-Muqaffa's *Kalila and Dimna*, The Lebanese Khalil Gibran's writings, the Algerian Abdelhamid Ben Hadouga's *The South Wind*, and Ahlam Mosteghanemi's *Memory in the Flesh*, tales of *The Thousand Nights and a Night (Arabian Nights)*, *Layla and Majnun*, *Aladdin*, *Beauty and the Beast*. As students of English, the twenty informants were asked if their reads were English too. Thirteen ticks were on the 'YES' I read novels in English, the remaining seven were a 'NO'. Question five targeted learners' linguistic horizons as it inquired if they read in another language other than Arabic and English. French was the only extension to those linguistic horizons with only four positive YES, and a remaining sixteen NO. Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables* was ticked twice, while Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* and Albert Camus' *L'étranger* got one tick each when titles were supplied.

Students, then, were asked to provide their own personal definition of literature. The aim behind this question was to identify learners' various reflections on the word itself and what it represented. "*The answers did vary. It is the language of society*", two said, while three others described literature as "*the mirror of society*" and five as "*a reflection of a people's culture*". Another four students associated it with history, traditions, style of life and thinking. Seven participants related literature to its three genres: prose, poetry and drama, enumerating books, writings, poems, and plays in their descriptions. Further answers included imagination, creative writings from different genre and languages, artistic ways to ascertain cultural identity, and a way of expression and developing skills.

The seventh question offered the twenty respondents the chance to have a say in the British Literature classes they had so far. The researcher wanted her learners to make use of their right, and duty, to reflect on their own process of learning. Teachers could never know what went right or wrong during sessions unless it was voiced by students themselves. Fortunately enough, the answerers benefited from such a freedom of expression and spilled it all. Out of the twenty participants, three described their Brit-Lit classes as *“exciting with great poems, impressive and very useful, language and knowledge enriching”*, another two called them *“interesting classes”*, and one student distinguished them as *“knowledge of culture”* while another wrote that *“Brit-Lit helped to get more information and improve students background”*. One of the negative points that were highlighted were lack of practice on behalf of the teacher, the way of teaching which was described as *“not good and not motivating”*, *“the serious attitude of the teacher made classes boring”*. A student even admitted not attending *“because I find them “boring classes. The teacher is always screaming”*. Another complaint was that students never got to actually read the novel or literary text as supposed, instead hand-outs were used and that demanded learning by heart. Difficult and complicated made the list also, but without further clarifications of what the actual difficulties were. A student admitted that the classes would get boring at times, but they still maintained the importance of the module in developing learners’ minds. Four spaces were left blank and one was not relevant, which denied the study of five potential answers that could have been informative.

The difficulties that students face in Brit-Lit class were listed down as answers to question eight. The vocabulary was a major issue that both classes were met with to understand their Brit-Lit courses, especially when the texts are in old English that some

described as boring, or of a poetic nature which was beyond their ability to analyse. Lexical difficulties were succeeded by learners' inability to keep up with the so many details that were often confusing and prevented them from relating with each point. Some respondents associated this setback closely with the teacher's way of explaining the lessons which was usually done through hand-outs that they would have to memorise later. Other answers revealed absence of motivation, the prevalence of boredom, the uselessness of data that would not be actually used in studies, and the insufficiency of the information they received. In what concerned the teacher, students pointed out to the hardship they find with hearing the voice in a large amphitheatre. They also referred to the lack of creativity on behalf of the teacher in presenting the courses. The open exam was also marked on the list; students were allowed access to documentation which they had no idea how to use in the first place. Four answers were nothing, no difficulties.

Another reflective question was directed to the respondents with regard to the material being taught to them in Brit Lit classes. There was a disappointing number of nine gaps left unfilled. The other eleven answers ranged from normal, very interesting, good and useful, acceptable, to so complicated, and not enough. A student thought there was no material in the first place; it was mere dictation of what was written on hand-outs. Another added that they needed ICTs to facilitate and aid the explanation of lessons such as the over-head projector. A third gave credit to the teacher's endeavours to make students understand. One of the respondents found the classes not interesting since they (students) do not have to read novels.

Participants were then offered the chance to evaluate the degree of their own interest in literature classes. Two students gave a 1 to 3 rate, which indicated they were

*not interested*. Seventeen answers were on the 4-6, *averagely interested* choice, and the remaining one student ticked the 7-9 *highly interested* box. It is worth noting that most students admitted they do not attend their literature classes on regular basis for their lack of interest.

Brit-Lit class was the centre of assessment in question eleven. The answerers were given nine criteria to evaluate the content and quality of teaching. *Very useful for language learning* was ticked five times, *useful for language learning* fourteen times, and *not useful* once. As far as the content was concerned, a majority of twelve ticks were on *very interesting in content*, and another five on *interesting in content*, and none in the *not interesting in content* box. The *very well taught* space was left unpicked, the second choice, *well taught* was ticked fifteen times, and ‘badly taught’ twice. The participants had, later in question twelve, to justify their evaluations. Some of them explained that Brit-Lit classes were important to understand the others, British people mainly, and to raise their awareness about their great nation. Others added that Brit-Lit helped them enrich their culture, improve themselves and their repertoires, and feed their language and abilities. According to few more answers, Brit-Lit was described as the best way to develop the readers’ way of speaking and writing, and as the core of all other modules that deserved care. There was one student who knew that “*Brit-Lit is something interesting, but in ‘our’ university it’s not*”, they confessed. The two ‘badly taught’ ticks were justified by the teacher’s way of giving information, and the fact that students were merely learning by heart what was analysed by others. Four spaces remained empty in the same way that the evaluation boxes were.

The following question inquired what the learners enjoyed most in their Brit-Lit class. The Bard William Shakespeare, his plays, works and the Elizabethan Age, got the biggest share of likes followed by poems and novels. Other favourites included Old English, Middle Age, heroes, events and adventures. One student gave an unpleased review: nothing and two others left the space blank. The researcher needed to dig deeper in such answers, thus asked why? Shakespeare's admirers explained that his ideas and drama are timeless, and that he has put a beautiful world of feelings and expressions, filled with impressive stories that made history, and his time was by far the richest period of literature. Poems were found to be thought-challenging for they enclosed hidden meaning, and novels were said to be important to know how people discover the skill of writing and help learners acquire new vocabulary. Old English was seen as the first history of literature and it was interesting to have a look at old culture while Middle Age was justified as interesting. One student related liking short stories to their short and fun nature that did not last long which would make the reader drown in imagination and then it would end. The answerer with 'nothing' to like wrote that they did not like what was presented and the remaining two blanks were kept empty.

'What do you like the least in Brit-Lit class?' was question number fifteen. Poetry which was a favourite of many students in the previous question proved to be unpopular with others. Anglo-Saxon literature, historical dates and events were not to the liking of participants either. Short stories, text analysis, vocabulary and dictation also made the least-liked list. One student answered 'we like' and the remaining eight left the question unanswered. The non-admirers of poems found them so complicated, strange and full of difficult words and hard as they would come as a natural talent. Anglo-Saxon texts were described as very obscure and could not be learnt by heart and historical details as not

enjoyable, boring, same, repeated, not interesting and tiring for students. The lexis was seen as strange, so difficult to learn easily that learners were unable to memorise fast. Dictation, according to the answerer, was a boring way to study Brit-Lit. Hand-outs were unappealing too because, according to the student, they want to understand things not learn them by heart. The seven empty spaces were empty in question sixteen as well.

The research director asked her respondents to supply the reasons that would motivate them to attend Brit-Lit classes. To discover different cultures, mentalities, ways of living, heritage, traditions, and British society, some answered. Others were lured in by the language, the poems, the books, the mystery, Beowulf, and to have a chance to know about a nation without visiting it. Curious minds deducted their interest to their desire to know how this huge literature formed and evolved across centuries and to get more insight into the way of thinking of British writers. One student wrote it was Shakespeare, the greatest works of the English playwright, who made the classes worth-attending. The teacher, two participants clarified, had a big role making the students more interested, while one answerer could not figure out a reason and instead wrote “*do not know*”.

Students were given a freedom of expression with question number eighteen when asked what they would add to their Brit-Lit class. ICTs made the top demand with tools such as the over-head projector, videos and movies. More novels and poems, to read in class, to explain and present as exposes, some wrote. Others wanted to act plays and turn the texts they have in class into performances. Few voices emphasised the already established dislike for hand-outs, and said if it were up to them, they would avoid such documents and write on board instead. A student complained that practical courses were



missing in their Brit-Lit classes, and another was more philosophical as they wanted to add how we have to be wise humans in our life, i.e., the real humanity, while two others had nothing to add.

Reasons for the aforementioned additions to Brit-Lit class ranged as well. Those who wanted more technological devices explained that it would help them have more interest in class, make the lessons easy to understand, to provide a better atmosphere for learning as it would invite good feedback, and on top of all it was estimated as a modern way to study. As for the ones who wished for more novels and presentations, they assumed it would contain needed things in order to speak well and enrich their knowledge. Stage fans thought it would be fun and interesting to perform plays as it would grant them the chance to successfully interpret literary works.

The answerers were granted freedom of imagination in question number twenty to cite things they would do differently if given the chance. Three answers came in as: nothing different to do. Another seven spaces were left blank. The twelve remaining ones felt at liberty to write. The program, one student thought, would be changed and shortened. Another wanted to introduce visual material, while two others expressed the wish to add different types of writers and playwrights, read more books, novels and write about topics they read. One suggestion was to find a way to use personal ideas. The five answers that remained centred on the teacher. A blatant one suggested changing the teacher, another proposition was to have a competent teacher with high capacities, the third was a wish to make the teacher's voice better heard, and the last one wanted to explain the lesson in a very stimulating way. The fourth respondent wanted the teacher to be kinder with students.

When it was time to justify, those who had nothing to change along with the ones who left blanks kept faithful and left the spaces empty, the nine other students backed their answers with justifications. The student who thought that the program needed some shortening claimed that it was so difficult and heavy to perceive. The one who rooted for visual ICTS said it was because handouts can give little information. More books and different writers were thought to guarantee some diversity rather than sticking to one person and to ensure more knowledge about literature. Using personal ideas in class was thought, by the answerer, to offer the freedom to express opinions which was considered as the key to be intelligent. The student who wanted to change the teacher explained that it would be essential to feel the real taste of literature, while the other one that wanted a competent teacher did not much alter the wording and only wrote: a good teacher with capacities. The teacher's voice, one respondent said, could not be heard in an amphitheatre full of students. Another answer expressed the desire to explain in a better way that would stimulate students because it targets their ideas and emotions. The last answerer claimed that their teacher is always screaming which is a turnoff for his fellow learners who, as consequence, do not attend.

Question twenty-two was somehow missed by most students who were asked to suggest literary texts they would want to have in their Brit-lit classes. Most answers came in general when supposed to be specific –particular titles. The aim was to have a list of some reads that were favoured so as to have an idea on what learners are into, and why not use that to one's advantage. Old English texts, modern literature, novels, novels with philosophy, stories, historical texts, psychology, poems, essays, drama, tragedy, plays and theatre class all made the list, with no specification or narrower descriptions. The only name that was mentioned was, oddly enough, Jane Austen, without any particular

titles. A student wrote “don’t know”, while another stated “I am not good enough to suggest something in Brit-Lit” and a third completely missed the point of the question. There was, again, a remaining four blanks. Participants were, yet again, invited to supply whys though the whys in such a case remain as off as the answers. To develop competence of different cultures, to enrich imagination, to get more knowledge in Brit-Lit, were some of the reasons given by students. Old English was found to be essential to read first, modern literature seen as enough and rich, novels and poems to be interesting things that reflect the writers’ personalities. Plays were thought to be the best way to make the reader know some new ideas about literature using them, so as not to get tired quickly. Austen was believed to be what it takes not to make the course boring. The number of blanks doubled in this question with nine empty spaces.

What would students want to do in a Brit-Lit class? Question twenty-four came in to find out. Some answerers suggested fun activities to make them enjoy literature such as watching tapes, guessing, gap-filling, presenting famous authors and poets...etc. Others wanted to have novels reading to be followed with discussions. Few others wanted to be given a space for personal creativity to write their own poems or novels if possible (short stories). Stage activities took the big share with the majority of students into the idea of reading literary texts, Shakespearean ones in particular, and turning them into plays. The one suggestion that stood out from the pack was that of a respondent who aimed for a bit more: “to visit England and have an idea about what we are studying”, they wrote. A disappointing number of seven blanks were left that deprived the researcher from potential interesting ideas for class activities to be implemented in future classes.

Last question was an open one that gave learners freedom to say anything they have left, that they could not match to the questions, about literature classes, or to make further suggestions. The first answers were personal reviews from students. Two of them said they were not interested in Brit-Lit classes because they are dull and boring, and there is much information to memorise; however, one maintained that Brit-Lit is still important to know about Britain, history and language. The claim was ascertained in other answers as literature was said to be a major module that can help students enrich their vocabulary, and that would be very enjoyable if only there was competent teacher. Therefore, it was seen, that the teacher has to provide students with all the material that is needed and should do her/his best not to bore the learners with the difficult words and expressions. The teacher, answers proposed, should also suggest books and novels for students to read at home and to be asked about when in class. In addition, it was thought that, in order to make sessions more important, educators should prepare some fun time and give the learners limited freedom to improve the relationship between the two. Only one reference was made concerning the time-table which, according to the answerer, needed organisation. The remaining answers were dedicated to want-to-do activities in class including: watching movies, using hand-outs and overhead projector, writing poems in old style and learning how to write poems and prose, performing plays, designing costumes, and analysing the works of William Shakespeare (lot of Shakespeare: as *Hamlet*, *Othello* and *Much Ado about Nothing*). A respondent went far and betted on giving the students the opportunity to talk, giving them something to read, and ‘you’ will see the result. One student had nothing free to say, and a remaining five rather left the space empty.

Questionnaire one copies that were given to group four were collected on spot as students were given time to fill in the answers and give them back. Some students could not finish all twenty-five on time as they found some difficulties to provide some answers, mainly because they were no regular attendants of Brit-Lit classes, as they justified. Therefore, the researcher decided to avoid the same mistake with group two and asked them to return the questionnaire after spring holidays. However, the researcher found herself asking the question “where is my questionnaire?” when the fifteen days were over. It turned out that learners tend to lose everything they keep for over one night. It took some time before the teacher could collect the ten copies back. Apparently, that was no solution for the problem. Thus, a sound recommendation would be to devote enough time in class for the questionnaire to be filled, and to give it at the beginning of the session so that students would not be in a rush to get it over with and leave, which is the case at the end of a session. Take the time to distribute the copies, read aloud and have students follow so that they would point out any difficulties collectively, which would later spare having to answer the same question more than once. Explain when needed and remind students to keep their answers simple, concise and to the point. This way may assure a better way for the questionnaire to be passed.

#### ***4. Pre-questionnaire Analysis: Interpreting the findings***

The last stop in this chapter is that of data analysis along with plausible interpretations and justifications. It should be noted that this station is the researcher's own personal conception for the most part; further guide and references would be sought when necessary.

The twenty-five questions that compose the pre-questionnaire have served the purpose of assessing the literary status from the students' point of view and analysing their learning profiles. It should be brought to mind that students answered the pre-questionnaire before they came back from their spring holidays. On the first session of

their comeback, the researcher had both groups take Howard Gardner's MI test, as complementary to the pre-questionnaire in determining their needs, preferences, strengths and weaknesses. What the researcher would end up with are descriptive portraits of what the learners' profiles are. The online test developed by Chislett and Chapman (2005-06) based on Gardner's MI theory, includes a note at the end that reads:

*“You are happiest and most successful when you learn, develop, and work in ways that make best use of your natural intelligences”*

(Chislett and Chapman, 2005-06: 02)

This very note applies to teachers as well. A teacher is also happiest and most successful when they teach, educate, and engage in ways that make best use of their students' natural intelligences.

First fact to check was whether the students read, and eighteen out of twenty said yes while the two remaining ones confessed they did not. The quality of reads was not quite extensive not very descriptive which could indicate that some of the answers might be shallow or ill-representative of the actual answers. An indicator of that is the very fact that many claimed to read books and novels and when they were asked, in later questions, to provide titles, short stories and tales were most prevalent.

When eight ticks are on the 'No' box when asked if they read in their mother tongue, Arabic, a pause has to be made. It is no wonder that our literary classes are filled with reading-lackadaisicals who would boo the activity when announced and yawn all the time during. If learners are not brought up on a culture that encourages reading in their own language, they can be acquitted from the blame as adults studying a foreign language. This is no excuse as there are always exceptions to the rule with few avid

readers to be spotted. The twelve positive answers when looked further into would be shrink to only few. The reason is that most of the titles given for Arabic reads are those of short tales our students usually encounter during their primary and middle school years, such as: *Kalila and Dimna*, *Aladdin*, *Arabian Nights*. Do students mean to say that they have not read in Arabic since they were young pupils? Gibran Khalil Gibran is the sole non Algerian figure, with no particular works named, to make the list, but then again, most probably for his poems from high school years. Ahlem Mosteghanemi and Ibn Hadouga remain the only two actual authors who do not appear in national syllabuses that can be seen as real achievements and actual literary reads in Arabic. In other words, students' treasury of mother tongue literary acquisition is gravely inadequate, nearly destitute. What the researcher considers as more pitiful is that learners themselves are unaware of their poorness, to the point of listing *Beauty and the Beast* when asked to name titles of Arabic novels they have read. Alas! Interest in Arabic might be fading.

As majors of English, and potential researchers in the language, when thirteen out of twenty students tick the yes, with a percentage of 65%, what are the remaining seven ones waiting for to start reading in the language of their specialty? It should be reminded that the questionnaire was handed at the end of March; respondents were already deep in study. There is only one thing to deduce out of this, when learners are oriented towards the department of English, they apparently do not 'bother' to prepare themselves for what is to come. I often stop in shock in the middle of my classes when students shamelessly admit that they have never read a full text in English: how come? There is a 25%<sup>15</sup> percent rate of English majors who do not read in English when they have a module that

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<sup>15</sup> Percentages are made with respect to the two groups only; findings can be made general however.



is actually called *Reading Comprehension* and another for *Literature*, in late March; it raises question marks!

Confessions came in packages when it came to reading in different tongues. Algeria's second language, French, got four 'Yes' and sixteen 'No', apparently no longer second! Students seemed to have *divorced* the language the minute they graduated high school, which is not very good news. One of the reasons for such breach is the fact that French is not included in the syllabus. Learners cannot be expected to reach outside the syllabus when they do not even reach within what is offered to them (literature as an example). The quality of French reads however meager remains somewhat *sophisticated* in comparison to those in Arabic: *Les Misérables*, *Madame Bovary*, *L'étranger*. Not reading in French explains students' linguistic handicap when it comes to using the language. At the beginning of the year, Sibero Mohammat, a Chadian student joined group four. Mohammat was proficient in French but at beginner level when it came to English; it was his first time studying the language. The teacher, in an attempt to have him involved, asked her class who spoke French so that they would translate the courses to him; only two students raised their hands. Learners are losing their interest in French even quicker than Arabic. Why not dedicate modules that are reading-targeted in both languages, may be that will give learners' abilities a boost.

Moving past reading-related questions, it was time to cut into chase and investigate literary-related issues. When asked to define literature twenty respondents were very literal, they spoke of society, history, civilization, they mentioned prose, poetry and drama...etc. No one sought the answer the answer deep within themselves; they focused on the '*literature*' and forgot about the '*you*' in the question. A way to put it would be

that learners have not yet come to the point of experiencing literature beyond its academic context; for them it is a mandatory module, a not so much interesting one according to reviews, and they have to get past it to pass. Another reason would be that students lack the culture and experience of enjoyment, imagination, abandonment, of absorption within a literary text. Most learners admitted, in later questions, that they cannot come to fully delight in a text because of the vocabulary obstacles they hit almost in every line. The teacher informed her classes that they miss on the real meaning of a literary experience by giving too much importance to vocabulary and stopping at every word and offered them solutions to disclose in due time. The researcher divulged how a proper definition would be, the kind that Digeon (1947) gives:

*“Literature is a feast, an enchantment for the mind of those who love to open books... We stop at the liking of desires, souvenirs, discoveries, reunions... We re-read the same poems, the same novels to live them anew...”* (1947: IV)

As literary instructors we need to teach our students that a literary text is not mere lines that adjoin successively on white pages, rather strings of a violin that vibrate each time they hit the bows. Only when they come to appreciate the beauty within texts that students might learn to respond more positively towards them and be more productive in class. Unfortunately, a literature module does not proceed like that. Students are at once faced with terms and concepts, overwhelmed with names of people, places, and texts. Very little time and effort are invested to explain the *whats* and *whys*? What is literature? Why is there a literature module? What to study in a literature class? Why is it important? Why should learners be interested? Why should they know this and that? Why should they read such and such? Humans are curious in nature, and learners carry a load of curiosity along with them to university. The least to expect is to have some facts cleared

for them; it is our duty as teachers to demystify the mysterious and the unknown to our students upon their arrival in our classes. Earlier in this chapter, the researcher made the claim that teaching is a journey we, as teachers, take with learners; a journey that has a destination, a means of getting there, a schedule with the things to do along the way and once there. Instructors need to put some thought into all of these steps before setting off on the journey, otherwise, they risk getting off track or never making it to the final destination.

Reflection was the next privilege to give learners' hand. The researcher inserted reflective questions to use as a leverage card, hoping for key answers, revealing confessions and empowering suggestions. The start was with British Literature classes. Reviews were generally not quite positive with the majority of answers describing the classes as boring, not interesting, and not motivating. The common confession was that students skipped this particular class for the previous reasons and for other that were-teacher related. The teacher, according to student, evinced a lack of mastery and practice over the module, her attitude was serious and uninviting. However, the respondents seemed to have some understanding of the module's importance and the actual value of content, so described as useful, impressive and important in developing learner's horizons and minds. Apparently, students have a certain awareness of literature's significance in their learning process, and what impact it might have on them. That is a milestone there. The literature teacher needs to pick up from there and work on the two remaining components: the input and the teachers themselves. One way to start is by asking questions: why do students find the classes boring? Why do they think that the teacher is ineffective? Probable reasons might include: excessive use of handouts, dictation, loads of data that demand learning by heart, old-fashioned ways of lecturing,

no integration of ICTs, lack of versatility in activities, absence of creativity from the teacher, literature-incompetence, lack of training...etc. One of the facts to be hereafter developed which is no secret in first place is that Algerian universities do not have preparatory trainings or internships for would-be teachers; a suggestion worth a stop in recommendation.

In question eight, the twenty respondents unanimously named vocabulary as their major setback in a Brit-Lit class. Strangely enough, the answerers do not know that half of responsibility for such a difficulty, if not most of it, falls on their own shoulders. Students do not read, they do not develop their skills, they do not expand their linguistic repertoires; how are they supposed to recognize words? When confronted with such a fact, the researcher noticed the exclamation marks on learners' faces; that important reading is! It is up to every individual in the classroom to take up the task of invigorating their own *lexical account*, through readings, practice of the language, use of dictionary and research, and exploration of a language facts and mysteries. Then, it is the teacher's task to nurture such progress and reinforce it. Instructors should select literary texts with a vocabulary that corresponds to students' level of proficiency; easy to go with low, medium to go with intermediate, and complex to go with advanced.

The list of difficulties extended to: so many details, hand-outs and uselessness of date. Documents can be used as recaps of what has been done in class, to include only main details in bullet points for students to develop later on their own. If wanting to know more, learners can use the information on hand-outs to guide them in further readings. Hearing handicap also made the list. Students claimed they could not hear the teacher's voice in a large amphitheatre that hosts more than one hundred students. One cannot, and should not, expect students to be merry in a room of more than a hundred learners, when

the room is ill-equipped and overly crowded. Interest is soon to jump out of the window or walk out the door with some unmotivated members. Lack of creativity of the part of the teacher is another hardship that the respondents marked along with the open exam. The former is a major challenge for all teachers not just literature ones. To come up with a variety of exercises that please all tastes and answer all needs is laborious. The latter is to consider as a big mistake. One cannot offer freshmen who do not even know how to handle information, not to mention free access to it, without being shown how to do it. After all, very few teachers take the time to give actual lessons on how to write a literary criticism or analysis, or how to handle a literature subject to begin with. More space is to be granted all these difficulties and issues in recommendations and suggestions.

When asked to reflect about the material taught in Brit-Lit classes, the twenty respondents admitted that there was almost none because dictation of what was written on handouts was all they got. Their expectations for what a literature class ought to be were met with a different reality. They looked forward for hours that bring the magic within poems and novels alive, and ended up with piles of handouts to memorise. It is often the case that handouts are pure internet property. It does feel like deception on part of the teacher to poor learners. Why expect and demand students to work hard, do research and bring something new when the teachers themselves copy-paste readymade lessons off websites? That is unfair for a deal.

The absence of ICTs had its toll on learners, they admitted. One cannot teach 2013 students in a 2012 way, a lot happens overnight, not to mention over a year. New methods, techniques, strategies, technologies and devices are continuously developed as well as updated, why not walk with the current instead of being left behind? Those ‘internships’ that college teachers are granted to go abroad seem to be of little use to

bringing them up to date with world changes. Why not dedicate that money to actually train them to handle the latest technology in relation to education? Another suggestion to be given some thought and consideration.

Another issue that was highlighted under ‘material’ related ones was the fact that learners never got the chance to actually read the literary texts in class; they were merely reported to them in the handouts. It should be herein noted that first year students are first provided with an initiation to literature where the teachers introduce fundamental literary concepts along with an overview of its development over time during first term, while the second term has them move beyond theory to dealing with literary texts. According to students, nothing does change that much, everything remains at the level of documents that are at times read aloud, and at others dictated on them. Students found themselves before a semi-literature, if not very little literature at all. The true meaning of literary experience is lost to them if all they end up with is inadequate crumbs that would not quench their curiosity nor answer their needs.

The twenty answerers evinced an extent of awareness towards what they are taught in Brit-Lit classes when asked what they enjoyed most and least. Both lists included same items with greater or lesser degrees of preference; but it was all there: Old English, Middle English, Shakespeare, poems, plays, novels, reading activities, writing personal stories...etc. The reasons provided to justify each answer back such claim and shows that learners are mindful of the appeal or complication underlying each activity. The respondents acknowledged the richness of certain aspects of their Brit-Lit classes in terms of vocabulary, instructional value and aesthetic beauty and pointed out the ones that they judged as less instructive, too complicated, and uninspiring. Thus, and although they might seem absent as participants in classrooms, students are actively present with

their reflections and evaluations. When asked what makes a Brit-Lit class worth attending, most of the answerers confirmed they were more appreciative of details that mattered: the content, the language, the chance to know and discover cultures as well as history, the poems, the books, the stories...etc. Only one student tied attendance with exams and marks. Most of students find education itself more rewarding than grades.

In questions eighteen and twenty, the respondents placed more consequence on the quality of their learning. Most answers on what to add and what to do differently in a Brit-Lit class were content-centred: more novels, read and present, practical courses, essays to write and poems to read, integrate personal ideas...etc. Other suggestions to give classes a boost were those related, again, to technology and visual material that would have a more positive effect on learners' receptivity and a favourable impression on teachers' creativity. Quality claims extended to the teacher, a couple of answers were straightforward: change the teacher, have a competent teacher, explain the lesson in a very stimulating way, point which highlights the importance that teachers play in learners' degree of interest in the module. Do we have incompetent teachers? According to students, yes we do. Why have them teach then? Why do they themselves teach? When someone is unable to teach something, why can they simply not teach it? Why do people take things they cannot handle, things that are out of their league? If all concerned parties were earnest in admitting strengths and weaknesses, our educational system might actually be a different one, a good one. However, and since the rule '*The right Man in the right place*' has been abandoned, the educational institution ended up with a lot of wrong things going, and settled, thus, for a state of an epidemic mediocrity.

In question twenty-four, the common suggestion for would-like-to-be-had activities is one that has nothing to do with reading or dictating. The general belief about what a

literature class ought to be is a large room full of devoted learners listening attentively to their teachers as they lecture them abundantly on the manifold advantages and appeals there are to literature. That was ancient history. A teacher has to be infinitely resourceful in order to keep the eyes and ears pointed her way. Students wish to break from the recurring rhythm through different activities mainly acting, watching text-related videos or movies, listening to tapes, creating personal spinoffs, and visiting culture-relevant places. One of the recurrent demands, which might be less considerable for educators, is to discuss. Students like to discuss topics, ideas, especially the kind that would engender debate. One of the activities the researcher integrates in her Oral classes is topic-discussion, some suggested by her, and others by learners to cover a variety of issues. For the teacher it was just another way to get her students to speak and voice their opinions, but when a reflective session was held at the beginning of second term, most of them admitted that the activity was one of their favourite. In questionnaire one, the twenty respondents asserted such preference by asking to discuss literature-related matters. The researcher has used this point to advantage while preparing the novels sessions as she made sure to highlight certain points that could be thought-provoking and stimulating for discussion. Entail, inheritance, patriarchy, matrimony were some of the points to invest in classroom discussion. Suffice it to say, they were a profitable investment as learners came forward with their personal reflections which they had to justify and defend in case of disagreement with classmates. And since the topics were given as homework, as the teacher judged her classes to be unacquainted with them, students showed up ready to talk, explain and argue.



## ***5. Class sessions: Invading the classroom***

Once the pre-questionnaire was in, the researcher could put together a teaching plan to be carried out in different sessions with the two groups. It should be noted that students had no idea that they were undergoing a study, or an experience, or that they were being observed. The researcher wanted to keep the sessions as much spontaneous and natural as possible; as far as her learners were concerned, it was a new way to teach. They were told that their teacher is to show them a new face to literature, and they welcomed the idea. Since the teacher had only two groups for Oral Expression module, each group got a novel with a five-session-plan to have separately and a sixth to have with the twenty students from both classes who took the pre-questionnaire. It is worth noting that the time of Oral class, which is one hour and a half, was not entirely dedicated to the novels'

sessions. The teacher preserved the students' space to present their projects and perform other activities.

It goes without saying that one of the walls we hit while making our ways through literary world, is cultural clash, taboos, and matters of appropriateness. This, in fact, has probably denied most of a rich literary experience. However, these are issues not to overlook. Jane Austen happens to be one of those so described "*priggish*" (Showalter, 1977: 102) writers who never divulge such matters that exceed the experience of a well-bred young lady. Both **PP** and **SS** answer to this quality of social propriety. The reader is not in danger of stumbling over lines that may damage their literary chastity; the authoress refrains from such scenes. In an Algerian class full of chaste learners, Austen makes a good choice, if not the best, as her novels guarantee that students would not find themselves in situations that scratch their inexperienced minds.

On the other hand, the two novels offer a certain extent of context-appropriateness. When the plots are examined, some traces of familiarity to local culture can be detected. The events and the multiple conditions the characters go through and are faced with resemble, to a certain extent those that everyone might have under different circumstances. This creates a point of relatedness/connection that learners lean on during their readings to best understand the novels. Learners, thus, no longer feel much estranged from the texts they are reading, knowing there are common points that bring them closer to the story and grants it an inviting appeal.

It should be here reminded that Austenian novels **PP** and **SS** are used as literary genres serving as means to achieve a pedagogic end: to teach language. The classes, in which this humble experience was conducted, are two of Oral Communication, and so the

aim has been to get learners to voice their opinions, to acquire new vocabulary and to use it in future discussions, and foremost, to talk

### ***5.1. Group two and four: Meeting the characters***

Composed of twenty students, group two in an Oral Expression class taught by the researcher herself was to meet the Bennet family and try to keep up with the endless drama that comes along. The novel was served in bits over six different sessions that consisted of a variety of activities.

Group four, similar to two, consists of twenty students, was to accompany the Dashwoods on their journey and experience all the ups and downs this family of four women would undergo. Again, the novel trials were divided into six sessions where different techniques were tried for effectiveness.

#### ***5.1.1. Session One: an introduction***

The very first step had to be with the title itself. On the two extremes of the board, ‘*Pride*’ and ‘*Prejudice*’ were written. Students were asked to brainstorm whatever they thought would fit under each category. Answers varied as *Pride* included: arrogance, selfish, superior, proud, strong-headed, full of oneself, not humble, high, self-importance, confident, self-esteem, ; while *Prejudice* was described as: injustice, unfair, intolerance, blindness, judgmental, biased, narrow-minded, ignorant of others, critical, prejudgment, discriminated against. The teacher noticed that students were motivated to give as much

possible answers, wrong ones were corrected or re-oriented, and correct ones were jotted down and explained if need be.

The following question that was directed to the class inquired after *Pride and Prejudice*, the novel, and what they knew about it, and its authoress. It turns out that not much was known about either which suggests that learners did not come across the novel before, except in previous references and Austenian quotations in Oral Expression class. A short biography of Jane Austen was offered along with her seven novels along with their dates of publication with an emphasis on *Pride and Prejudice*. A chart of PP main characters succeeded to acquaint the learners with the names they are to encounter in the sessions to follow.

Chapter one was the portal to the trials and events of PP. Using a PDF version of the novel, the chapter was projected with the aid of a laptop and an over-head projector. This way saved the teacher all those complaints about not having access to the novel, and it enabled all students to read off the screen. Readings were done out loud, with different roles (Narrator, Mrs Bennet and Mr Bennet) recited by different members. This activity seemed to stimulate some passive learners who repeatedly raised their hands to have a chance to read a passage.

Then, short summaries put together by the researcher were provided successively to cover the main events as well as characters. After each bit, a question or questions were asked to stimulate learners' imagination and get them to think what would happen next. This step helped involve learners within the plot and get them to interact with the characters. From time to time, quotations that were cited in chapter one are used to illustrate points or highlight details. The summaries respected the chronology of events in

the novel and were divided into three parts that condensed chapters from one to seven. The first session covered the introduction of the Bennets, the first ball where the Bennets meet Mr Bingley and Darcy, and the second ball where Darcy is cast under the spell of Elizabeth' fine eyes.

Along the way, there were some vocabulary items that needed to be explained. At times, a reference to history was made so as to best acquaint the learners with the context. Patriarchy was an example that the teacher clarified within its original settings. Then, students were asked to name other unfamiliar words they met with during their readings to be defined, or to guess their meanings within context. A debate would take place at times when class feels like there is more to the word being explained.

In group four, the teacher wrote down the two words that comprise the title of the novel to be studied, *Sense* and *Sensibility*, on the white board. Students were asked how to relate each one of the two to characters, events, feelings, actions...etc. Sense, thus, was intertwined with: reason, logic, mind, mature, wise, serious, poise, self-control, aware, careful, and sensible. Sensibility, on the other hand, was associated with: heart, feelings, romantic, sensitive, dreamy, love, rash, emotional, careless, passion, unrealistic, vie en rose. With all these attributions, and much more, at hand, it was time to ask what the class knew about *Sense & Sensibility*, the novel and its authoress. Some students recognized the movie adaptation of the novel and gave sketchy descriptions of what they remembered. Others admitted to never hearing of the authoress beyond Oral Expression class. Accordingly, a quick glimpse of Miss Austen's life and writings was given with more emphasis on **SS**, the target reading, along with the chart of characters to undo all future confusions.

As the novel centered on the sense-sensibility duality, first excerpts to be projected with the use of the over-head projector, were ones that highlighted the contrast between the two sisters, Elinor and Marianne. Students could already see where the story would go with two opposed descriptions, but speculations were too soon to be made. Next, selected dialogues were displayed on the screen of Mrs Dashwood and her two elder daughters conversing; again, with the aim to emphasize the dichotomous course of the novel, sense vs. sensibility. Other basic descriptions of major characters, Colonel Brandon and John Willoughby, were provided.

Once the necessary introductions to the main characters were made, short summaries followed to cover events from chapter one to chapter nine. Students first met the Miss Dashwoods and their mother, John Dashwood and his wife Fanny, and Edward Ferrars. It was felt that Fanny's nefariousness would be an obstacle in the way of her brother Edward and Elinor and apprehensions were at once expressed. It was, however, not love season yet, and Mrs Dashwood had to move away along with her three daughters to be spared Fanny's poison-dripped insinuations.

The new dwelling of the Dashwoods seemed to bring new acquaintance which neither appealed to Marianne nor to students. Colonel Brandon was thought too old to be considered a potential match for the seventeen year-old sensitive beauty. And just as Marianne, class was waiting for another more fitting character to make an appearance. And so it happened that Willoughby's entry was announced in a most hero-like way when he rescued Marianne. Swoon is Marianne, and biased are the students that when asked who is likely to be her prince charming, Willoughby was singled out with all

favourable votes; why? He was everything “*a young man ought to be*” (Austen: 2007: 25); was he indeed? The answer was to be revealed in the following session.

Students were introduced to the word *patriarchy* which was explained and demystified along with other difficult vocabulary items. A short reference to history was made by the teacher whenever felt essential to understanding the novel trials. And whenever a pause was needed to fully digest an event or to further inquire about a character, the teacher would dedicate sufficient time.

The first session was concluded in a similar fashion in both groups with questions to ponder over and homework to do: to define *entail* and to sum up the characters of Mr and Mrs Bennet from **PP** and Elinor and John Willoughby from **SS**.

### 5.1.2. *Session two: Secrets revealed*

The second encounter with the **PP** and **SS** in class *kicked off* with quick recaps where students summed up the main events they have seen in session one. The cliff-hanger<sup>16</sup> questions that got them thinking what would happen next and how are finally answered; at times learners admitted they did not see that coming.

Group two had the chance to meet a new character and a new vocabulary item, George Wickham, the heart-throb. And just as Elizabeth, students were also taken with Wickham’s almost perfect character, and they claimed him as a favourite whom they predicted to win Lizzie’s heart and affection. They had yet to learn to expect the

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<sup>16</sup> Cliff-hanger usually refers to a dramatic ending to an episode in a TV series, leaving an audience in suspense. The researcher uses the technique to leave students on tenterhook.

unexpected. And contrarily to what they anticipated in session one, wedding bells were not ringing any soon in Longbourn, as Mr Bingley leaves the neighbourhood without notice. This sudden change leaves Mrs Bennet to fret and students with endless questions as to what reasons would drive the bachelor away and what would become of Jane Bennet.

Mr Collins made his entrance in **PP** introducing the term ‘entail’ along. Students, who did their homework and looked the word up, just could not fathom why an ‘unfair’ law as entail would deprive women of the right to inherit when they would end up destitute and impoverished. The teacher invited the discussion by provoking personal reflections and later enlightened learners as to why the law was implemented: to preserve lineage (refer to chapter one). Mr Collins’ proposal to Elizabeth triggered another debate, to marry or not to marry, to marry for love or money. Opinions differed from those romantic ones who sided with Elizabeth’s judgment that “*Anything is preferred or endured rather than marrying without affection*” (Le Faye and Austen-Leigh, 2004: 219), others argued that reason dictates that love would not be served on dinner tables. Mr Collins’ second proposal to Elizabeth’s best friend Charlotte startled the class, but their astonishment washed away once Lizzie herself got over it and paid the Collinses a visit. Darcy reappears at this point only to make Eliza hate him a bit more when she finds out he was the reason why Bingley left and her sister Jane was suffering.

In group four, the vocabulary stop started at the word *entail*. The term took the novel trials back to the character of John Dashwood who inherited all possessions at the expense of his step-mother and sisters. Just like group two, the law of *entail* sparked a discussion in group four. Students found it unforgiving to take away money from helpless



females to give to an already well-endowed male. Debate was welcomed by the teacher who made sure by the end that the reasons of such a law were known to the class. The motive, as preserving as it seemed, was still no justification for the *unfairness*, according to class.

Short summaries were, then, resumed. Willoughby was putting quite a love parade that was openly welcomed by Marianne and often censured by Elinor. The long walks, morning picnics, successive contredanses, and endless stares the two love-birds had, indicated that they were engaged and that Colonel Brandon lost his battle over Marianne's heart before it even begun. Then students are told of Willoughby's sudden departure with no intention of coming back; questions are asked. Some of them thought that Marianne might have put too much pressure on him; others suggested that Colonel Brandon might have driven him away, and another few guessed that her lack of fortune might be a reason.

Answers had to wait when Edward Ferrars showed up at the Dashwoods' doorstep. Another mystery was triggered as Edward remained silent during his stay, learners, like Elinor, were expecting a marriage proposal. Instead, Mr Ferrars left adding more question marks. The secret the silent bachelor was hiding was soon unwrapped; he was engaged to a Miss Lucy Steele. At this point, students anticipated some reactions on the part of Elinor, just like Marianne did. However, Elinor was not to be seen agitated or affected. Comparisons between the two sisters piled up, and students were asked to sum them up in a home assignment for the session to come.

Once again, students in groups two and four found themselves before yet another set of questions to ponder over for the sessions to come: What will happen next? What

are the effects the revealed secrets will have on the characters? Speculations were at extremes.

### 5.1.3. *Session three: The season of broken hearts*

As a warm-up activity for both groups two and four in session three, a word game<sup>17</sup> was introduced. Students were asked to give fifteen different letters that were written separately on board. Then, the alphabets were used to form as many correct words as possible. The teacher spiced the game with a *catch*: words that are inspired from the novel are rewarded. Needless to say that the students were on fire competing to give as much **PP** and **SS** related words and earn bigger rewards than the others. Once the mood was fired up, it was time for a review of session two. Students were, next, all expectations to verify the validity of their speculations from last sessions.

What would happen next was the question that led the talk to Mr Darcy's first proposal to Elizabeth. Since the marriage offer was so intense, the teacher felt that words might fail to transmit the intensity of the faceoff between the two characters, and instead opted for a video from the BBC 2005 adaptation<sup>18</sup> of the novel. Just as expected, learners were better exposed to the confrontation, the tension, and the weight of the words being said for they were better interpreted by facial and body expressions.

Lizzie rejected Darcy despite his opulent wealth, while her friend Charlotte accepted Mr Collins' proposal at once and "*sacrificed every better feeling to worldly advantage*" (Austen, 2007: 268). The discrepancy of the two ladies' decisions fuelled a

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<sup>17</sup> The game is inspired by 'Scrabbles' adapted by the researcher to fit her purposes.

<sup>18</sup> Find video attached in appendix 05

hot debate among group two students; what is it that matters most? Feelings or pounds? The discussion went on for a span of ten minutes as everyone shared their personal opinions, at times agreeing with someone, at others defending one's own views, and drawing at personal experience in some instances.

When the teacher could see that the question was fully satisfied, **PP** trials were resumed. Darcy's letter was as surprising to Elizabeth as it was to the class; a lot of question marks were raised and speculations were at height. With Wickham exposed for the true con he was and Darcy vindicated from Lizzie's charges, students had to review their previous judgments and predictions. The ladies in group two were as disappointed as those in the novel; their sighs could be heard as the heartthrob turned out to be a mere Casanova.

Breaths are held when Elizabeth runs into Darcy at his estate, Pemberley, on her visit with her aunt and uncle. Students who once seconded Mrs Bennet's opinion about Darcy being "*eat up with pride*" (Austen, 2007: 209), begun to see his alteration toward a tamed humble man before the woman who rejected his hand. Still, guesses as to what might happen next had to wait when Jane's letter reaches Elizabeth carrying dreadful news about Lydia: What do you think happened to Lydia? was the cliff-hanger question that concluded session three. "*She will be kidnapped and murdered by a serial killer*", someone said. The teacher told them they would have to wait for next session to know the answer.

In group four, a short review of prior sessions took place before carrying on where we left off. Students, then, travelled along with Elinor and Marianne to London in the hope of finding some answers to all the mysteries of last session. At an evening ball,

Marianne's gaze landed on the sight of the one man she came to London for, John Willoughby, but he looks away. Astonished at his coldness, Marianne follows him only to be slapped in the face by the look of him and his fiancée, a rich woman. That was not the only secret Mr Allenham was hiding as it turned out that he had seduced a young girl of fifteen years old and abandoned her with child. Marianne's heart broke into a thousand pieces when hearing the news. Students, too, were at shock, they did not know what to make of Willoughby's character who, now stripped from his chivalrous arm, was at the object of the most heinous labels: cheater, liar, womanizer, Casanova, manipulator. "*The ladies are cutting him no slack*<sup>19</sup>", observed a male in the classroom.

The exposure of Willoughby led to a discussion: to marry or not to marry, to choose love or money! The likes of Marianne said that marriage should be foremost built on love, one cannot eat love the opponents claimed, and though choosing money might be materialistic, it is far safer, a third party saw that a sound relationship should be built on a little bit of both to keep it going. The teacher welcomed the different opinions and informed the class that each was entitled to what they see and say.

Elinor was to receive her share of heart-breaking too. When Edward's secret engagement to Lucy was known to his snobbish mother and sister, he was forced out of the house and disinherited. Being a man of honour, Edward did not abandon Lucy and resolved on marrying her. Students had finally seen Elinor go up to her room and cry; her Edward was forever lost to another woman. Her feelings, they judged, were comprehensible and justified.

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<sup>19</sup> Cut somebody some slack, an idiomatic expression to mean give someone a chance, take it easy on them.

With Willoughby exposed and Edward's secret revealed, learners were wondering if the Miss Dashwoods still had hope for a happy ending! Things did not seem so promising when Marianne fell sick and her doctor gave desperate hopes for her recovery. Colonel Brandon, who rescued Marianne, is sought to fetch Mrs Dashwood in case things went from bad to worse. Meanwhile, Elinor stuck by her sister's side and prayed that she would survive. Would the worse happen indeed? Their conjectures went far: "Marianne would die, and it would be her lesson for falling in love", someone thought. Students were left to find out in the following session.

#### 5.1.4. *Session Four: Undoing the mystery*

Once again, quick recaps initiated the fourth **PP** and **SS** sessions and refreshed the events dealt with in earlier 'séances'. Then, it was time to answer the questions about what might have happened.

As far as Lydia Bennet was concerned, students were at liberty to entertain as much wild guesses as they pleased. Some expected, if not wished, her to be killed; others thought that she might be kidnapped by one of the soldiers; however, no one could see that Lydia may elope with none other than the once heart-throb, George Wickham. Class could easily relate to the gravity of the matter and were as uneasy about it as any of the characters concerned.

After the matter was wrapped up, class found out, along with Lizzie, that the credit of Lydia's marriage and Wickham's commission is owed to none but Darcy; what could that possibly mean? Answers had to wait when Mr Bingley was back: did he still have

feelings for Jane? Apparently he did, learners delight in seeing him finally make the long awaited move; to propose to Jane. With Lydia married to Wickham, Jane engaged to Bingley, what about Elizabeth? Students said she might still stand a chance with Mr Darcy now that both have undergone so much change. Another student, a male, reasoned that since it was Elizabeth who rejected Darcy the first time, she should propose to him to have her second chance. The ladies in class did not agree, it was improper; it would always be men's business to kneel on one knee. Darcy might not have knelt, but he still avowed that his "*affections and wishes are unchanged, but one...*" (Austen, 2007: 393). No but was to be uttered by Elizabeth; it was the time for *yes I do*.

Before concluding the events, students were once more exposed to Mrs Bennet's exultations, she was the fortunate woman with three sons-in-law. Her reaction upon hearing that Darcy was to marry her daughter was quoted in a few words that provoked students ridicule and sympathy at once.

*"Oh! my sweetest Lizzy! how rich and how great you will be! What pin-money, what jewels, what carriages you will have! Jane's is nothing to it—nothing at all. I am so pleased—so happy. Such a charming man!—so handsome! so tall!—)*

(Jane Austen, 2007: 400)

In group four, students had previously been made witnesses of the heart-aches that befell the two Miss Dashwoods, thus, suspense was at height. The teacher, then, offered a window of speculation and anticipation. Some students entertained the possibility of Marianne's death; she was too sensitive, the very kind of woman who would die of love, they thought. She might come to finally see more to Colonel Brandon than his old age, others hoped. Elinor's fate, on the other hand, was too subtle to decide or conjecture; she might meet another man.

Marianne survived her illness, to the relief of readers, and Willoughby made one last appearance. The learners were curious as to why he would visit Elinor Dashwood after the horrendous things he had made. Seeing him apologize and enumerate his reasons and regrets was not to reconcile the class' opinion of him as a scoundrel, but it gained him some sympathy when it was known how much he was suffering with his new rich wife.

Marianne and Elinor, along with their mother and Colonel Brandon, returned home. There, Marianne seemed to have altered, she had come of age and learnt to see things differently. Her feelings towards the Colonel were changed too. Her heart and affections were soon placed at the hand of the once thirty five year-old bachelor. Students were pleased that Marianne had at last evinced so much maturity, and thought that her marriage to Colonel Brandon was rewarding.

It was time to check on elder Miss Dashwood. Learners did not know what to expect, as far as the story had so far unfolded, Edward was Lucy's. The servant had confirmed such theory when he informed Elinor that he had run into Mrs Lucy Ferrars, who showed him her big wedding ring and sent her best regards to the Dashwoods. Elinor was heart-struck and vexed at the news, and so were the learners, but it was no time for tears. Moments later announced the coming of a guest; it was recognized as Edward Ferrars. Elinor had put her indifferent face on as he walked into the room and pressed herself to inquire after him and Mrs Ferrars. Edward dropped the final bomb as he informed the Dashwood that he was not married to Miss Lucy Steele, she was rather Mrs Robert Ferrars, the wife of his younger brother. It would not be quite presumptuous to say that students had the same reaction Elinor Dashwood herself had, that look of utter

disbelief, minus the tears probably. Of all the scenarios they had pictured, learners admitted that such a twist never crossed their minds.

The season of love had finally arrived to both houses. In **PP**, amiable Jane married to sensible Bingley, and no longer-prejudiced Elizabeth to now-humbled Darcy, the novel closed in an ever-after style. Similarly in **SS**, Elinor and Marianne were happily married after having learnt a lesson or two on how to use *Sense* and evince *Sensibility*. Students in both groups two and four were asked, one last time, if they had expected such ends for both novels. They confessed that they could not see the novel coming to such an end, though happy it ended that way. Some of them said that the finale answered all of their questions and wishes; others claimed that they hoped for a more deserving end for undeserving characters such as Wickham, and Willoughby. Learners said that they were kept on tenterhooks anticipating the authoress' next surprise. Jane Austen did a great job, majority of students avowed.

*“If it were up to you, would you change the end?”* The teacher asked. In group four, the one student who thought that Lizzie should propose, stuck to his idea and admitted that his version would see her do the kneeling before Darcy. The majority said they were quite content with the way the novels ended. The remaining few wished to do something with Wickham and Willoughby, a harsher ending would do. Learners' opinions however different they all approved that **PP** and **SS** had surprised them in every way possible, that it contradicted all of their guesses and expectations, and that it taught them to see beyond the surface deeper into a story.

#### 5.1.5. *Session five: Rocking the stage*



In session one, learners' in groups two and groups were consulted vis-à-vis presenting a play, novel-inspired, by the end of sessions. Some were excited about the idea, others were not. The teacher told them that it was not compulsory to take part, but that it would make a great experience to take the stage and perform. Fears and concerns were expressed with regard to facing an audience, how to stage a play, what to do and what to say. Again, the teacher interfered to assure her class that all they needed was some guidelines. Three options were given to students in groups two and four: to perform a novel faithful play, a twenty-first century version, or an Algerian adaptation of **PP** and **SS**.

The question that might arise is: Why do a play in session five? One of the reasons would be that most respondents of the pre-questionnaire expressed their wish of doing plays; they thought it would be a good way to break the routine, but said they never got the chance to do it in their literature class. So, by asking her learners to perform, the researcher is offering them the space to do something they have wanted to do for long. Another purpose is the researcher's firm belief that there is no better way to fully absorb a literary text –novel, short story, play- than to actually take it to the stage. It is practice, and practice does make perfect. The play would fill in the gaps of the missing pieces students have about the text at hand. They would have to consult the original text, make research, rehearse roles, exchange ideas, and personate characters. They would walk away from such an experiment with much more than they thought upon embarking on it.

Group two members took up the Algerian challenge and managed to put together a play that highly simulated the British settings of the novel. Ten students, out of twenty, took part to embody the characters of: Mr Bennet who was pictured as a father often

outspoken by his wife Mrs Bennet, the mother who would not miss a wedding in order to make a parade of her five daughters in the hope of marrying them; Lydia, who was still a carefree girl who was looking for a dashing city boy; Lizzie was still the prejudiced woman with access to a better education; Mary was keeping up with the crowd; Jane was the kind of woman who remains unaffected with the world's changes; Mr Collins made an appearance on his wedding to Charlotte and both seem to rejoice in making everyone else envious of them; Mr Bingley and Mr Darcy were landowners with a lot of potato farms and Hilux cars; Mr Wickham was the man who won the sympathy and hearts of everybody.

The play opened up in a similar way to the novel with Mr Bennet and Mrs Bennet conversing, in an Algerian English, about ways to marry their four daughters. A wedding invitation was soon dispatched with the names Collins and Charlotte. Mrs Bennet delirious reaction soon followed on how the neighbour's daughter had *hooked* a husband while her four<sup>20</sup> daughters remain quite single. The four Miss Bennets along with their mom, then, attended the wedding ceremony. Mr Collins who was happily seated by his bride kept whispering in her ears on how envious their guests were, Charlotte would nod in agreement, and both of them would give smiles that dripped with gloat. Since the wedding, as is the case with Algerian weddings these days, was attended by women as well as men, the eligible bachelors of the neighbourhood soon joined the party. Needless to say that Mrs Bennet was beyond animated at the sight of the three handsome, obviously rich, catches. In a similar Mrs Bennet fashion, the Algerian duplicate asked her daughters to serve coffee or go near the DJ and dance to entrance the male audience. Darcy still made his coarse comment about Lizzie who once overheard him could not

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<sup>20</sup> The play did not include a character for Kitty.

reconcile her mortified pride against his mortifying one. Bingley fell for Jane the very same minute she fell for him. After rounds of chasing and attempts of hooking, we were made witnesses of three proposals at once: Bingley's to Jane, Darcy's to Lizzie, and Wickham's to Lydia. While Mrs Bennet could not be any happier, Mr Bennet was hesitant and worried on how to marry three daughters at once, when he could not afford the trousseau of one, he said.

Group four students took over the stage and collaborated in producing a twenty-first century version of **SS**. The play had more creativity put at display. Eight students took the original text of **SS** and fitted it into a modern version. The necessary alterations were taken into consideration in terms of clothing, behaving, dating, and making use of technology... etc. Marianne met Willoughby after almost getting hit by a car, she thanked him for saving her life at which point they exchanged phone numbers so that he would check on her. Elinor and Edward kept a more subtle contact via emails. Marianne would be seen listening to romantic songs while Elinor was drowned in studies. Mrs Dashwood was in deep thought on which singer would they host on Marianne's wedding.

When Willoughby stopped returning Marianne's calls, it was time to confront him. While the two lovers were arguing, Willoughby's mobile rang. Curious to know who the caller was, Marianne was devastated to find out it was the mayor's daughter with whom he was obviously having an affair. Once home, Elinor could see that her sister was not feeling well. Marianne was taken to the hospital where the doctor said she was suffering from depression and that she needed rest and anti-depressants.

Fanny Dashwood who had already managed to convince her husband to kick Mrs Dashwood and her daughters out, found a new ally in Lucy Steele. She easily managed to bribe greedy Lucy with some money into deceiving Elinor that she was in a relationship with Edward, and so Lucy did. She manipulated Elinor into thinking that she and Edward were sweethearts, their Facebook status said *in a relationship*, and she showed off a ring, that Fanny gave her, as their engagement proof. Elinor sent Edward an indifferent congratulatory message which he did not read.

Marianne, who was quite recovered from Willoughby's betrayal, fell in love with rich old businessman, Brandon and said 'YES' to his marriage proposal. When Edward finally received Elinor's short message, he rushed to her to clarify things. It turned out that Lucy had invented the whole story; the two lovers were, thus, reconciled and they happily attended Marianne's wedding.

It cannot be denied that students, in both groups, were faced with some difficulties, mainly in keeping up with all the events and trials that the characters went through in the novels **PP** and **SS**. However, they managed to re-enact the scripts, to a similar way, with tremendous success. Both plays were executed in a light environment that reflected how much fun students were having on stage. Those who did not take part also admitted having quite liked it, and some confessed their regrets for not participating. At the end, the unanimous feeling was that it had been quite an enjoyable experience that they would not hesitate to undergo again, making sure to avoid past mistakes.

## *Conclusion*

Chapter two is the first step in the journey beyond Jane Austen's lines. It goes past the novels, the characters, and events into the classroom. The researcher's own students volunteered to undergo the experiment. The pre-questionnaire comes first as an attempt to investigate learners' views with regard to literature in general and Brit-Lit in particular. One cannot know what is wrong in a classroom if those concerned are not questioned about it. Twenty-five questions were put together to include all possible literature-related topics: reading, material, activities, teacher, methods, and evaluations. The answers, assembled from twenty respondents from both groups two and four, were used to identify common problems.

The pre-questionnaire served to supply the teaching experiment with a clear path, suggestions, and practices to avoid. Novel sessions, thus, followed where groups two and four were to meet the characters in **PP** and **SS**. Five sessions were designed with a variety

of activities and techniques to try for effectiveness. At times, the researcher employed some data from chapter one, those related to gender, as to serve the novels from a fresh perspective –patriarchy, entail, victimisation, and stereotypes.

Chapter two leads to next stop, session six where the twenty respondents are brought together for a more focused discussion as a final evaluation for the degree of their absorption of the novels. Session six is concluded with the pre-questionnaire, which are both to be detailed in the upcoming chapter.

# Chapter Three

## What's in an answer?

### What's in an answer?

#### *Introduction*

Unlocking an answer for possible interpretations is, to a lesser or greater extent, similar to solving a mystery, we may end up with so many or nothing at all. What's in an answer? There's an open invitation into the minds, at times souls, of respondents. An answer puts thoughts and ideas into words, it unveils to worries and fears, it gives voice to proposals and suggestions, it reflects reprimands and appraisals, and does so much

more. An answer is a mine of endless sources for he who seeks it. As a researcher in the pursuit of an answer, and answers most of the time, to the many questions posed in this paper, I have put together an entire chapter for the purpose.

As chapter two ends it unravels the next level of the beyond journey. Chapter three comes to carry on with the didactic experiment. The start is with the crossroad session that brought all respondents together for a gender-focused discussion. Many questions are asked, thus, many answers are offered, with relation to the novels' session and other points.

As the sixth session comes to a conclusion, the post-questionnaire is to learners. Both stops are a data mine that provides the researcher and the paper at hand with answers. What's in an answer? Suffice it to say that it reveals most sought secrets behind some of the most recurrent literature issues, it adds vigour to the research and it paves the way for the chapter to come.

### ***1. The crossroads: bringing both groups together***

The reader may wonder why session six is not included with the previous ones. The five sessions that served in introducing the novels **PP** and **SS** into groups two and four were done separately; session six, however, brought the two groups together. As mentioned earlier, the pre-questionnaire was filled by twenty students, ten from each group. The same twenty participants were assembled again for a last session. The general assumption is that these twenty students have evinced a certain degree of understanding the novel they were assigned in class, and thus, represent good candidates to move on to another level. By this time, the teacher finally disclosed the fact that the twenty



participants were subjects for a Magister study; they welcomed the idea and demonstrated a willingness to carry on with what would come next.

The session started with a mini discussion on the very issue of literature: to like, or not to like. With a favourable number as twenty, each students did have a say. Those who liked literature attributed it to their fondness of reading, of exploring new cultures, and extending their horizons. Literature, according to them, had offered them the chance to enrich their vocabulary as well as to nourish their imagination. The ones who were not big literary fans related it, primarily, to their lack of interest in reading and their vocabulary shortage. They would be easily distracted and bored before a long text especially one that might be loaded with heavy words. Both parties, however, agreed that the teacher plays a major role in changing or shaping the learners' views of literature, either ways (positive or negative).

Next step was to have students from the two groups fill in members of the other group with what they have learnt from the novel they had. Group two was telling group four about **PP**, and group four was recapping **SS** for group two. A student would contribute different bits of the novel, another would pick up from where the first had left off, and a third would join in to add more details till all the novel events were covered. Whenever there was a gap to be filled, or something missed, the teacher would interfere. By the time both recaps were over, students could already identify common points between the two novels, in terms of story, characters, events...etc.

By this point, students were estimated to have attained a certain insight into the novels that would equip them with sufficient material to move on to a gender reading. The first question to be asked was how to describe gender. According to class: man,

woman, masculinity, femininity, male, female, were of relation to the word. Gender meant that, as stated by some participants, some characteristics are attributed to one sex in opposition of the other: men are strong, women are weak. When read through a lens of gender, the novels, said most of students, took on a more inviting dimension.

Prior stops during previous sessions were revisited. Patriarchy and entail were seen as more gender-biased than before. The former was interpreted as an imposition of male rule over women, even when the men are defected as in the case of Mr Bennet in **PP** and John Dashwood in **SS**.

Patriarchy dictated that Mr Bennet is the head of his family, which would suppose he would have to provide for his five daughters. But he remained quite idle throughout his entire life with the least concern for what would become of the six women after his death. Had women been granted the right to act on their behalf, the five Miss Bennets would not be seen sitting home waiting for an eligible bachelor with fortune to whisk them off from their doomed to be destitute house.

In **SS**, John Dashwood failed his step-sisters and mother to their own disappointment and astonishment. On their own, they could not get a home; they had to put up with Fanny's nefariousness until finally rescued thanks to Mr Middleton's charitable offer.

Entail proved, again, quite a juicy topic to be discussed. Students thought that even a reason such as preserving lineage, was no excuse for the "*cruelty of settling an estate away from a family of five daughters, in favour of a man whom nobody cared anything about*" (Austen, 2007: 232-3), as is the case in **PP**. Both females and males agreed that entail had given men superior privileges at the expense of women which rather rendered the latter more vulnerable and much at the mercy of odds and the other sex. The law

disadvantaged females and left them comparatively with little options; marry or perish. Learners could deduce that society, back in Austen's time, was men-friendly. If it were not for that, they reasoned, the Miss Bennets as well as the Miss Dashwoods could have been spared much of the drama they went through. Mrs Bennet, a student thought, would have fewer provocations for her poor nerves; she might even overlook a single man or two and give up the match-making frenzy. The Bennet girls would be seen as more eligible bachelorettes, and Elizabeth might have not faced Lady Catherine's snobbish wrath.

The Miss Dashwoods, according to class, would have remained Mistresses of their own home, Norland, and would have never had to put up with Fanny's toxic insinuations and her mother's belittling compliments. Marianne would have been safe from a Casanova such as Willoughby, and Elinor would have stood better chances in having Edward's mother's blessings for their reunion. But all these *would haves* remained mere aspirations and wishes that the students had entertained.

Keeping up with this dissertation theme, gender relations were tackled next. Students were left to decide which characters they saw as a victim of another, and which ones were the victimisers. The first name that came to mind was George Wickham; he was a victimiser according to unanimous views. He was moved by money, a participant observed. Wickham planned to elope with Darcy's sister for money, charmed Lizzie only to engage another rich woman, and then married Lydia after being given money; he would do anything for some cash, the student added.

The romantic Marianne was easy prey for Willoughby. Learners remembered how the seventeen year old was all hopes and dreams about a hero from the ancient times who

would steal her heart; and ripping hearts happened to be Willoughby's major. They realised that what seemed at first to them as a man in love, was rather one who knew exactly how to make his moves; a chivalrous rescue, a poetic name, followed with concerned visits, then recital evenings, with some mastered dances and Marianne was all his. John was that prince charming she was waiting for, and romanticism-infected females in group four admitted that they believed him much as Marianne did. Alas! He vanished away before she could even have him. Being the romantic she was, Marianne drowned fully in sadness the same way she gave in to happiness and that almost led to her death. Another student brought to mind the poor girl whom Willoughby has seduced and abandoned, Eliza the teacher clarified. She must have been fooled by her own romantic views of a handsome man who would sweep off her feet, only Willoughby swept a lot more than that.

Elizabeth was a victim of Darcy's proud upbringing. From their first meeting, class judged, his comment on her intolerable beauty mortified her, and later his first proposal. When shown the video extract of the proposal, group two unanimously agreed that the scene seemed more of a fight than a marriage affair. Elizabeth's refusal to Darcy could only be excused with his enumerations of her inferiority. Though his feelings were true, Darcy could not get past his haughty nature even when addressing the woman he wished to woo.

Due to the fact that both groups did not have enough time to meet all characters, they were not familiar with all different gender dualities that were included in both novels. This same limitation applies to the following part that deals with gender stereotypes. The typology of female and male portraits within **PP** and **SS** followed. Students were first asked to identify the term '*stereotype*'. The words did not ring many

bells of familiarity, and learners had to go with their prior knowledge of the word. To stereotype someone could mean to give specific descriptions to them, to call them according to what they are thought to be by others; an example would be: That people of Mascara are usually referred to with potatoes, which they do not even grow, a student commented. The example indicated, as the other classmates joined in, that stereotypes might be false or prejudicial in nature. A participant referred to the gender-related stereotypes: men are strong, women are weak; men work outside, women take care of homes. Again, fellow students would argue that stereotypes do not necessarily hold true all situations but they would be mostly so, bearing in mind that as time changes, things and people change along. The teacher, then, made a quick interference with more detailed definitions of the term ‘stereotype’ and other examples and explanations.

As far as the two novels, **PP** and **SS**, were concerned, both groups could only discern two stereotypes. “*How would you describe the characters of John Willoughby and George Wickham in one word?*” The teacher asked. The answers were: a Casanova or a Don Juan. *Why?* Students would add that both men played the heartthrobs, for whom ladies’ heart would beat, only so that they would seduce them with no serious intentions in mind. “*Of the novels characters, which ones were the utter opposite to the two Casanovas?*” Another question was directed to the participants. Respondents named Elinor Dashwood and Jane Bennet, the two, according to them, remained silent throughout the novels and never expressed their feelings. The two ladies were reported to be in love, by the narrator, but rarely put it in words by themselves, and the others could not see that on their faces either. The teacher put that description in a word: Poker Face. The females and males in class found themselves drugged into a brief argument about the

stereotype. The conclusion was that men who put on big love shows were more likely to enjoy the role with no other regard for genuine attachment. Women, who say and show much less than what they feel, were probably most affected and more moved inside.

Group two members could identify yet another opposed stereotype, Mr and Mrs Bennet. One student recalled how Mrs Bennet would be seen talking all the time, usually about single men and their yearly income, or how to marry her five daughters, “*and she was annoying*”, the student observed. Mr Bennet was the one who avoided all serious matters and discussions with his sarcasm and sharp comments. “*The wife talked a great deal*”, another student observed, “*...and conveyed little meaning, while the husband made fewer interventions with deep significance*”.

Before closing the gender window, one last invitation was directed to the participants to voice their thoughts on the matter. Respondents said that gender rather rendered the novels interesting as it offered dual representations of both sexes. Another view was that if the novels were examined, for each female character there would be a parallel or opposing male character which rendered the characters much easier to identify and the novels easier to remember. A gender reading, learners agreed, would produce more debate and make the readers feel concerned, to defend or back their own sex at times, or to just have fun with the theme itself.

## ***2. Post-questionnaire: examining the results***

During session six, when the gender reading of the two novels was over with, the teacher opened room for feedback. Questions were asked to direct the learners' comments and viewpoints with regard to literature, the novels, and the teacher. As the pre-questionnaire has shown, the twenty participants were mostly not big literature fans for a number of reasons. Did they still think of literature as a boring subject? Most of them said they no longer do. The different sessions they had with **PP** and **SS** had shown them that literature can be fun, enjoyable and still instructive. There were some defects,

of course, but not the kind that would put their interest off. A few students admitted that they still had to get over their own lack of interest in long readings so that they may come to take pleasure in literature. A student confessed that she might only enjoy a literature class if the texts would conform to her personal taste. The major difficulty that would prevent better response and effect was the vocabulary. Both parties claimed that hitting ‘big, complicated words’ along their reading was a tremendous set back which usually demanded the use of a dictionary, after which the whole mood is lost. The teacher assured the learners that it was a common issue with a lot of people; however, it should not affect the activity itself. A favourable recommendation would be that a reading should be done for the sole aim of enjoying, drowning, and forgetting oneself within the text at hand. If difficult words were met, they should be highlighted with a pencil without affecting the flow of the reading. Once the reader would be done with the literary text, a dictionary could be consulted. This technique would guarantee that the students’ attention would not be diverted, and instead remain focused on the literary writing being read. In the end, the twenty participants unanimously agreed that the introduction of **PP** and **SS** in class offered them a different learning experience and broadened their prospective literary horizons.

When it came to the novels, **PP** and **SS**, opinions ranged and differed once again. There were those who thought that the choice was a good one, while others believed that they would have preferred to have something of adventure, science fiction, detective, and even horror. However, most of those present agreed that they were still interested in the novels for the way of teaching, bit by bit, that made it easy for them to grasp the plot. Being able to relate the events to local culture, in some instances, and to personal life in others, made both **PP** and **SS** more accessible to students and much more enjoyable, they



explained. This helped both classes to empathize more often with the characters and use that to their own advantage when voicing their viewpoints.

The introduction of the novels was done through different steps and activities: explain, guess, imagine, summary, games, videos...etc. that barely left any window for boring repetitions or negative energy in class. It was a light way to present a novel, students stated, that guaranteed they would easily digest the different events. The characters, however, some participants confessed, were too numerous for them to remember. The main characters in **PP** and **SS** were not much challenging to retain for they were frequently dealt with, nevertheless, students found it a bit tricky to keep up with their different relationships with other characters in the novels.

As far as the teacher was concerned, reviews were generally positive. The main reason to that might be the fact that the twenty participants were drawing comparisons between their experience in their literature class and the one they had with **PP** and **SS**. Their teacher of Oral Expression had found a way, according to students, to deliver the novels in their entirety in an easy-to-follow way. The teacher knew how to use the bits of time to her own advantage, and knew how to pastiche a medley of activities that targeted her students' strengths and preferences; there was something for everyone in class. The teacher attempted to stay away from same-old-ways of introducing a literary text and instead aimed for a modern fun way, as described by students. The researcher knew when to interfere and guide the sessions and when to leave space for the learners own expansive contributions. The participants admitted that they had appreciated those moments when the teacher would interrupt the reading to show them the 'right' way to do it, employing different raises and falls in intonations, so that they would imitate it, which

made the activity more enjoyable. The other point that gained the class appreciation was the fact that their teacher was inviting for different views and encouraging to all students to take part in discussions as well as in different activities. Students were, then, asked, almost entreated, to name any shortcomings of the teacher; her presence was no reason for them to silence their critique. Unfortunately, students claimed that there was nothing to note. The researcher, thus, hoped that they would take much more liberties in assessing her performance in the post-questionnaire they were to be handed.

The second questionnaire<sup>21</sup> was, in a way, designed to answer three questions: What did students think of literature in general and the two novels in particular? How did they assess the novels' sessions and activities they had? What did they have to say about the teacher's performance? In order to avoid having *rushed* answers, as was the case with the pre-questionnaire, students were given questionnaire two to take home with them to have the chance to fill it at their own pace. The teacher aspired that, by doing this, her class would supply reliable reviews. The questionnaire was provided in the form of printed copies for those who have no computers and Microsoft Word documents for those who have internet access. It should be noted that the participants remained the same in both questionnaires to best preserve the credibility of findings. The twenty participants answered forty-seven questions that aimed at eliciting reviews and comparisons to the pre-questionnaire, each had to select the novel first then take the questionnaire.

### ***2.1. Group two: How did PP do?***

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<sup>21</sup> To have a look at the full questionnaire, refer to appendix 07

Students were not to be given any slack; the questionnaire went straight into business seeking honest straightforward answers. The start was with the novel **PP** itself; did group two enjoy it? Nine out of ten said ‘Yes’ they did, one ticked the ‘No’ box. Why was the novel enjoyed? Why was it not? Those who took pleasure in **PP** gave different reasons: “*because I like stories*”, “*because it was something new and fun*”, “*because I love novels*”, “*because I found it so interesting and the subject still in our life*”, were some of the answers written in the ‘Why’ section. Other points that were highlighted were “*it includes adventure*”, “*it is entertainment and helps students to know more things*”, “*it was very interesting and full or rich vocabulary*”, “*it was very fun to have something new and interesting*”. One student seems to have appreciated the ‘guess what’ element in the novel sessions as they stated that when reading they “*couldn’t jump to conclusions*”. According to the same student, readers are to make sure their predictions will be wrong. The respondent with the single ‘No’ tick justified it with “*because it is boring and not interesting*”.

Question three inquired if the novel choice was to the satisfaction of learners. Out of the ten PP respondents, seven affirmed that they were, while the remaining three replied with a negative ‘No’. The researcher wanted the non-satisfied students to suggest a choice they would rather have. A student proposed more youth novels with no specific titles; the two others were more specific naming Gabriel Garcia’s *Love in the Time of Cholera* and D.H. Lawrence’s novella *The Fox* (the novella was presented by the same student on her book report presentation in Oral Class).

The teacher and researcher wanted to know how much altered, if such is the case, the class view was about literature and literature classes. Nine of the answerers said yes,

it did change, while one student, who has already been singled as an avid admirer of literature, ticked the No. Question six came to dig more in the ways of such change. Learners disclosed their different reasons, which at the same time gave explanations to previous remarks made in the pre-questionnaire. *“Now I find myself ready to read”*, *“because I was thinking that literature is just learning by heart”*, *“I learnt that literature is reading, not defining words”*, were three answers that signalled three recurrent issues: reading, learning by heart, and how to read, all three, in addition to others will be expanded in the analysis. The content was reason for one respondent to be literature pro as *“the ideas of society about how people will be married”* were the key factors. The play, performed in the fifth session, helped two learners change their views. The three remaining answers were centred around the teaching itself, differently put as: *“in the way of enjoying literature”*, *“the way of expression”*, *“I prefer this way of literature because it is full of imagination and its language is better.”*

Now that their opinions on literature have, to a certain extent, been affected, does group two want to learn more about it? Nine of the ten respondents said yes they do, while one went for the No. As the researcher was not looking for shallow answers, question seven was followed with an eighth that demanded justifications. The student with the No claimed that literature *“...is boring”*, as for the now literary-enticed answerers reasons ranged and differed. Learn more literature/literature was a way *“to know more/ more information/ more about history of literature”*, *“to have new vocabularies and words and an insight into old literature”*, *“to improve ‘our’ learning level in English”*, according to some learners. The remaining three gave the following answers: *“It seems to be pleasant to know more about history, how people were living, and to use my imagination in reading novels or plays”*, *“speaking from myself reading*

*will extend my imagination, my thinking, my daily speech*”, *“because it’s my interest it take us to another world, it contain an imagination for me it is the best part”*.

With their opinions somehow changed, are students finally ready to read, **PP** for starter? The respondents were given three criteria to determine their readability: Most likely, May be, Not likely. Five out of ten ticked the first choice, they are most likely to read the entire novel, the five remaining ones went for the ‘May be’, ‘Not likely’ was not marked. The justifications that soon followed were a mixture of avidness and wishfulness. *“What happens in the novel motivates me to read”*, *“because I am inquisitive”*, *“because it gives you passion what happens in the end”*, *“we liked that kind of novel. It has given us another culture”*, *“I enjoyed it and it gives me new ideas”* were the five reasons given by the ‘Most likely’ answerers. The ‘Maybes’ were justified as follows: *“I want to know more about the novel”*, *“I did not like the literature at first, but now I do”*, *“learn about their (the characters) experience”*, *“because if I want to read I read”*, the fifth was a blank.

If students are willing to finish the reading of **PP**, are they in for other reads? The researcher wanted to know if the reading “anathema” was as much prevalent as before. With four out of ten ‘not likely’ answers, the phobia seems to be still there. Two ‘Maybes’ were given along with three ‘Most likely’ and one blank. Complementary question twelve was, again, introduced to seek ‘whys’. Confessions came in successions: *“because I hadn’t the will to read and I was thinking that reading is boring”*, *“I’m not interested to (in) novels”*, *“because it is boring”* were those with relation to ‘not likely’, while *“I just like reading I do not know why, I like the British literature”*, *“when I read a novel I have new ideas”*, *“to read other novels is good because you will learn different*

*things from each novel and take many lessons and to see different views*” justified the ‘most likely’ ticks, and the remaining one was “I had a wrong view about literature” below the ‘Maybe’. Three blanks were counted in this part.

The question that followed sought the students’ opinions about the allocated time for the novel sessions. It should be reminded that **PP** was introduced in four sessions followed by a fifth for the class play. The researcher already admits to the inadequacy of such short a duration to present the whole text, nevertheless, she has attempted to give the gist of the storyline with the most important highlights and events. Learners’ feedback was still pursued in the hope of having valuable recommendations and constructive comments. The answers were fifty-fifty, five answers on the ‘Yes’ and the other five on the ‘No’. The ‘No’ tickers complained about different points, to be taken into thoughtful consideration, in their justificatory answers “*We did not have enough time to read it (PP) all. I like tasting the quotes and the style of the writer*”, “*because the time didn’t help us*”, “*I haven’t the time*”, “*because they have many things*”, the fifth now was unjustified. The students with ‘Yes’ ticks explained their choice as follows: “*We could understand it, it contained an easy vocabulary*”, “*Because it was well explained by the teacher .and our teacher knew exactly how to benefit from the time*”, “*Because when I was reading the novel I wait for another part*”, “*You (the teacher/researcher) made simple and fun for us to read it and grasp it*”, and once again the fifth one remained blank.

It is universally known that every story teaches a little bit something; does it apply to **PP**? Nine students said yes, the novel has taught them something new, while one ticked the ‘No’. Reasons were thereafter unfolded and elaborated. Most of the respondents admitted they have learnt not to be judgmental. Darcy taught group two that

pride leads the proud to be hated by people while Lizzie gave a lesson in simplicity and standing for one's own principles. Students learnt that money is not everything, that love is a key, that some things are out of reach and are rather controlled by destiny, and that all people are the same their appearances do not matter. Some students were inspired by the novel to be humble, to be compassionate, and to be there for others. A couple more claimed that the story gave them the needed push to read, and to take more interest in novels.

Once again, learners were given the means to assess in question seventeen. Five criteria were put forward to determine the degree of difficulty that was met with: not at all, a little difficult, somewhat difficult, quite difficult, and very difficult. *A little difficult* was ticked five times, *somewhat difficult* twice, both *quite difficult* and *very difficult* once each. The follow-up question eighteen investigated the source of hardship. The top handicap was the characters, most respondent admitted. Apparently, they could not memorise/recognize the different names they came across with, nor were they able to establish the connections that tied each one to the other. Vocabulary made the list in second place: “*some words and expressions are difficult*”, “*new words and idioms*”. One student assumed responsibility for the fellow classmates and wrote: “*because we don't read a lot and we have poor vocabulary*” while another said the confusion temporary “*I found difficulties to understand the subject and theme but when we presented play I understood the novel*”. One blank was counted.

With a not very encouraging rate of interest in the pre-questionnaire, the researcher re-introduced the question with regard to the novel sessions. Five students ticked the *averagely interested* box while the other five ticked the *highly interested, not interested*

remained unpicked. Question twenty falls under the same evaluative sense. With nine parameters at hand, group two were at liberty to carry on their assessments of the novel sessions. *Very useful for language learning* was ticked six times, *useful for language learning* three, *not useful for language learning* none. The novel was found to be *Very interesting in content* by four students, *interesting in content* by one, and *not interesting* by no one. When it came to the way it was taught, the novel got four *very well taught*, two *well taught*, and one *badly taught*.

The evaluations were succeeded by justifications some of which were dedicated to the content: “*it’s related to knowledge*”, “*because it is a serious novel and give us idea about the thinking of people to engage*”, “*because it content (contains) a grammar and vocabulary we need it for language learning*”, others were related to the quality “*It can raise the English level and facilitate the way of understanding Brit.Lit and Literature*”, “*The pronunciation was good, so it teach us how to pronounce*”. The remaining ones concerned the teacher “*For me it was due to the teacher who made the novel interesting and it was well chosen and I did learned (learn) new word*”, “*Though we did not have enough time and oral expression has nothing to do with teaching literature my cher teacher could help us in understanding the real meaning of literature briefly*”. Two blanks were scored.

It was about time to check how true were students’ claims about having learnt from the novel, being taught new things: did the new things include vocabulary items? Nine answers were positive with a negative one. What were examples of such items? “*Servitude, heavy-hearted, heartthrob, astonishment, infamy, sarcastic, entail, pride,*



*prejudice, sense, humble, brave*” were listed with pride, prejudice and sarcastic more frequently than others, and one blank. The respondent with ‘No’ left the space empty.

As detailed earlier, novel sessions contained different activities and tasks. The researcher opted, in question twenty-four, to survey group two’ preferences to have an idea what was effective and what was not. Out of ten respondents, three were motivated with the ‘Guess what’ activity: *“That of when the teacher asked us to imagine what will happen next in the story”, “asking for opinion”, “guess what will happen next”*. Games came in second place *“games”, “doing funny games”, and “drawing games”*. Remaining answers varied *“Oral activities (reading out loud)”, “to read the novel”, “play”, “doing plays”*, while two missed the point of the question.

Why did students like those particular activities? Question twenty five asked. Guessing was seen to *“widen our (students’) imagination and to make up new event that may be didn’t exist”, “I like to be present with my thinking”, “it give (s) us the chance to think”*. Games’ fans said *“because we spend good time”, “because it is enjoyable”, “it can give us other opinion of view concerning the teacher or the module”*. Oral was thought to *“show your ability in language”, reading to “develop and better our (students’) pronunciation”, while plays were found to “make the novel very enjoyable”, as well as “funny, it made students have a rest, relax and practice English language more”*. The two missed answers kept so in this question as well.

Question twenty-six sought the least liked activities during novel sessions. Two respondents did not find reading quite appealing which they later justified in question twenty-seven *“we failed in choosing good novels, reading is boring” “not interesting”*. Two blanks were scored, three answers were irrelevant to the question, one was “non”.

The last was by a student who misread the question: “*when we were asked to act the novel*” for the reason was not as unfavourable “*It was a great experience when we perform it I felt that as if I’m part of the novel especially when we turned it to the Algerian context*”.

Next, the ten answerers were asked about their personal reflection on the novel, what did they think of the story? Was it mere fiction? All of ten answers agree that there was a real dimension to the novel. One student went on to generalise the case “*i think that in every novel there is a real part*”, another thought that “*there is truth in stories of novels*” and a third concluded that “*from the reality the fiction begin*”. The researcher wanted to see if her class could establish a certain familiarity with the events, though taking place in a different setting. To be able to relate to a story is already halfway towards reading it in its entirety.

So, were students able to relate? Three said Yes, five ticked the No, and the rest remained blanks. The three Yesses were supported with reasons “*because the events were well ranked*”, “*by going back to the previous events*”, and “*because I understood it when make it into play*”. The researcher suspects that the true meaning behind the question might have escaped the class that is why they abstained from giving their opinions, and more coherent answers. Another reason might be that group two did not have ample time to study the novel as should be and familiarise themselves well with the different events. However, one thing was for sure, students were acquainted enough with the characters, did they empathise with them? Question thirty-one inquired. One student said *never*, two ticked *occasionally*, four went for *fairly often*, three chose *quite often*, and one picked *very often*. How has such empathy, thus, affected learners’ ideas and feelings? The ways

differed and varied but were all a confirmation that each student could relate to one or another character. *“Sometimes you like or even love one of the characters or I may hate it”, “in the novel I was influenced by some characters and I was looking just when this characters appear and do their role I was somewhat impressed with their roles”, “The characters were very serious and this what I liked the most”, “they were sever and the same time emotional”, “Elizabeth had a strong personality”, “I don’t remember the names of characters exactly, but they are so interesting in the novel”*. A student gave credit to the authoress: *“In this novel, Jane Austen collected different personalities and different kind of behaviours. The characters were totally different and special”*, another accredited the choice *“The novel was perfect and great, it put its emphasis on something realistic and logical”*, a third was carried into the story: *“I feel that this novel happens now”*, and a last one found it personal *“i find in novel some answer i look for it”*.

With respondents’ reviews so at favour, is it because they were able to voice their opinions? Seven students said Yes the novel has offered them the chance to be heard, two ticked the No, and one was blank. The two Nos referred back to someone who *“didn’t make difference between the characters”* and another who *“didn’t understand it enough”*. The seven Yesses were attributed to different reasons: vocabulary-enriching, freedom of expression, rewards...etc. *“I found some expressions useful for expressing opinions”*, *“it gives us the chance to talk freely and say whatever we want and be more creative”*, *“In order to get more stars<sup>22</sup> initially and to be present secondly”*, *“you can improve your personality from the novel and give your idea and opinion”* were some of the answers.

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<sup>22</sup> ‘Stars’ refers to a reward system that is used in my classes. Students get rewarded for different things (activities, games, personal productions, initiatives...etc) with a set of stars (that differs). Once students reach a certain total of stars, they are converted to extra marks and other privileges. The system was introduced to provide a stimulating motive for learners to be more involved.

One answerer admitted to have been transformed from a silent party into a heard one “*because my voice was hid but when offer novel it was discovered*”, another highlighted the teacher’s role “*our teacher encourage us to speak and to read it*”, while a third referred back to the play “*because when we do play I try to do another one.*”

In order to keep up with the gender theme of the study, gender-related questions were asked. As stated earlier, the novel sessions were more gender-oriented, each part kept faithful to the men-women duality. Did it help invite more debate? Seven students thought it did, two gave a No, and one left the space empty. One No was justified, in complementary question thirty six, as “*it doesn’t matter*” and the other was blank. Those who thought that a gender-reading did invite discussion had more to say “*because men and women are different in their thinking and each one of them has his own opinion, so I think that for sure it will create more debate*”, “*every person has their own thinking*”, “*because it has enormous ideas and information in content*”, “*the views of boys and girls are totally different and make opposites, so it’s important to discussion (discuss) in two sides*”, “*to talk about the equality of people and their ideas in the wedding*”, “*there is some things that need discussion and debate*”. The two blanks given in question thirty-five remained so in thirty-six.

Did students think that the gender duality made the novel more interesting? Once again, there were seven positive ticks with three negative ones. In the follow-up question, thirty-eight, the Yesses were to be justified. The seven following answers were given: “*It will be enjoyable and maybe people find it motivating to read*”, “*because we find emotion, feeling, happy end sometimes sad, and we take many influences*”, “*both of them have different characters, it was good to collect them with each other*”, “*they, men and*

women, make accident of novel completely”, “because all the events that turn between men vs. women make us more interested to know especially what the end is”. One student recollected about entail in their response: “because conflicts between a man and a woman is not like between men; and the law that leads the man to inherit however women cannot”.

During novel sessions, group two was provided with different descriptions of characters in dualities, as analysed in chapter two (stereotypes and victimization). The aim was to make the duos easy to remember and understand. So, did it help students better understand? Eight respondents said *Yes* it did, while the other two said *No*.

The turn was on the teaching and teacher. Did group two like the way the novel was taught? Eight admitted they did and two ticked *No*. Why? The two subjects with *No* answered “*I don’t know*”, and “*it is boring*”. The ones with *Yesses* had different things to say: “*Most of time the novel’s elements do exist*”, “*it was a good and interesting way, because it was taught part by part and makes us eager about what would happen next*”, “*Because it was taught by the best teacher ever*”, “*because it make us enjoy and have fun*”, “*it was more modern*”, “*because we learned it step by step*”, “*because it’s new and good way*”, “*it was easy and clear*”. As far as the plot is concerned, was the teacher successful in delivering it to her class? Eight students thought she was, one said *No* she wasn’t, and one left the space empty. What about literature in general? Has the teacher helped learners take more interest? Once again, eight *Yesses*, one *No*, and one blank were scored.

The play was one of the key activities that students had in session five. Did it help them better remember the novel? All ten respondents said *yes* it did. Further clarifications

succeeded: *“The play is fixed better than reading the novel”*, *“it did because you feel as if you live the event of the novel”*, *“I had to go back to the novel to know what should we do”*, *“the play help me to understand the novel well because when I get my role and practice to do it very well I understand the personality that i act even the other personalities because me and my friends we practice together and each one explain their roles”*, *“It remind me with characters and the whole story of the novel so it was like to refresh our mind”*, *“the play make it so easy to understand more”*, *“it described the novel and make very interesting”*, *“this is logic, when you practice something important by yourself”*. One space was left empty and another answer was crossed by the student which made it ineligible.

Forty-six was one last evaluative question to be offered students. If there was anything they would do differently, what would it be? Eight versatile answers were given back. *“I like some practice”*, one student suggested, *“every student must read the story”*, a reading-fan thought, *“I would give more novels and explain very well and make plays”* an enthusiast added, *“I introduce our novel with best way”*, said a not-much satisfied respondent. One interesting proposal was to *“make the session in different places for example in the nature or in different university”*, a point which will be further elaborated in recommendations. Three answerers thought that there was not much to alter *“Not much because if I can say that the teacher did everything according to me like to have more novel and play”*, *“ nothing because I like the way that our teacher use it”*, *“It was enough for me that I should not add anything”*. Two spaces were left blank.

The last question was an open one. A free space for learners to write down whatever recommendations they might have for the teacher about herself, students, and the novel.

Fortunately enough, the respondents seized the opportunity and gave useful suggestions for the researcher to expand and benefit from in later stages of the dissertation. The unanimous agreement was on the significance of reading, one idea was to read a novel monthly and have compulsory reading. One student addressed the fellow classmates with an assuring promise *“my recommendation is to student that didn’t read novels because they see it boring without meaning i say to him that is wrong you must read novels because it’s important and enjoyable it tell us the story of old generation”*. The novel was found to be *“good” “interesting and great work for Jane Austen”, “so interesting...I enjoy it with them (students)”*. Students *“should read more”, “they were good listeners”, “were able to grasp and the novel”, “were so quiet (as they paid attention)”*. When it came to the teacher, one general recommendation was that they *“should make the lesson more interesting like novel or films we like to study poems”*. As for the teacher herself, she was found to be *“doing well”, “great, even I like her more than the other teachers”, “so quiet and in her session we feel that we are in great session are in the high level”*. Two somehow obscure recommendations made the list *“We must be humble with others and Allah is the best”, “about the students”*. The last space was kept empty.

Group two’s ten respondents, thus, come to conclude their share of questions concerning the novel they had, **PP**. It is about time to check on group four and what they have to say about **SS**.

## ***2.2. Group Four: Did SS pass the test?***

Questionnaire two, as mentioned earlier, was designed with a variable option, the novel title, the forty-seven questions remained unchanged for both groups. The answers, however, were as different in both groups as they were in each individual paper. Once again, the number of respondents<sup>23</sup> was ten to keep the same subjects of questionnaire one.

The question that comes first, did students enjoy the novel? Nine said Yes, one picked No. Fans or no fans of **SS**, question two sought a *Why* to either the Yes or the No. The lone *No* belonged to someone who doesn't "*like romantic drama*". The others had their own share of reasons to like the novel: "*because it's something great*", "*because I like read story*", "*it is a beautiful story about the 2 sisters who one of them chose sense and the other sensibility*", "*It shows how the things were in the past*", "*It's like a fight between the heart and the minds, shows at the end that both of them should be together or big loss happened most of the time if they're separated.*", "*Parce que c'est une histoire éducative qui conseille l'autrui de la perspicacité d'être prudent par ses personnages opposés. Et elle nous montre la logique du rationalisme triomphant, une arme de sûreté*", "*because it linked by the sense and the feeling, and I learned a lot from it as it is rich in such terms*", "*because it made literature very easy to learn*", "*It's full of emotion and it help us to know the western culture*".

How far pleased was group four with the choice of the novel? Eight students said Yes it was to their liking, two were not satisfied. The two No respondents were asked to

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<sup>23</sup> One of the respondents is a Chadian student who is not very well spoken in English. He was granted permission to provide answers in French. The researcher refrains from translating them and rather reports them the way they are written.



suggest a different pick instead, one wrote “*nothing*”, and the other wanted “*adventure*”. No particular titles or authors were given which left a wider range for guessing.

Question five inquired if the subjects’ view of literature has changed after SS novel sessions. Eight answerers admitted that it did, while two said it did not, one of them the foreign student who is known for his literary avidity. The literary-transformed respondents gave the following justifications: “*Because I were (was) not interesting to literature but now and after I read the sense and sensibility novel I liked literature*”, “*It pushes me to know about old literature*”, “*before it was very difficult and complex but now it is very clear*”, “*I prefer this way of literature because full of imagination and its language is better*”. Two answers highlighted the play: “*When we did the SS play*”, “*In the way of explanation, and the way of the application of the novel in a play*” while one recommended the way the novel was served “*the new method of presentation of the novel*”. One Yes remained unjustified in question six.

When asked if they wish to learn more about literature and literary texts, the ten students gave nine Yes and one No. Question eight, once again, asked why. Some attributed it to literature itself, some others gave personal reasons, but overall, everyone has a little something to say. The one No belonged to a student who wrote “*I don’t like literature*”. The remaining Yeses were backed with different claims: “*literature is something that needs all care all skills of learning*”, “*to know the way of old writing*”, “*because I found it interesting*”, “*we can grasp different cultures of lot of countries just by the writings of their authors*”, “*to get benefits from the style of writing, vocabulary, etc.*”, “*because I like to know more about the cultures, way of thinking and mode of life of the other nation*”, “*I’m romantic and it pleased me to read this literature*”, “*because it is*

*very useful and very well taught*". The last answer belonged to the student from Chad: "*J'ai toujours aimé être un orateur pour que, comme Césaire, ma bouche sera la bouche des malheurs qui n'ont point de bouche, ma voix, la liberté de celles qui s'affaissent au cachot du désespoir. Et sans doute les livres sont un moyen efficace pour cet objectif. Le savoir est dans l'écrit.*"

With nine positive literary-transformed views, how likely were students to read *SS* on their own? Four most likely, four may be, and two not likely were counted. The two not likely to read the novel wrote: "*Because I haven't the novel at home, I used to read it just in class with the projector*", "*because it take long time and you should be patient but I am not like that*". Three Maybes were justified as follows: "*because it is very long and it takes a long time*", "*because there were difficulties, I don't have the novel, and there were some difficult terms*", "*I like but I haven't much time, besides it is difficult*", the fourth one remained blank. The four students most likely to finish reading the novel had their share of reasons to give: "*it has a meaning and a lesson when it talks about the two sisters story*", "*Cette situation me permettra de comprendre totalement l'histoire*", "*I want to know all the characters actions and the whole dialog*", "*because in our age we admire to learn as much and as fast as we can, so this novel it's shortens the way to know the personality of people related to their reaction*".

If ready to finish *SS*; would students be willing to explore other novels? Four answered *Most likely*, five *May be*, *Not likely* was left unpicked, while one answer was a blank. Question twelve came in to back the previous answers with plausible whys. The ones most likely to read more gave enthusiastic motives "*because as much as I read as much I get knowledge*", "*Because I want to enrich my culture and to make my vocabulary*

good”, “I want to my culture better”, “Ça été vraiment extraordinaire! Ces livres m’ont influencé. Et sans me rendre compte, j’ai fait une amélioration avec un sentiment extrême d’attrance envers eux. Ils m’ont aidé à penser et à cultiver l’esprit”. The five Maybes followed in justification, some students depended their willingness on the quality of the reads “According to the choice of the novel .sometimes it is very interesting”, “To change a little bit, another situation, another style”, another one was somehow hopeful “may be my view of literature will change”, a third student revealed a personal lexical handicap “I can’t read it alone, I need someone to translate to me”, and the last one came forward in admitting their real issue “I am lazy to read but I’ll try to read other novels”.

Were the five sessions enough for group four to understand the plot of **SS**? Eight students ticked *Yes* and the remaining two were *No*. The two answerers with the *No* attributed to vocabulary “because of the vocabulary which was difficult for me”, and the play “because they have my friend make play”. While the first one is clear, the second one may refer to the fact that the student thought that session five should have been dedicated for more of the novel, and that they felt that doing the play deprived them from more time to better grasp **SS**. The eight *Yesses* were attributed to different causes “We had it in different parts and sessions”, “if we understood the novel”. Four respondents gave credit to the teacher “because with your help we reach the entire meaning of the novel”, “I could understand the plot because the teacher made it so easy”, “Our teacher did her best to make us understand the plot and we had turn it into play”, “Because you make it easy to be understood and you explain it in many sessions”. One student has missed the meaning of the question and the tenth left it blank.

With such positive reviews at display, was the novel instructive? All ten respondents agreed that **SS** has taught them new things. In follow-up question sixteen, students poured in all what they learnt, educational and personal likewise: *“It’s teach me to discover a new deed with novels”*, *“I learnt how to be independent in my personality and to never ever give up”*, *“It teach us to never follow our feelings only but we have to use our minds too”*, *“La culture générale, l’influence, la facilité de construire tant de phrases, la sagesse, l’intelligence”*, *“We love but we never give the partner trust more than we have to”*, *“The sense & sensibility movie that I saw was a novel of Jane Austen”*, *“it gives me a lot of wisdom”*, *“it teaches me to be always loyal with my family and friends”*, *“how to be wise and use your intelligence to solve problems and know the difference between good and evil”*, *“It teaches me that the heart and the mind are enemies and that we should not follow our feelings all the time, and we shouldn’t be greedy”*.

The researcher, then, introduced questions seventeen and eighteen to detect the degree of difficulty and the possible sources. Out of the five criteria they were given, (refer to the pre-questionnaire sample) eight students found the novel a little difficult to understand, while two others thought it was quite difficult. These last two answerers had issues with vocabulary *“my own problem was just with vocabulary, as sentence not the words”*, *“it used words from classical English, it’s different from ours”*. Vocabulary was a handicap for others as well *“I found a matter with the vocabulary”*, *“may be in some words and expressions”*, *“sometime I can’t explain or understand some words in the novel”*. The student from Chad admitted it was *“Mon ingnorance sur l’anglais”*. The remaining students found it challenging to identify the different characters: *“we faced difficulties while reading the novel and we tried to grasp who is logical and who is*

*sensitive*”, “*to distinguish between the characters*”, “*the characters mixed up in my mind*”. The tenth space was left empty.

Students were then given the right to evaluate with a series of questions. A scale from one to nine was set to rate the degree of interest in novel sessions. One student gave a 1-3 not interested, five others gave a 4-6 averagely interested, while the remaining four gave a 7-9 highly interested rate. In question twenty, the ten respondents were granted more evaluative parameters to assess the usefulness, the content and the teaching of SS sessions. ‘*Very useful for language learning*’ was ticked six times, ‘*useful for language learning*’ three times, and ‘*not useful for language learning*’ once. Four students found the sessions *very interesting in content*, four others ticked *interesting in content*, while *not interesting* was not picked. When it came to teaching, five answerers thought the sessions were *very well taught*, and one found them *well taught*, *badly taught* was not selected. In question twenty-one, the respondents were to provide reasons why they gave the above evaluations. While one space was left unfilled, the other nine had much to say. The student who gave ‘not useful for language learning’ rate wrote “*because it is boring in some place*”. The remaining answers varied, some centred on the usefulness of the sessions “*First of all it is very useful for language learning .it helps the reader to get a nice language*”, “*the best way to get language speculy (especially) when I find it interesting and very well taught*”, “*novel is help us to learning more knowledge and ideas and literature in general*”, “*I got from this novel many words useful in my speech*”, “*C’est une situation avantageuse qui nous donne plus de courage à surmonter les obstacles, vaincre la timidité..., avoir la confiance devant le public lorsqu’on parle*”; while the other part credited the teaching “*Interesting sessions and you can teach something like moral lessons*”, “*our teacher made this novel very easy to understand*” ,

*“the way that you explain the novel, it was very clear and modern, according to me, it makes me feel that I am a character in the novel”, “The way of teaching is very modern and fun. I don’t feel bored in class especially when Miss asks us to imagine the rest and she gives us all the novel in different sessions, she makes me very excited to know the end. The use of the over-head projector is important also”.*

It was time to put some claims to the test, students have alleged they found the novel sessions very useful and interesting in content and learnt a lot; did they acquire new vocabulary? Eight students said Yes and the remaining ticked No. They were, then, asked to supply a few examples. Some respondents might not have grasped the question for they gave irrelevant answers such as *“Some sort of words .punctuation and how we follow the intonations of some expressions”, “New rules and new vocabulary”*. Two blanks followed, one answer with *“I can’t remember”*, and only two answerers who could name actual words *“ascertained”, “dispose, fortitude...etc.”*.

In question twenty-four, the ten subjects were asked to name the activities which motivated them most. The answers were as follows *“Novels and plays”, “Une nouvelle experience (la piece)”, “Preparing as conclusion, the play”, “The play”, “Watching the movie”, “The play”, “when you ask us to guess what will happen”*. Two spaces were left blank and one was about Oral Expression class, not the novel sessions. Students had, then, to supply reasons for their choices. The answerer who is into novels and plays wrote *“It motivates the student to do more work not just to read but to express himself at presenting a play or essay”*. The play fans had a share of things to say *“Ça sera un atout pour mon cursus professionnel”, “Because it is a resume of the novel”, “Because it was very funny and makes me learn how to speak fluently”*. The one for movies said *“I can*

*grasp all the novel and I never forgot it*” and the one who liked the Guessing activity added “*because we have open chance to come out with all what we have*”. Three blanks were scored, and the last one remained irrelevant to novel sessions.

To keep things fair and balanced, students were asked which activities they liked the least. It was no wonder that transformation did not include the reading phobia; four students named it their least enjoyable one. Out of the remaining six answers, only one was meaningful “*the first two sessions*”, the respondent from Chad was rather not a fan of his own lack of knowledge of English literature “*Mon inexperience*”, he wrote, three blanks followed, and one irrelevant answer. Explanations followed in question twenty-seven. Reading-phobics related it to different reasons: “*I usually used to get tired of the long novels and stories*”, “*because of the time*”, “*it takes a long time*”, “*because I understand more when I read silently*”. The student who did not like the first two sessions associated to personal reasons “*I was new at it and i was like a silly student*”. The one with not much experience said the hardship came from it being a first “*C’était ma première fois*”. The three blanks were maintained along with the irrelevant answer.

In station twenty-eight, the researcher wanted to know how far tuned with the story group four was, and whether they could find some reality in **SS**. Most of the answers were short ones “*there is some reality*”, a few others took the time to write more “*because the same happened in our society*”, “*...because one of the girls chose logic .and the other sister follow her emotion*”, “*...some others are real like when man have more than one girl*”, “*Le roman, meme dans la fiction, est influencé par le milieu. L’écrivain est toujours influencé par son milieu. Le roman contient de réalités*”.

If all ten respondents found the story to have a real dimension, does that mean they could relate to it? Seven said *Yes* they were able to, while three others claimed they did not. How? Question thirty asked. The answers ranged and varied once more: “*Because I did an important role of the novel. John Willoughby*”, “*En résumant le livre dans son context historique, le role de ses personnages, le message qu’il contient*”, “*by imagining the events of the novel*”, “*By trying to remember what was written (projected) on the wall, and the answers of students when you ask us to imagine the end of every part*”, “*I was trying to link the events and remember them again by imagining the story*”, “*I can imagine myself in another of one place*”. One *Yes* was left unjustified.

Question thirty-one offered five parameters for students to decide how often they were able to empathise with the characters. Neither *Never* nor *Very often* were ticked, *Occasionally* was chosen four times, *Fairly often* twice, and *Quite often* got three ticks. To keep in within the same scope, the ten respondents were asked to describe how empathy has affected their ideas about the characters and the novel. Apart from one empty space, remaining nine answerers had ample things to tell: “*The novel was so interesting and the characters add more and more interest to it so that you will be affected by the events and the characters too*”, “*Rien d’influent sur mon comportement, mais je commence à compatir les peines de ceux qui suivent la passion. De toute façon, je préfère le rationalisme*”, “*I like some of them, especially the main characters Elinor and Marianne*”, “*I felt for them*”, “*We must search for the important items which presentated by the character you feel like from one when enrich you mind by new ideas*”, “*I feel this story happens now*”. Three answers were elaborate reflections in what relates to the main characters “*I liked the novel very much and I felt the characters mostly Elinor and Marianne, and I felt that Marianne was not happy because she didn’t find Mr*



*Charming*”, “*On general, the novel is very good, but there are some characters I didn’t like, for example, Marianne, because she can’t use her mind for everything, with it we can be careful from the mistakes*”, “*I love the novel so much. I like Elinor and her logic, end with Edward. Poor Marianne, I feel sorry for her because she didn’t marry prince charming. What is amiss in the novel is a sad ending of Willoughby; I mean he must get a hard harsh end*”.

How much have students taken advantage during novels’ sessions, were they given the chance to voice their views? Nine answers came positive while the tenth was a No. Why? Question thirty-four inquired. The respondent with a negative No took responsibility for it confessing “*I didn’t participate in class, it was my fault*”. The nine Yesses were associated with the different ways students found in expressing their feelings and ideas: “*Because we had chance to read the novel in class and we were asked for the novel. So I had the chance to speak*”, “*C’est un avantage, une arme pour se défendre ; s’imposer avec les idées convenables*”, “*Because it provides with new ideas*”, “*Because every student share the participation in class*”, “*specily when the teacher ask to guess what will happen, everyone is participating*”, “*because it gives us the opportunity of enrich our language with new ideas*”, “*because there are many voices were hidden, and when the chance came they were heard*”, “*Because the teacher asks us to read the role and say what we understand from the novel*”, “*Our teacher didn’t give us the novel story, we gave our suggestion about it, so I did*”.

Since the SS novel sessions were served in a gender mould, it was time to ask how much of a difference it made. Nine students answered question thirty-five, *do you think that a gender-reading invites more debate?*, with a Yes, the last one was left unticked.

Further explanations and clarifications soon followed in thirty-six. Most answerers found the gender element to be enriching, if not essential, in the way it offers fresh venues for discussion and understanding the story: *“Because it is something necessary in the novel. However if the novel use just one gender it will be boring”*, *“L’autre est un arrangement. Pour bien comprendre, il faut un débat”*, *“Because they exchange different opinions which makes it more great”*, *“it’s gives the chance to participate and tell your opinion and shows the defrences that result: deferent ideas and debates”*, *“Because in the class I knew how did my classmate think about the story of the novel, and their view about the characters”*, *“When the reader tell there is some words and ideas difficult so they need discussion”*, *“When the teacher asks to imagine every part of the novel, it was not boring”*, *“Because it gives nice impression and the teacher helped us to imagine or live every role”*. The ninth Yes was left unexplained.

As mentioned earlier, SS plot was given in the form of gender dualities to facilitate learners’ mission in remembering the characters and event related to them. How far interesting did students find it? Eight respondents affirmed that men vs. women dualities were interesting, one said No, and the tenth left the box with no tick. Question thirty-eight sought more insights on how. The answers maintained the claim that the presence of both is a spice for discussion, as well as a source of capturing interest and intriguing curiosity: *“Sans les hommes, le livre est enfantin, sans les femmes, le succès est presque impossible ; il faut les deux. C’est inevitable”*, *“Because it adds to the novel a new touch to make the reader understands the different roles between the men and women”*, *“Because it collects two different ideas with a different reaction”*, *“The men are sense, women are sensibility. Everyone is attractive so every person relate with sense or sensibility”*, *“defrences result deferent opinions and ideas and that what we look for”*,

*“men and women each one have different opinions about how they deal with in the novel”, “because if there is no men vs. women in the novel it wouldn’t be interesting and there will be no impression, and because they give a nice taste to the novel”, “When the teacher asked us to do men vs. women, I felt very excited to read the entire novel”.* The final gender-related question inquired about its usefulness in the first place: Did the gender-opposed descriptions of characters help group four better understand? Eight students said Yes it did, while two left the box empty.

From gender to teaching was the next set of questions. Did you like the way the novel was taught? Forty asked. Surprisingly, all ten respondents ticked the Yes box. Complementary question forty-one sought validating answers. Some students referred to the value of the content taught *“we must learn how we can do to benefit from reading novels”, “it help up to get the message of the novel and understand the entire meaning”,* some others related it to the way of teaching *“It is more interesting”, “Yes, because it is good way and simple”, “Il y avait la facilité de le comprendre”, “It gives us the motivation since it is taught collective”, “It’s modern, funny, important. I love it”,* the three remaining ones highlighted the teacher’s role *“Yes because the teacher were so helpful to explain the plot for us”, “When the teacher started telling the novel I felt that I was living with the characters”, “Because our teacher taught like a friend who want to explain a song, or who want to tell a joke”.*

Next, the teacher was put in the centre of critic, was she able to deliver the novel plot to her students? Nine students said *Yes* while the Chadian one clicked the *No* box. It should here be noted the latter did face challenges during the entire year for the main reason that he has not been much accustomed to studying English; he was still a beginner

making baby-steps towards familiarising his ears to the language. The final teacher-related question was on how far was the impact she had in helping her learners take more interest in literature and literary texts. All ten respondents agreed that their teacher did help them be more conscious of literature appeal.

Session five was all about taking the stage and letting the inner artist within learners come out, did the play, then, help them better remember and understand **SS**? Nine students ticked the Yes box, while one went for the No. The answerer with the No did volunteer to give an explanation *“because our play was not organized very well”*. The others with the Yesses had their own say as well accentuating different points: *“I remember it because I wrote it in my diaries”*, *“because it is a resume of all the novel, so you can understand the novel events from the play”*, *“The performance of a novel can stay in the memory for long time, especially when performed with groups”*, *“because the play make it better to understand”*, *“while reading 3 missed something and in the play I discover that everyone missed something, so we completed each other and with the performance we gave them information”*, *“...to understand more and live the events of the novels”*, *“C’est plus compréhensible, la mémoire perçoit aisément en retenant les choses”*, *“If we just read it in class, my degree of remembering the novel is not high as I do the play and watch the play of the others students, it’s more”*, *“because while doing the roles of the characters I remember the novel characters and specially the play was turned into Algerian version”*.

Students were given free space to suggest activities or things they would do differently in novel sessions. The suggestions were enriching and remindful of things that were amiss and that are to be taken in consideration in the future: *“I will suggest to give*

*the students every week end a novel to read and to make a summary to read at class*”, “*Simply, I want to give all the students the chance to share the session*”, “*I would change the method of presenting novels by give more skills and plot to deed with this*”, “*I offer the students the best play, the real book of this novel, and other books if it’s possible*”, “*Add visual material, watch movie and repeat some action as old dancing*”, “*I’ll offer students the chance to make plays twice a week and read different novels*”, “*I describe the novel and make very interesting*”. Three respondents had nothing to say because they believed the teacher to have done it all “*Nothing*”, “*everything is good, you give all what we need a model novel and play and more explanation*”, “*Nothing because my teacher perfect to this role*”.

The last question was an open one for the ten respondents to have their say in what concerns the novel, students and the teacher. Ten different answers centred on different particulars were given. Students were either given advice or commended for their interest: “*Je conseille surtout les étudiants à lire ce livre*”, “*students must do their best to give more opinions about interest of novels*”, “*the students were brave to say their point of views*”, “*The students were so collaborators*”, “*...the students, we should read lot of novels to enrich our vocabulary...*”. One answer was kept very minimal and blurry “*about the student*”. The novel, **SS**, got its share of recommendations: “*novel is need all care and flourishment from the users*”, “*This novel gives us an opportunity to work as students in making a work and perform it and this was a new form/way*”, “*...the novel, it was a good choice and amazing I like it...*”, “*The novel gives a lesson to learn*”, “*And the novel was so beautiful and helped us to break the routine*”. When it came to the teacher, some answers were general: “*...teachers should give more plot and new technic of novels*”, “*I would ask teachers to aim for deeper essays not just superficial*”, “*The*

*teacher, there are no recommendations but he/ she must always use the new media to get information and his/ her education must be renewed*". The four to remain were addressed to the teacher in person as an acknowledgement of her part and abilities: "*au professeur, de laisser faire la tête bien faite*", "*, the teacher is able to teach anything she put on her mind*", "*I want to thank the teacher for her big work she does .she was very helpful...*", "*The way of teaching of Mrs Darcy (the teacher's nickname) stays as it's now and never change even she is 50 years old, her secret method of stealing the students' hearts, she just is a friend of them first, and teacher of them second, I'm fond of it, stay as you are*".

Forty-seven questions were the accumulation of the six sessions that group four had with the novel **SS**. If there is to be one regret it is that there were some spaces and boxes that were left empty which denied this study from a richer content. Nevertheless, the ten respondents succeeded in financing this dissertation with enough material to suffice the proceeding of next parts.

### ***3. The Post-Questionnaire: Drawing conclusions***

Learners in groups two and four underwent an extensive literary experience over six different sessions that introduced them to Jane Austen's novels **PP** and **SS**. During session six, only the twenty respondents who filled the pre-questionnaire were summoned back for a final evaluation that was concluded with them taking home the post-questionnaire. Forty-seven questions were designed to elicit learners' feedback on particular issues. Conclusions that are uncommon with the pre-questionnaire are to be detailed in what follows.

The initial twelve questions were the survey-type that aimed to feel the effect generated by the novels whether liked or not, satisfying or not, view-changing or not...etc. The general feeling of the answers was quite positive with most ticks on the Yes box. The first stop would be at questions three and four where the respondents were asked if they were satisfied with the choice of novels, three were not happy about **PP** and one not much into **SS**. What to suggest instead? Youth novels, Love in the Time of Cholera, The Fox, and adventure novels. Students are entitled to have a say in what they study, to a certain degree, and it is teachers' task to come up with a democratic syllabus that appeals to all tastes. It cannot be denied that one cannot please everyone's personal preferences; however, an attempt could be made to target the most prominent ones.

In question six, the twenty respondents were asked to justify whether their view of literature has changed or not. Three answers of the entire twenty stood out: "*Now I find myself ready to read*", "*because I was thinking that literature is just learning by heart*", "*I learnt that literature is reading, not defining words*" to signalled three recurrent issues: reading, how to read and learning by heart. Learners do not like to read. Why? Because they think it is a boring activity. Teachers should refute such a claim. How? It is no easy

task. When a literary text is introduced in class, it should be done for sound reasons, not random ones. In the case of a novel, time almost never allows teachers to deal with it in its entirety. If bits of chapters are the only option at hand, selection should be well thought of. One should aim for passages that highlight the best about a novel as well as key dialogues to be read aloud and performed by duos or multiple conversers. The teacher has to provide a model reading with distinct intonation and dramatic rises and falls in order to bring the conversation into life. Students will pick on the action of reading and follow in the same path and they will find the reading more animated, thus, more interesting.

Learning by heart comes next in the list. The lengthy courses, the heavy-worded hand-outs and the comatose lectures lead to a one-way road, learning by heart and students have no escape from that. How else are they going to recap and digest the huge amounts of information which they could not understand in class? Students are not supposed to come into exams only to fill answer sheets with copy pastes of what they had in class. Where is the accomplishment in that? Why not give them something that would make think, use their minds, ask questions and make research? When they show up at the exam room, there will be a thousand different answers for a thousand different students. Can we, all ones concerned, not take some time to ponder upon that syllabus we are supposed to teach over the year, and seek ways to present it in ways that are actually worth the students while?

Do students wish to learn more about literature and literary after having experienced **PP** and **SS**? Eighteen out of twenty respondents said ‘Yes’ they do. The reasons to that varied from one answerer to the other, but the one that was quite personal was that learners appreciated the ‘imagination’ part of literature as seen in novels’ sessions.



Students like to use their imagination. They have got brains of their own; why not grant them the chance to use them? They like to have a personal touch and say in what they are learning. If teachers use that to their own advantage, they might be surprised with the outcome. Imaginative approach based activities can be given to grant the students the chance to let that negative energy out. They would be absorbed in the idea of producing something personal, which is an achievement that they take on seriously. Give them the chance to share this achievement, this production with others, offer them the chance to read out loud, to feel appreciated by others. At times, teachers would be surprised to how much serious their classes take these writing spaces. They would be so personal, they would get so creative, and they would go the extra-mile; make sure they take the advantage. As a teacher of Oral Expression, I have always managed to offer some writing tasks, which were generally welcomed by both groups. My aim was, mainly, to compare the verbal and written competences, to see whether learners were conscious about the errors they make when speaking to avoid them while writing. The other motive was to involve those who like to write first, to be able to read loud and talk later. There were those moments of astonishment filled with pride where a she or he would take the stage and read for us what they wrote, or when I would take back home written papers only to discover marvels. I made sure each piece got its due share of praise while my next recommendation was for them to publish their writings online, on their social network accounts, and share them with others. During novels' sessions, time was not quite in favour to introduce writing tasks; however, imagination-inspiring activities were maintained. *Guess what* was introduced to activate learners' creativity to come up with as much personal possibilities as they wished, some which could be developed into sequels or creative re-writings of the novels' plots. The play gave more space for both groups to

unleash the tides of their imagination and come up their own versions and interpretations of both novels.

Some students justified their ‘not likely’ answer to question nine, how likely they are to read the entire novels, for not having much time as if they have that much to do in the first place. Some others expressed linguistic inadequacy as they could not go beyond the difficulty of the vocabulary. Focusing too much on understanding every difficult item the reader encounters, takes all the pleasure out of the reading activity. Instead of trying to understand every word, students can attempt to infer its meaning from the context. One of the interesting justifications for this question was for a ‘may be’, “*If I want to read, I read*”. The answer itself is Arabic-formulated, nonetheless, revealing. When it is not about having time to read, students seemingly have mood issues. This one respondent represents all those learners whom teachers know as capable of giving more but who prefer to remain idle during courses. Consequently, educators have to put in a little extra effort to activate such passive elements in class in order to make students such as the above do want to read.

The researcher has on several occasions admitted the time handicap that deprived this study from possible richer extensions. Respondents were invited to give their judgments about the time allocated to the novels. Six out of the twenty ticked the ‘No’ box and said that it was not enough. “*We did not have enough time to read it all I like tasting the quotes the style of the writer*”, “*because they have many things*”, “*because of the vocabulary which was difficult for me*” further justify the answer. Teachers of literature should give a literary text its due time and give students the chance to explore the story, to know the characters, to understand the plot, to guess, to imagine and to be

involved. The teacher has to design activities that highlight the beauty in a work, or take a moment and pause at a beautiful passage and let students enjoy it and show them how to.

On the other hand, there were students who thought time was enough for them to grasp the plot, the main reason to that they wrote was the teacher: *“Because it was well explained by the teacher and our teacher knew exactly how to benefit from the time”*, *“You made simple and fun for us to read it and grasp it”*, *“Our teacher did her best to make us understand the plot”*, *“Because you make it easy to be understood and you explain it in many sessions”*. The teacher, unquestionably, plays a major role in students’ level of tuning in with a story, of being interested in knowing more, reading more, discovering more. Time has to be fit to the size of the literary text, and the needs of the classroom. The activities being introduced are a key to make such a leverage if carefully designed where each student will find a thing or two that correspond to their learning profile and that appeal to them. In order to motivate learners to take part, the researcher inserted guessing which is an old, yet effective, way to get people’s attention and it worked wonders during novels’ sessions. Giving the story in different parts sustains a certain amount of suspense and keeps the students on tenterhooks to know what comes next with all sorts of speculations in mind. Furthermore, the fun element in teaching, serving and presenting a literary text seems to be well appreciated by students. No need to get all serious about literature or to get all clownish either. One may find windows where to throw in bits of comments, additions, twists, to use videos, pictures with relation to the text with a humour dimension to them just to unwind.

One of the difficulties admitted by learners in question eighteen is keeping up with the characters, who they were and their relationships with one another. Respondents from both groups were lost in the midst of all the different names they heard. The researcher judges that there were not that many names to retain. The main reason, however, for such challenge, is that learners did not have the chance to read the entire novel themselves to meet the characters one by one and be filled in with each one's description. The narrow time window spared for the novels' sessions did not allow the researcher to deal with each character separately and introduce the learners properly to the families in **PP** and **SS**. Practice makes perfect, it is said, if students get the chance to take up the different roles in a story, it would be much easier to identify them. Groups two and four got the chance to be the characters of the novels in the plays they performed. The experience was both fun and instructive and by the end of it, it was clear who was who. There were some confusions, to remain credible, about secondary characters in **PP** and to make the difference between the Dashwood sisters in **SS**. The teacher pointed them at the end of the performance still crediting her learners for their efforts.

Another hardship that marked the novels' sessions was the vocabulary according to a few respondents. While one attributed the source of their struggle to "*some words and expressions are difficult*", another admitted it to be the learners own fault "*may be because we don't read a lot and we have poor vocabulary*". Of all the twenty students who blamed external factors, who gave ulterior reasons, who pinned their struggles on the syllabus, the teacher, the novel, time...etc. only one was true enough to admit a personal responsibility. Students do not read a lot, how else are they expected to earn vocabulary and recognize words if they do not take the trouble to read and be familiar with such items. One cannot expect to know something when one does not make the

move to actually know it. It is also important to make sure that learners do actually retain the vocabulary they earn from a literary text. Games can be introduced for such ends in a fun yet educational way. An example would be the starter activity in session three in each group.

Within the same vocabulary-related issues, question twenty-two inquired whether students acquired new items, most of them ticked the ‘yes’ option. However, when asked to supply examples, the answer space was often left blank or it was something of “*unfortunately I cannot remember*”. One of the reasons that the researcher can give is, once again, that learners never got the chance to deal with the novels in whole; they never got to touch the novel, to go through it, and read it themselves. This has definitely deprived them from a better chance to retain words, and know how to write and spell them. Some excerpts, as already mentioned, were projected in class, but it was not enough. They were given some items from time to time such as patriarchy, entail, primogeniture, and whenever a student would signal a strange word, the teacher would write it on board, explain and give examples. At times, learners were invited to try to guess the meaning of a word from its context. While this worked for some learners, the majority needed more extensive exercise and practice for the newly-acquired words to stick.

One of the remarks that stand out in question thirty-two, when it comes to relating to characters in both novels, is that group four respondents were more fortunate with **SS** than group two with **PP**. Characters in the former had much clearer definitions and relationships to them, the only ones that were often mixed up were Elinor and Marianne. In **PP**, students were literally lost when it came to determining who was who; apart from

Elizabeth, Darcy and Mrs Bennet, the other names were too blurry in their minds and memory. While almost every answer related to **SS** listed the different names: “*I love the novel so much. I like **Elinor** and her logic, end with **Edward**. Poor **Marianne**, I feel sorry for her because she didn’t marry prince charming. What is amiss in the novel is a sad ending of **Willoughby**, I mean he must get a hard harsh end*”, **PP** answerers were not that minute “*I don’t remember the names of characters exactly, but they are so interesting in the novel*”. The one thing to be said in justification is that while both novels have so much in common<sup>24</sup>, which is the reason why they are part of this study in the first place, **PP** is more mature, more developed and more expansive in terms of plot in comparison to **SS**. **PP** is a more perfected version of **SS** with further additions and diverted sub-plots.

*“Compared to **Pride and Prejudice**, **Sense and Sensibility** figures rarely in general discussions of Austen’s writing career. And those critical studies that address each novel individually most often seek in **Sense and Sensibility** early signs of a craft that would blossom into art only in the later works”*

(Stephens Duncan, 2000: 17)

In order for learners to have a better grip over the story as well as the characters that feature in **PP**, they need more time, which can be said to have been the black sheep of this study, to have more access to descriptions and details throughout reading. Having said this, group two respondents still evinced a generic understanding of broad storyline and an overall appreciation of characters: “*The novel was perfect and great, it put its emphasis on something realistic and logical*”, “*In this novel, Jane Austen collected different personalities and different kind of behaviours. The characters were totally different and special*”.

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<sup>24</sup> Refer to following website for a detailed comparison <http://jane-austen.livejournal.com/60006.html>

When questioned about how helpful the novels were to offer learners the chance to voice their opinions, sixteen out of the twenty gave positive Yesses. The respondents displayed their gratitude for such a chance and at times their surprise at the achievement: “*Our teacher didn’t give us the novel story, we gave our suggestion about it, so I did*”, “*because my voice was hid but when offer novel it was discovered*”. The way of ‘serving’ the novel is a leverage to be well used. The teacher, in fact, plays a major role in making a knockout out of an unprivileged literary text as much as she can turn a masterpiece into a loathsome torture class for students. The key to making a success out of novels’ sessions is that the researcher was inviting and welcoming opinions and ideas whatever they might have been like, and however weird they might have sounded. Students were placed in a conversation-friendly environment where extremes were not sanctioned nor were the mistakes pointed or corrected. By the end of the sessions, I had heard it all from unexpected spins to strange guesses, unconventional spinoffs and shocking suggestions, but then that was the point, for learners to get it all out. When someone had predicted that Lydia would be kidnapped by a serial killer, I paused for a second and then just nodded, “well, that could make for an interesting turnaround!”, another in group four thought that **SS** should have had a more gloomy end for Willoughby, I welcomed the idea and invited the class to entertain such thoughts in sequels of their own writing. I cared less for the mistakes made as long as it meant that some of the rarely heard voices were vigorously coming to life during novels’ sessions, each one responding to their favourite activity. I may even vouch that participation rates throughout the year reached a zenith during the novels’ sessions.

When it was time to reflect upon the way the novels were taught, most respondents seem to have valued the ‘bit by bit’ technique: “...*because it was taught part by part and*

*makes us eager about what would happen next*”, “*because we learned it step by step*”. Instead of overwhelming learners with information and details, the teacher rather gave small bites that included projected chapters, conversational passages, selected descriptions, personal summaries, concept definitions, historical glimpses...etc. Every step was separated from the other with a *guess what* intermission that served the aim of activating learners’ interaction with the story. The trick worked and students loved it as indicated in their answers. It turns out that both groups did feel involved, if not taking part at times “*When the teacher started telling the novel I felt that I was living with the characters*”, “*I feel this story happens now*”. Had we had more time, the results would have been even more remarkable. Teachers of literature ought to keep away from what learners put as “*serious attitude*”, it should be buried along with old-fashioned ways of teaching, and supplanted with a fun light inviting ambiance.

What better way to practice a literary text than to perform it on stage? The idea was at first frightening, and incomprehensible to students. I promised them it would be a lifetime experience they would not regret, and I knew it was. I gave them as many ideas as possible, as many details, clarifications, explanations to do their fears away. It was a mission to convince, and I was not losing it. On the day of the performance, most students were ready to take **PP** and **SS** to a whole new level of novel creativity. I imposed no restraints; I asked them to be as comfortable as they pleased. It was okay to make mistakes, to forget, to redo scenes, to put on music, to dance, to dress up, to invite friends over, it was their moment TO BE. There were blunders, some confusions and disarrangements, but at the end of each play, the story was clear, the point was there, happy faces were in sight. The others who did not partake wished they did, and promised they would not miss a second chance. The performers had a better understanding of the



novels, for in order to write the play, they had to refer back to **PP** and **SS**. Then, once having written the script, they had to go over their roles, to memorise their traits and details and they had to rehearse with their mates, each one listening to the other and paying attention. By the end of it, they did more than just learn about one character, but all the others in the play as well. They had fun doing it! It was a way to break the routine, to change, to offer them something new. Both groups were grateful for such a chance, promise accomplished.

## *Conclusion*

Chapter three closes in after rounds of collecting answers. Comprising stops, the crossroad and the post-questionnaire, have come as an aftermath to the pre-questionnaire and the five novels sessions from chapter two. Session six has been a gender-centred round table that saw the coming of twenty participants from groups two and four together. Over a span of one hour and half, the researcher, along with her students, discussed everything gender in the novels **PP** and **SS**. The ingredient seemed to be the sparkle needed to fuel the debate in class.

The post-questionnaire, then, came to afford more answers to the questions often asked in a literature classroom. Respondents were generous and forward with their opinions, assessments, and recommendations, which would help the researcher to establish a sound data base to carry on with chapter four. Every single reply included within the twenty copies was diligently analysed so as to squeeze out every interpretation, thus, draw as many corresponding conclusions as possible.

# Chapter Four

Bringing the 'it' into Lit

# Bringing the 'it' into Lit

## *Introduction*

Are you that literature teacher in constant search for new ways? Do you ever think of ways to resurrect the lost interest in a literature class? Do you ever wonder how to ignite the fading passion of students? Do you ever seek to fuel the dying fires of motivation? Do you ever wish to re-flame the melting desire for reading cherished poems, acclaimed novels and epic drama? If you do, then, this chapter is the right place to be.

Chapter four starts with the limitations of this study, the fallouts of the two questionnaires mainly, along with the impediments met with during the different stages of research. This first part might not offer the answers to the questions above, however, it would acquaint the teacher and the reader with what to expect along the way.

Then, the chapter moves to the recommendations that have been designed and inspired by the conclusions made in previous chapters. The researcher strives to put forward a suggestion to go with the issues spotted throughout the study. Further propositions are likewise provided to best reflect the researcher's vision of a literature classroom.

## *1. Limitations and shortcomings*

It is only fitting to admit the many downs this study has gone through. The very beginning would be with the number of participants which has been somehow inconsistent. On the day when the pre-questionnaire was handed around ten to fourteen learners in each group attended, and while ten filled the questionnaire, the remaining ones chose not to take it since the teacher said it was voluntary, and so after holidays, and although all the class went through the five sessions, the pre-questionnaire card could no longer be played. The ten participants were kept for the post-questionnaire to keep the comparison between the two as credible as possible.

In terms of content, questionnaire one is twenty-five questions long, because it was mainly a generic one, aimed at surveying general opinions about general matters, reading, literature, Brit-Lit classes. The specific points to target were those with relation to learners' feedback on content, teaching, teacher and activities. The answers provided by students helped the researcher designate particular issues to aim for during the sessions and in the next questionnaire. Questionnaire two is forty-seven questions long, it kept some of the questions in the pre-questionnaire, and went for more identifiable topics –the teacher, the content of the novels, gender, the activities, students' feedback on what they had. That is the main reason why the two are not balanced.

Another disappointing, yet interesting, common point is blanks and empty spaces. In the pre-questionnaire, most of the answers that were left unanswered were due to the fact learners did not know what to write as they usually do not attend literature classes. When it comes to group four, who later got **SS**, the ten respondents filled the questionnaire before leaving class. The teacher could tell that most of them were in a rush

to get over with it and leave. Some of the respondents found themselves before a difficult task, it turned out, as their faces coloured with question marks and signs of powerlessness. The teacher offered her help clarifying the questions that these elements found challenging. It should be herein admitted that two copies were given with a completion rate of 10 to 15%. The researcher judged them as unhelpful to provide any insightful information. The two copies were put aside and two other students were approached to fill in the questionnaire *de novo*, and later take part in the post-questionnaire. At times, the respondents felt inexperienced to be in a position to make judgments and evaluations. The same case applies to the uncompleted spaces in the post-questionnaire, which remain fewer in comparison to the pre-questionnaire. One of the potential causes to add is the thinness of learners' knowledge which is most evident in questions from seventeen to twenty-four (refer to appendix 05) when it comes to literature and literature-related issues. There was a record of blanks that amounted to ten and eleven when asked what they would do differently in Brit-Lit class. Students were straightforward as to write "*I don't know*" three times and "*nothing*" five times in questions with relation to literary texts, things to add, to do differently, to make Brit-lit class interesting.

While learners' ignorance can be the outcome of many different reasons, the one that stands out is that they do show very little concern about their own education. Truth be told, most students, probably not only English majors, do not bother to inquire on what they are about to major in. They just pick a choice out of the many on their '*fiche de vœux*' and then wait for the beginning of the academic year to be shocked with what they have chosen. Endless is the number of students, the researcher concluded, who had no idea that joining the English Department would mean having detailed modules for every

aspect of the language: Written Expression, Oral Expression, Reading Comprehension, Grammar, most of all Linguistics and Phonetics. The surprising issue produces three kinds of students: those who will abandon the major once the time-table is revealed, those who will give it a try but may change or drop out eventually, and those who realise they will just have to pull themselves together and study hard. Out of the three-hundred and fifty first year enrollers in the English Department of Mascara, only one hundred and twenty made it through to second year. There were some drop-outs during the year, but most of the two-hundred remaining ones re-oriented toward other majors, Arabic ones, they reasoned that they might do better since it would be in their mother tongue. All of this drama could have been skipped had learners taken the time to investigate their future study specialty. What is worse is that even after they realise what the curriculum is and what modules they are to have, students remain passively irresponsible and ineffective. It is not like they raid libraries, dig up books, and engage in a deep process of self-instruction; they pause at the surprise moment and stay so for the rest of the year. The reasons given to justify such defect remain very hollow: *I cannot talk and participate because I am shy; because I do not understand the vocabulary; because the course is difficult; because my English is weak; because of the syllabus; because of the teacher.* While each one of these causes might have some truth and weigh to them, where does the student fit in all this? Students do not take part in their educational advancement nor do they take the blame for their failures. Learners have yet to learn that make it or break it is their own responsibility and they cannot evade it.

The blame is shared with the university as well. Had the Algerian university dedicated some time to actually guide and enlighten high school graduates, learners would not be walking into a blind maze. University has to grant its enrolled students

access to what the possibilities may unfold, and to demystify the majors for them. The brochures handed to *freshmen* are very sketchy to hardly do them any good as they only include generic lists of what the university offers rather than detailed descriptions. The result would often be learners picking a ‘catchy’ name as major and ending up in a “that is not what I expected” fashion. Teachers also play a role in the circle of blame. It is often the case that educators treat their students as specialists in the course they have chosen and cut into chase. Little time is dedicated to explain the *whats* and *whys* and the *hows* crowding in learners’ heads.

Going back to blanks and unfilled spaces, it is observed that they are fewer in the post-questionnaire. There were cases where learners would criticize for the mere sake of criticizing without providing sound reasons, as in the case of the respondent who said she did not like **PP** because she would have liked to have D.H. Lawrence’s *The Fox* instead but then did not justify the answer. The other unanswered questions have been said to be the outcome of not understanding them and since the post-questionnaire was taken home, the teacher was not there to clarify what is meant or expected.

Of all the forty-seven questions in the post-questionnaire, the one that got a common rate of two to three blanks in both groups is the one with a relation to vocabulary. Students were asked if they acquired any new items, to which nineteen answered with a Yes. When it was to exemplify, however, answers were not that accurate. Respondents in group four tried to be tentative about admitting they could not remember the words they presumably had acquired and answered with “*Some sort of words .punctuation and how we follow the intonations of some expressions.*”, “*New rules and new vocabulary!*” instead of giving examples, another student wrote a straightforward “*I can’t remember!*”. As far as group two and **PP** are concerned, the



same phenomenon persists, yet, learners were smarter not to express it. There were three answers wholly inspired by the title itself with one of them adding the (etc.) next to the words pride and prejudice. As already explained in the analysis of the post-questionnaire, the chief factor is that learners did not have the chance for a whole learning experience. The researcher has also noticed, during novels sessions, that students in both groups hardly took notes down. The teacher was giving her classes plenty of information, descriptions and details about the authoress, the novels, the stories and characters. The lessons were presented in different ways, at times projected, at times through activities and games, but rarely would a student be seen writing down things on their notebooks. They were paying attention, which is good, but they did not master the technique of being attentive and still making the best of it. Taking notes is a trick to teach at times. Being beginners at the whole lecturing mode of learning, students are at loss as to which information is worth detaining and which can be memorised. It is a fact that some learners just do not know what to write and what to skip. There was this time where I have taken a glance at some students' notes and found out that they have written everything that was said during the class, trivial included. Teaching literature is based, to a certain degree, on giving lectures that demand students' attentiveness, so why do teachers not take the time to show them how to make the best out of the data given?

Both questionnaires cross roads again in questions where respondents are asked to name novels they would like to have in a Brit-Lit class. In the pre-questionnaire it is question twenty-two and number four in the post-questionnaire with a slight difference. Hardly any title is named except for *Love in the Time of Cholera* and *The Fox* which were both done as part of Oral Expression book reports activity. The name of authoress Jane Austen and sub-genres such as adventure, tragedy, history made the list with no

further details or particulars. This can be an indicator of learners' deficiency when it comes to reading; they apparently do not have that many reads up their sleeves to name. On the other hand, the answers highlight the different tastes of learners which ought to be taken into consideration when designing courses. There are three genres to literature: poetry, prose and drama with almost endless sub-genres to offer the teacher multiple choices to select from, again, with students' profiles and needs in mind. An introductory session can be wholly dedicated to getting to know one's class with in a less random fashion, a short questionnaire or test would be ideal to save up time and still get to detect the diversities to be faced with along the year.

In both questionnaires, the twenty respondents are given the power of evaluation. The researcher offered them different scales and parameters to assess the different aspects of their learning. When asked to rate the degree of their interest in Brit-Lit classes as well as the course itself, learners gave a majority of ticks on average ratings – seventeen on *averagely interested*, fourteen on *useful for language learning*, fifteen on *well taught*. The exception remains in the *very interesting in content* which was ticked twelve times only to evince learners' awareness as to how important the module is. The novels' sessions, however, got higher positive reviews with nine on *highly interested*, twelve on *very useful for language learning*, eight on *very interesting in content*, another nine on *very well taught*. While numbers remain relative, they still indicate a slight change toward the better that is to be nurtured and further encouraged.

The justifications that followed evaluations in the pre-questionnaire are mostly related to the learners motivation and understanding of Brit-Lit and its significance “*improve ourselves and repertoires*”, “*because it is the best way to develop the reader way of speaking and writing*”, “*because it is the core of all modules*”, “*the source of*

*English language*”. The same points are highlighted as well as further elaborated in the post-questionnaire with a more positive personal incentive along with a distinct influence by the way the sessions have been taught. Samples would include: “*the best way to get language speculy (especially) when I find it interesting and very well taught*”, “*C’est une situation avantageuse qui nous donne plus de courage à surmonter les obstacles, vaincre la timidité..., avoir la confiance devant le public lorsqu’on parle*”, “*the way that you explain the novel, it was very clear and modern, according to me, it makes me feel that I am a character in the novel*”, “*The way of teaching is very modern and fun. I don’t feel bored in class especially when Miss asks us to imagine the rest and she gives us all the novel in different sessions, she makes me very excited to know the end. The use of the over-head projector is important also*”. Respondents seem to have their voices back so as to express their opinions and give feedback in comparison to the pre-questionnaire where the answers have been kept minimal.

The twenty respondents were asked about the activities they would like to have in Brit-Lit classes, the A demand was to perform plays, then to read novels stories and poems and discuss, present famous literary figures, write essays and have fun activities. Next, learners gave lists of tasks they enjoyed the most and the least in Brit-Lit classes. The listings were almost the same except in the degree of preference –Shakespeare, plays, poems, short stories, reading, vocabulary...etc. These suggestions, favourites, and dislikes were put to advantage in the novels’ sessions. Most learners admitted they enjoyed both novels, **PP** and **SS**, as they were taught in a “*fun modern way*”. The play proved to have offered students the creative outlet they sought and needed. Guessing, a new fun activity, was a refreshing addition to the sessions that was highly welcomed and praised by learners. Students still listed reading as their least enjoyed activity but

expressed their wish to have the original book at hand for a more real chemistry. It can be said that if their needs and recommendations are attended to, learners are more likely to be cooperative and responsive towards their education. They appreciate being asked to reflect upon their own learning, content, ways and the teacher included, and they value the ability to take all these into consideration all the more. The attitude shifted from passive as well as negative into dynamic and optimistic. There was one answer in the pre-questionnaire that carried along a feeling of bitterness "*Literature is interesting, but not in our university*", the same student exhibited a more positive viewpoint in the post-questionnaire, still admitting the shortcomings "*Though we did not have enough time and oral expression has nothing to do with teaching literature my cher teacher could help us in understanding the real meaning of Lit*". To have been able to transform bitterness into positiveness marks the signs of the instructive change that is taking place in both groups.

When given the chance of having a say as what they would do differently in their classes, learners had plenty to add. In the pre-questionnaire, blanks predominated but suggestions were still there, mainly about the teacher and teaching ways. As far as the former is concerned, students wanted her removed and changed for a more competent one who would explain the lessons in a very stimulating way. The program is found to be in need of some revision and shortening. Learners want also to have a space to fit their personal ideas and creations within Brit-Lit classes. In the post-questionnaire, only two blanks are scored out of twenty where it seems that respondents feel more confident about the things they want to have. Unexpectedly, learners want more novels, more books, more plays, more practice and more literature. The teacher, according to other answerers, has been able to deliver enough for them to ask for more. Even more, students have made some novel suggestions such as re-enacting scenes like classic dancing,

holding sessions in different places inside and outside the university, providing enough copies to have loud readings, in addition to other visual-related activities like movies. It seems that if offered an education that lives up to their expectations and aspirations, learners can turn into a powerhouse. Groups two and four are taking matters more into their own hands to meet their teacher half-way and to ensure that they are active partakers in their learning process.

The last question in both questionnaires is a free space of expression for the twenty respondents to write down anything they missed in previous questions. In the post-questionnaire, answers range from doubtful to wishful. Some students have declared they find Brit-Lit boring and not quite interesting, while others maintained the importance of the module still in the presence of a more qualified teacher. The remaining suggestions centred on Brit-Lit syllabus and the activities serve in a more instructive as well as engaging way. Recommendations in the post-questionnaire have a more promising feeling about them. Learners have benefited from such freedom and addressed their fellow mates with some counsel, mainly to read the novels and go for other reads. They have not missed the chance to make some propositions to teachers in general with regard to what they find “*superficial essays*”, the imperative use of ICTs, and the necessity of renewing their information. The researcher is frequently credited for being able to capture the novels, **PP** and **SS**, into stimulating sessions and creative activities; students express their gratitude for such an experience.

One last assumption to be made here is that teacher reviews and reflections are more prevalent in the post-questionnaire than in the pre-questionnaire. In the latter, whenever Brit-Lit teacher was mentioned it was to point her flaws, criticize her

incompetence, or demand her removal. Very few students allowed her some justice and referred back to her efforts in making classes work. However true or exaggerated reviews might have been, the Brit-Lit teacher is not the only one to take the blame for it but she definitely had little fans. The researcher having conducted this study is given a large share of evaluations in the post-questionnaire even when the question does not refer to her. Some learners made sure to acknowledge the teacher's role in the transformation of their views about literature and related subjects. The difference only indicates the weight that a teacher can play in affecting students' feedback and productivity and attracting their attention.

One does not need long years of experience to undertake a new field of teaching expertise; the key ingredient is will, the will to make as much efforts as it takes to make things work. The road toward successful end of years might not be as easy, but it will eventually be rewarding. I have been approached to teach literature before, but I declined the offer, my reason for that had been that I have never taught the module and I would not know where to begin. When I decided I was doing the novels' sessions, I had no ideas how to. The pre-questionnaire was a light in the dark tunnel, further inspiration was sought from my own experience as a student with my favourite literature teachers and literary moments, and the rest was supplied with my inspired initiative of how a literature class ought to be. I invested time and thought into designing the different sessions to come up with something original, instructive and engaging. I do not presume to say that things were perfect; they could not have been so from the first time. There were moments when students would be so responsive and interactive as there were moments when I felt that the session has gone down to a very monotonous rhythm as was the case in session two. I thought it was best to give my classes a rest from the novels for an entire course

and take some time myself to reflect. I could not sacrifice quality for the quantity of hours. The result was quite rewarding as the remaining sessions were explosive. I could not have been more satisfied with the way things turned out.

## ***2. Recommendations: Bring the ‘it’ into Lit***

Throughout this entire study, the researcher has spotted some issues that are either pointed to by students themselves or deduced through their answers, which make for must-stop points in this section. The attempt is to suggest remedial solutions and potential corrections drawing on personal conceptualisations as well as professional instructions. In short, the researcher strives to put together an encompassing *jar of tricks* to include ways, methods, and techniques that help bring the ‘it’ back into Lit.

The ‘it’ stands for all what literature has lost over the years: status, motivation, interest, passion, and much more. The ‘it’ is the lost interest, the fading passion of students, the dying fires of motivation, the desire to study literature; the ‘it’ is the excitement, the adventure, the mystery, the thousand pleasures, discoveries, instructions that await the learners. The ‘it’ are the ways, conventional and unconventional likewise, the strategies, old-fashioned and fashionable, as well as the endeavours, demanding and effortless, that us teachers follow, devise, and invest in teaching literature. The ‘it’ is the answer to the questions raised at the outset of this chapter.

It is foremost to be realized that teaching is three-dimensional; there are the students, the teachers, and the material to learn. To develop successful remedies all three partners must be taken into careful consideration and delved into extensively.

### ***2.1. Students: I want a teacher***

First on learners wish list when they join a class of literature is to find a teacher who is energetic, committing, creative, humorous, may be even charming, for the list certainly looks like that of ‘I want a life partner’ fashion. Yet, truth is that students do expect such



qualities, it is likewise true that learners might be looking for so much in a teacher, but it is their right to have their *Teacher Right*.

### 2.1.1. *Reading: Mission Impossible, is it?*

One of the major hindrances faced by a literature teacher is that of a reading-related nature. It is no secret that most learners abhor the activity so much that they would roll their eyes at the very mention of it. It is likewise true that some teachers of literature find themselves helpless before a large number of students, each one of them demanding rightful privileges in reading tasks. Consequently, many a problem is posed, questions are asked on how to make reading an appealing activity, how to provide full access to the target text for the entire class, and how to integrate readings in classroom. The researcher, having detected such issues before, has worked on a combination of suggestions, some of which have been tried in class, to detail in exhaustive parts.

#### 2.1.1.1. *How to serve a literary text?*

One of the major concerns posed in a literature classroom is how to secure the target text for the entire classroom. Number one on teacher's to-do list is to check whether the text is available at the university library or whether students can have access to it from other sources before even introducing it into the classroom. Poems are generally shorter and easier to procure while novels and plays are where this problem is most prevalent. Most of the time, there are not enough copies for each learner to take home with and spend time reading and understanding the text.

The researcher's first suggestion offers a way to manage a few copies and still make it work. The teacher having secured a number of the text copies would hand them out to

learners. To ensure the efficiency of the idea, the class is to be divided into groups of four to six students each to form a maximum of six or seven groups. This way would enable the entire classroom to have one copy per group. Then, loud readings would start in sequence, each time a different student from a different group would take their turn. If time does not allow, as is usually the case, learners who would not have the chance to read in a session can make it up in the next one. The teacher can take part in the reading as well, the first to launch the activity, so as to give learners a model in the way of pronouncing, pausing, intonating and transmitting the life within words.

If paperback cannot be procured, Xerox is an option. Once again, the teacher can divide the class into groups and assign them different chapters to Xerox. Otherwise, and to keep reading versatile, Xeroxing can be done in one stage of studying the novel (or play), as a way for students to have personal copies that they can read at home and avoid such complaints as *not affordable* as well.

Another technique, which has already been mentioned and tried during novels session, is to project the PDF (Portable Document Format) version of the target text using the overhead projector. This way ensures that all class has access to the text at the same time, and allows loud reading activities which are involving and much appreciated among students. It would be a beneficial technique not only to provide the text but to make reading fun and interesting as well. In questionnaire two, students have expressed they liked the idea as it enabled them to see the text, read it, and be familiar with the words as well as names of characters in both novels.

To keep away from routine practices, another way to serve a text is to provide CDs<sup>25</sup>. The teacher can compile a collection of the literary texts to be studied throughout the year novels, plays, poems, some other references, articles, and related books if possible into a CD. The Compact Disc can later be made into multiple copies and distributed out to students. Each one will end up with their own library to access whenever they wish. The teacher can ask learners to bring laptops<sup>26</sup> into the classroom and read off their screens. It is a way to combine a favourable technology among students into their learning. On the other hand, the teacher would be on the safe side, having taken the responsibility to provide the texts so that no one will use lack of copies or inaccessibility to them as a pretext when asked why they did not do their homework or why they got bad marks.

#### 2.1.1.2. *The question we never ask: How to read?*

How to read? This is a question that, as teachers, we probably do not bother to ask, I have not asked my students that until they themselves marked it among their concerns. It turns out that the very essence of reading “anathema” is the mere fact that learners do not know how to read. Why? The common reason, according to the twenty respondents during session six, is that they strive too much with vocabulary, difficult words which force them to stop each time and consult a dictionary, then carry on, and then stumble over a new vague expression, open dictionary, look it up. “*So that is why?*” was my reaction. I related it with the definition of literature and told them that I could tell their

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<sup>25</sup> Refer to appendix 06

<sup>26</sup> One major argument might be that not all students can afford a laptop. Fortunately, every university has at least one computer room equipped with multiple devices to suffice an entire classroom. A literature teacher can use that to advantage and move their session. It would be hitting two birds with the same stone, having access to computers and changing settings into a different place.

struggle from their ways of defining, all were literal none was personal. The teacher's advice for her class, and all those who wish to undertake literary readings, is to read for the mere pleasure of reading, because literature is foremost a feast, an enchantment, a celebration. Read a novel, and focus on the story as a whole, the feelings, the thoughts, and the reflections building in minds and forget about lexical troubles. A pencil can be used to underline unfamiliar lexis to be later, once the reading is finished, explained with the help of a dictionary and added to learners' jar of vocabulary. "Ah!" was the common response that accompanied looks of admiring the idea and realising the faultiness of previous practice.

It is not everyone who would pause a moment and ask themselves: how to read a novel? Most would just grab the book and start reading. The result is, often, a vague understanding of the story with sundry murky details to retain to no avail. At other times, the activity is aborted half way, if not at earlier stages, after hitting lexical dead ends. Learners from both groups two and four have admitted, at different stages of novels' sessions, that they faced many obstacles when reading a novel or a short story. The main reason, students confessed, is that of difficult vocabulary: they stop at every unfamiliar word, and after some time the activity becomes so dull and tiresome. This brings us, again, to the question above; how to read a novel? As a teacher, my advice for learners has been to embark upon the activity with an explorer spirit as if about to discover uncharted paths, as if about to unravel hidden secrets. Reading ought to be a pleasurable trip to literary wonderland not a spiritless recital of the lines within. There are a couple of ways to introduce reading activities inside the classroom so as to revive learners' interest anew.

### 2.1.1.3. *Read for Life*

Another *trick* to put some vigour to reading is to relate to it. Learners do appreciate to be able to end up with a something or two out of a reading experience. In the post-questionnaire, one respondent recommended that teachers should aim for deeper essays (to probably stand for all texts introduced in the class) not just superficial ones. To read for pleasure, to lose oneself in a story sounds good, but to read to walk out with something of actual use is far better. There are many literary texts that carry invaluable lessons within them that do not necessarily have to be procured from lengthy narratives. Teachers could put together a nuanced list<sup>27</sup> of short reads, the kind that can be finished overnight, and assign the stories to students. Each member in the classroom would read their story, then come to class, take the stage and share what they have learnt from it with their mates. Learners are to focus on hidden messages, moral lessons, and valuable gist of the narrative. They are to learn new things, acquire a skill, information, anything that would count for something, the things that help them grow personally, ethically and professionally. Let it be reading for life. Making literature classes count for something more than pleasurable moments of word highness brings us to talking about syllabus; where to even begin?

### 2.1.1.4. *Reading Through the Lens of Gender*

Throughout this research, gender has played a key role in the analysis, understanding and teaching of Austen's novels, **PP** and **SS**. It has proven to be a refreshing angle of study as well as a thought provocative teaching strategy. The

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<sup>27</sup> Refer to appendix 06 for a suggested list

researcher believes that a gender reading would make for a great addition in literature classrooms.

Female-male opposed and parallel descriptions likewise would make the literary text approachable and relatable to students. During novels' sessions, learners could easily identify with the different characters as well as distinguish similar traits in their own sex. The teacher can exploit this leverage to their advantage. Gender assures attention and involvement. It also invites endless debates and discussions. There is always going to be one party with claims that are different from those of the other. Each group will try to sell their own perception and defend their views.

A literary text may be entirely read through the lens of gender, when possible. Events of the story can be introduced in relation to the duality man vs. man. Examples would be that men were allowed to inherit while women were denied that, men had the right to a wider range of occupations, women were limited to fewer options. In Austen's time. It is a trick to make it easier for learners to remember facts and different characters. The teacher may dedicate one or two sessions only for the gender reading to best highlight some part in the literary text and then opt for different angles.

The gender element can also be exploited in students' critical receptions of the text. They can be asked to reflect on a certain point, gender-relations, social regulations, characters' descriptions from a gender dimension. They can draw on their own personal interactions with the text and with the issue at hand. They would have plenty to say in light of being the party concerned. Teachers have plenty room for creativity and flexibility in the ways they envisage to use the gender element in their classes.

### 2.1.2. *Book Clubs*

A literature class usually offers students the chance to encounter different texts, prose, poetry and drama. As admitted by the twenty respondents, all three genres are included in their list of favourites with varying degrees of preference. A suggestion would be that the teacher surveys learners' opinions at the beginning of the year and teams up prose lovers, poetry fans and drama enthusiasts together in three different groups. The teams can be referred to with further specific names once the teacher has a clear idea of what texts to introduce in the class. Examples would be Jane Austen Book Club, Shakespeare Drama Club, and Emily Dickinson Poetry Club as a fun way to engage students' attention. The teachers will play on the strengths of groups, each will deliver their assigned text the best way they can competing against the other. Whenever it is their turn, a club's members can take over the classroom to carry out the activities to go along their literary text, such as loud readings, lexical definitions, context and settings explanations, exposés, plays...etc. The teacher is present to launch the different exercises, guide their flow, intervene, reinforce, and give feedback when necessary. Learners will feel they are taking an effective part in their own education and developing into independent researchers breaking away from their constant need for teachers' support. Each member in a club is to contribute their own bite to the whole of their assigned literary piece. The teacher can invite the participants to inspire their roles and relate them to their own passions and interests. For example, if a student is into fashion, they can talk about women and men's wear during the era that corresponds to the text, if they are over-motivated, they can attempt to design a costume. If a play happens to be included on the club's to-do list, they can make use of the fashion activity previously presented. Literature, thus, would be more than mere lines to read within texts, it is an

entire world waiting to be resurrected back to life. It teaches students to look at the other dimensions there are to literature, shows them new ways to explore the texts, and stretches the horizons of possibilities and liberties they can take with a text. The claim to be maintained is that everyone has their own interpretation and personal perspective in approaching a literary text. The teacher might be surprised with how far her students can go taking advantage of such privileges.

In a similar fashion to book clubs, teacher Mark Furr from the University of Yokohama, Japan, who is the founder of an online website [eflliteraturecircles.com](http://eflliteraturecircles.com), suggests using literature circles<sup>28</sup> in an EFL classroom to pick up the tempo of classes. Furr describes the circles as “*fun, focused classroom-based student reading and discussion groups which naturally combine the skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening*” (Furr: 01). Unlike the book clubs, literature circles are carried by all students within separate groups. The teams would be constructed evenly to include excellent, average, talkative and shy learners likewise to create a balance. Members would, then, have to join efforts, display strong points and bring the best in each other. One of the many ends the literature circle serves is to intrigue learners’ curiosity into facts beyond the text, Furr believes. Having read and discussed a literary text over graded sessions, students would be eager to know more and go beyond the lines into the social, historical and cultural aspects. They would want to know why the author has written such and such in this and that way, they would even be interested in his person with relation to his writing. King of critics, as dubbed by Richardson Jones (1992), George Saintsbury fathers the idea of historicizing works of literature. A literary text is given a real dimension when studied with reference to its history. Literature is a free ticket into the

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<sup>28</sup> Find complete article: Why and How to Use EFL Literature Circles on <http://eflliteraturecircles.com/howandwhyilit.pdf>



culture, society, daily-life of the target language country. It offers learners an open window into the thoughts, occupations, dealings, and reflections of the target nation, thus a better understanding to how it functions. It is likewise a battery of topics which can be used to generate discussion in class. Relating events and characters within a novel, for example, helps students establish connections to real-life situations, thus, improves their chances of understanding and increases the degree of their empathy. By the end of a study, learners would have expanded their views of the human self, discovered new ways of looking at the world around them, and would have been exposed to new ideas and ideals. Needless to say, the advantages are at infinite ends, the least to come out with would be a new different way to perceive things and people.

During **PP** and **SS** sessions, though not carried within circles, both groups two and four have evinced increasing interest in the different issues raised in the novels such as entail. Often they would ask questions as to why women were not allowed inheritance, or why they could not work, why men were so privileged, why Mrs Bennet wanted to marry her daughters so bad, why Willoughby could not marry Marianne, how Jane Austen knew all about it. Their questions would not end, and the discussions they would start seemed endless. In the post-questionnaire, respondents admit to have learnt things that were unknown to them before and for that they were grateful.

### 2.1.3. *Class Families*

If the teacher is not quite sure about the clubs' idea, for it involves one group of the class into the text at hand more than the others, she can opt for something to engage them all. A way to do that, in the case of a novel like PP and SS, is to divide the class into the different families included within the story. Students would meet the families, one at a

time, the Bennets, then the Lucasses, the Bingleys, the Darcys, for example, according to their order of appearance in the novel. When a family is introduced, its different members would be embodied by students, the descriptions and details related to the family are disclosed. Later on, each learner, having read and researched, will take a turn to narrate and explain particulars about their characters, for example, Mrs Bennet is a chatterbox, mean with little understanding, always complaining about her nerves and chasing rich bachelors. Once the first family is well memorised and delineated by its class members to their classmates, next family comes in. This technique helps the teacher avoid confusing the class and losing their attention in a whirlpool of names they cannot even pin on proper characters, and events they cannot decide at which time they did happen. In case of a mix-up with relation to a character, the student having impersonated them would be in charge of clarifying for their friends. The teacher decides when it is best to interfere, to highlight, to explain further, and to provide support for her students. The technique assures likewise that all the classroom is engaged in the same text, going the same pace and making progress together. Strengths and weaknesses are both at display with the former further reinforced and the latter enhanced.

#### 2.1.4. *Keep it simple*

One of the facts, often an obstacle, a literature teacher is faced with is to manage time to fit the literary text, especially a novel, in its entirety inside the classroom. The main reason is often that a novel is condensed with detailed information about everyone and everything that takes place. Going over all of it is not quite practical within time and other restraints. In the pre-questionnaire, students have referred back to the ‘too much’ element most prevalent in their literature classes, their recommendations were,

accordingly, to shorten the program, to give only important information, and deliver it in a stimulating way. Learners' loss of interest in a literature classroom is due to the heavy data there is to process, which can be overwhelming at times, thus, a turnoff for their passion. A key trick would be to keep the analysis as well as the study simple, not to go over every line and fact, not to give all parts the same amount of attention, to decide the things that are worth skipping or detailing. The teacher only needs to make sure to cover the parts that are essential to the understanding of the story. Less primary information should be left for students to discover by themselves should they like to read the entire work at their own pace later on.

Inside the classroom, things can be made *refreshing*, one way or another. When having readings, teachers could make long sessions light by trying different techniques. Dividing lengthy passages into shorter parts would work. Trying various ways of reading a same text like hardcover, projected PDF, an audio version, a movie scene, would break the routine and vary the rhythm of the activity. Reading<sup>29</sup>s can also be spiced up with a variety of activities, novel-inspired, to give learners the chance to refuel and maintain their attention; too much of the same thing can be boring. During the novels' sessions, students responded positively to the 'Guessing' brainstorming exercise that followed every bit of reading. What is next? What do you think? How would it be? Are the sort of questions that have been used to engage the class' curiosity and activate their presence. According to the post-questionnaire reviews, guessing has proven to be a hit step in the sessions as it enabled students to take part, to express themselves more frequently, and to vie against each for the closest guess the novel plot. Guessing can engender an exciting

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<sup>29</sup> Some may say that reading is not supposed to happen in the classroom. That might be true for the entire body of the literary text. But, how else are we, teachers, going to change our students' phobic views of reading literature if we do not show them the way, inside the classroom?

ambiance within the classroom if exploited advantageously. The literary text can be used to design a multitude of activities as well as games to attract learners' attention, enhance their lexical luggage and strengthen their memorizing abilities. In a later stage, the researcher provides a tripartite method to try out in literature classes.

## ***2.2. Literature classes: Lost in institutionalisation***

Literature is a portal to a world of infinite charms waiting to be exploited. However, most of the times, literature loses its much celebrated appeal once brought into the classroom. Between ministerial impositions, syllabus moulds, and teachers' interpretations, all that is left is a poor version of literature stripped from its natural allure. Albeit being freshmen, first year students are well aware of both literature's universal value and its unfortunate local status "*Brit-Lit is something interesting, but in 'our' university it's not*", one respondent has admitted on behalf of their classmates. Institution, as in university and the people administering it, has taken much out of literature. The researcher goes in-depth into the matter to seek answers as well as solutions.

### ***2.2.1. A democratic syllabus***

As far as it is known, the national syllabus of literature has not changed, the content remains the same, aims have not been redefined either for a decade at least. While the ministry of education does draw the broad lines of the national curriculum, it is the teacher who has the final say in what to teach and how to teach it. It is about time to

revisit the worn syllabus, shred it into a thousand pieces and establish a new one that breathes the soul of change.

Democracy ought to be a key component in the composition of the new literary syllabus. The teachers should take into consideration the forming of a democratic course which appeals to all tastes. It is hard to keep up with everyone's personal preferences, but an attempt could be made, and one would not know what appeals to their learners if one does not ask them. Why not introduce a questionnaire at the beginning of the year or have a friendly chat and pop the question: what kind of novels or literary texts would you like to study? The ends might be infinite with every single student naming different things, so the teacher can have a guided choice. Then, a list of different works for sundry authors can be made to cover various themes and genres that fall under the scope of the syllabus. This ensures a variety of dishes that would answer to all customers' tastes. Everyone is having a share of his favourite. Let students think they have some sort of a say in their education, in the things they have in class. This is a three-way 'trick'. First, the teacher will have their attention, if they are sensible enough, they would appreciate the opportunity and try to make the best out of it. Secondly, they can no longer blame teachers for lame choices. The teacher can always look her learners in the face and say: you voted for this! Thirdly, the method ensures a variety menu that would answer to all customers and where everyone is having a bite of their favourite dish.

If students suggest texts that the teacher does not have the experience of teaching, but still believe they would make for a valuable addition in her classes, she could still include it but keep it for later. The teacher would instead start with the texts she is familiar with and gain herself the time to get to read the target text, understand and prepare to introduce it in her classes. Students are smart enough to detect when their

teacher has no idea what they are talking about, their reaction would be: if my teacher does not bother reading the novel, why should I?

As a student myself I had such instances, it was really disappointing to hear a teacher talk in the opposite direction of what the story says, even at the presence of their precious Google hand-outs to enlighten them. As a student and as a teacher, I believe that when a teacher admits their ‘inexperience’ at a certain something, it makes them human, relatable to, and respected. The teacher should take advantage of the situation and joins her students in learning and discovering the text together, they would appreciate the chance of teaching their own teacher a little something or two.

### ***2.2.2. Diachrony: does it really matter?***

Traditions and norms have it that a British literature program is to be taught in a diachronic order starting from the very beginnings of Old English, with Beowulf and Chaucer, coming to Elizabethan era and Shakespeare, and eventually ending at colonial-related texts with Achebe and his contemporaries. On top of being shocked at the sight of a full time table detailed with every possible module in relation to English, students come to Brit-Lit class to find out it is a spoken in a language they are not familiar with. The result, I would say, is the kind of answers respondents have written in the pre-questionnaire; feeling of confusion, loss of interest, skipping classes, hating literature, and eventually failing the module<sup>30</sup>.

Students find hardship getting through difficult vocabulary items during their first year studying British Literature because the first texts they are introduced to are Old English, Middle Age English. Truth be said not all those who major in English are

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<sup>30</sup> Out of 220 freshmen, 38 got above the average (10) in Brit-Lit exam in their first term exam. That represents a 17.27 rate of success which is frightening, to say the least.

competent, some would answer the question “*where do you come from?*” With “*I have nineteen years old*” but they still come with the hope that they will improve. All hopes fade away once in class as they start with Beowulf, Cynewulf, *thee* and *thine*, complex themes and subjects. This is like starting a game at level ten, next to which it says: very hard. However curious learners might be, they are still not equipped for professional levels.

Radhika Sullivan (1991), having detailed the sundry advantages literature offers, names two major difficulties that can put off learners’ interest for good. The linguistic complexity of a literary text is generally above day to day English students are accustomed to. Literature’s highly crafted language makes for a major argument against using it in classroom, according to Sullivan (1991), especially when learners have not gone past survival stage yet. Literature 101<sup>31</sup> has to encompass extensive background knowledge about the language, the society and culture in relation to it as well. It is how teachers equip their students with the necessary tools to be able to read, understand and interpret literary texts. Literature instructors should give their learners enough time to develop critical competence and ripe thinking.

With the *shoulds* and *hows* aside, it seems that most literature overlook its disadvantages and skip the preparatory steps straight into lengthy literary lectures that date back to antiquity. The reason would be that teachers think, or hope, that students might come to fill in the gaps on their own. Brumfit and Carter (2000) tackle this issue and refer to the other failings of teachers’ efficiency in their students’ education. Reading, which some might take for granted, is seen to need a little supervision and thought.

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<sup>31</sup> 101 is pronounced ‘One oh One’ often indicates an introductory level of [learning](#). The term originates from use in American university [course numbering systems](#) ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/101\\_%28term%29](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/101_%28term%29))

*“Traditional practice has normally been to include discussion and analysis of literary texts in class, and to assume that learners will in some way ‘catch’ the ability to read appropriately from the process of discussion and analysis in a fairly random way...”*

(Brumfit and Carter, 2000: 25).

Here is an idea that would sound unconventional: Why don't we, teachers, initiate freshmen into a less unappealing stage, and give them introductions that go along with their level of understanding and readability? Let us not shock people who already did not read since primary school Aladdin with Shakespeare, let us not give reading-phobics, literary-phobics, lengthy overwhelming texts yet. Someone needs to make serious revisions of the national syllabus. It might be British syllabus paralleled or simulated but British people grew up reading British literature, they heard of the Bard in their bedtime stories. Our students have just arrived at English-Ville; they are already *sous choc* from the different modules English turns out to comprise. Let us not add Beowulf to the list, let us keep Chaucer for a later time.

A suggestion would be to start with basics, definitions, simple surveys, and general overviews. *“What is literature?”* a question to be often asked in our classes to see how the learners reflect upon it. The way they define it reveals much about their expectations and influences, a point which can be used to evaluate progress, detect problems, or enhance content. The basic literary concepts to be dealt with frequently may follow next. A quick history of English literature, the eras and the movements, can be added when learners acquire enough competence. Analytical tools succeed as an initiation into how to write a literary article, how to criticise, to justify, and to argue in a literary style. As a student, I have never had a teacher who taught us how to answer the literature exam questions. We had to find out on ourselves on the day of exam. Not all of us were fortunate enough to figure out how. Then, marks would be in and most of the class would



have below ten because they were out of topic, they did not know how to answer. Is it not fair to be assessed on something one is supposed to know but was never shown the way to do? This is definitely worth adding to teachers' must-do in a literature class.

First texts to be introduced in the classroom would be short ones, written in an English that learners recognize and identify with. It is up to the teacher to judge the readability of her students to go to the next level of complexity and bring in the heavy arsenal of archaic English. Having acquired enough background in British literature, learners would be more than welcoming to broaden the scope of their knowledge.

### ***2.2.3. ICC: a new ingredient to the mixture***

As the world closes in into one cosmopolitan village, we are witnesses of an unprecedented rapid pace of growth. Myriads of nations and millions, if not billions, of people have come in close contact with English as the primary language of communication. Regardless of the countless resulting advantages, teachers find themselves before novel issues inside the classroom. Students, it turns out, should not be restricted to learning basic linguistic skills: phonology, morphology, lexis and grammatical rules. While the four skills assure a good Communicative Competence (CC), successful communication goes beyond mere language learning to include what Bachman (1990) refers to as a vital component of cultural knowledge and awareness. Speaking the same tongue, to a great or lesser degree, necessitates a shared culture to be able to decipher messages in similar ways as the other. Byram argues for the credibility of such a finding when he states:

*“The exchange of information is dependent upon understanding how what one says or writes will be perceived and interpreted in another cultural context”*  
(Byram, 1997: 08)

Teachers, as providers of L2 (Second Language), are asked to introduce a cultural dimension into class, to aim for ICC (Intercultural Communicative Competence) which is, respectively, the ability to invest one's knowledge about one's and others' cultures in understanding meanings of messages and holding coherent communication. In such a cosmopolitan world, we are no longer concerned with L2 but rather with LC2 (Second lingua-culture) and as guides of the teaching process, we are asked to be multi-cultural, if not only bi-cultural, for it appears that bi-lingualism and multi-lingualism are out of date. Thus, as teachers of EFL (English as a Foreign Language) classrooms, we cannot overlook the exigency of introducing cultural contexts into our classrooms; otherwise, we would be depriving students from a fully-fledged learning experience.

The question that comes to mind is: How does ICC relate to a literature classroom? Literature is the window that opens onto to the target language culture at its fullest and most spontaneous way. From daily greetings, social conventions, conversations, to celebrations, traditions, beliefs, coming to ways of dressing, conducting relationships and occupying jobs, it is all culture-bound, and all found within one text of literature. One of the things that I keep telling my students is that English is not a mere language to speak within the four walls of the classroom. Students need to be reminded that it is an entire culture rich with its norms and values and that they should aim for the *whole package*. That is what literature is, the whole package. Literature teachers have to point out the cultural factor which is at the background of our everyday life in the ways we walk, talk, eat, think, celebrate, deal with others, smile, hold eye contact... and in almost every practice; verbal or non-verbal. Cultural awareness is eye-opening and it helps learners perceive the *other's* differences within their natural context.

Some of the respondents in the post-questionnaire expressed the wish to have the movie and re-enact scenes “*such as old dancing*”, wrote one. With enough time space, an entire movie session could be dedicated to take learners understanding of the story from words into fully developed action. The plays introduced at session five were students’ first attempt at stage performance; they had, yet, to overcome the stress, the shyness, the confusion. Trying on classic dancing would make for a good idea to experience a cultural aspect of the novel, only if everyone is on board with the idea. The researcher has noticed how ‘chaste’ some students are inside the classroom that they would blush or cast their eyes down at the mention of a word. As a teacher, she always tries to keep the environment comfortable for all learners until they are more open towards culture. The main reason would be that most learners deal with English language in its entire package, including cultural aspects, for the first time. There were many such moments, in Oral classes, when students would look startled and confused at the mention of something culturally different from their own, the simplest example would be greeting: English people do not kiss as we, Arabs do, and they would feel awkward if someone approaches them to print kisses on their cheeks. A good way to clear all cultural misunderstandings away and justify the other’s behaviour is to introduce intercultural elements to literary classes.

During novels’ sessions, students would stop at instances they judged as alien to their own culture and understanding. In **PP**, question marks have been raised as to why the Bennet sisters are seen as “unmarriageable”. The small amount of their dowries is the reason, teacher explained, as women back then would bring money into their marriage. The higher the dowry, the more likely the woman is to receive a marriage proposal, which is why Mrs Bennet wants her daughters to marry rich men, for they are wealthy

enough to mind the dowry. **SS** features another matrimonial-related issue that group four has judged as strange and wanting clarification. The locks of hair, one solicited by Willoughby from Marianne, and the other wrapped around the finger of Edward Ferrars, are seen as proof of secret engagements. Students have learnt yet another cultural facet to the British society, in Austen's time, which is different from their own. In a way, disclosing cultural facts clears some misunderstandings about the others' behaviour and gives reasonable justification. It is a way "*to sow the seeds of tolerance, acceptance, understanding, and respect*" (Zofia Chlopek, 2008: 12).

#### 2.2.4. ***Glocalisation: finding ways to reach to students***

In an attempt to keep our English majors globally connected to world's sundry literatures, we have to teach them Shakespeare, Dickens, Austen, Bronte, Dickinson, Poe, Irving, Joyce...etc. But after a while, or somewhere along the road, suspicion must come to their minds that they are a bit way too far to relate to any of these texts, the only tie that binds them, at times, is that of words. Learners would feel culturally, historically, socially, and personally divorced from that literature. Even when encountering Achebe and N'gugi during African Literature hours, students still do not feel the connection, though they are Africans. This in no way undermines the value of these texts; they are invaluablely rich and represent a heritage that is unique and inexhaustible. However, the reader remains lost within the detailed descriptions of the extravagant balls, the five-course supper, governesses and masters, uptight Christian families, genteel decorum, dark romanticism and western folktales. The reader cannot identify with Igbo rituals or Nigerian traditions though they belong to Africa and are Africans, yet they are not

familiar with that face of Africa. It is no secret that literature classes, be they British, American, African no matter what mysteriousness and excitement they promise, it soon fades away as learners hit walls of estrangement. As teachers we could easily read those expressions of confusion and loss written over the faces before us: What happened? It is not the kind of questions to be answered in a few lines. In addition to a limitless list of reasons, the one I am most concerned with and interested in is that of relatedness. As humans we are drawn towards strange things, the odd, the new, the unfamiliar, but once the enigma is solved, once we get to know what was formerly unknown to us, that ‘*love*’ story may come to an end. On the other hand, we keep falling in love over and over again with things we have known all our lives. This very fact is a first step towards the answer of the question raised above: If you want a student to feel engaged in the class you are teaching, make them feel home, make it local to them.

Localisation, applied in isolation, would mean that the syllabus keeps to home-made, home-friendly topics and themes, the kind that goes hand in hand with the long established contexts as well as traditions. Literature would be stripped of anything that might be inappropriate or contradicting as it is seen as endangering or damaging to local culture. Instead, learners would be exposed to a locally-customised revised version of the target literature. Teachers would keep the aspects that conform to native culture, delineations of characters that learners can identify with. In such a case, the result would be narrow minded students who do not know what lies beyond the horizon of their own sky. Closed off from the diversities of the others, learners would be restricted within a very limited version of what is literature, what is culture, and an immature understanding of the human self. So, while localisation may afford a home-sweet-home feeling, it would estrange the learners from the world around them and straightjacket their notions of it.

Glocalisation, thus, comes in to bridge the gaps between global literature and local contexts. The term is a newly coined portmanteau term born within marketing contexts. It means to accustom a global product according to the needs, characteristics and demands of the local market. Within educational settings, the concept might not be well spread, but is making quite a *buzz* already. An example would be international lead company, Yahoo. The homepage designed by Yahoo webmaster offers global services to all countries in the world, with modifications that take into consideration the specific particulars of different cultures. A simple test would be to open the Yahoo homepage in English, then to change settings into Yahoo Maktoob customised for Arabs, even Yahoo.com is made to target what Americans would be drawn to unlike fellow UK surfers.

All three homepages may share some news in common, but everything is adapted individually to highlight topics of interest and put in local-friendly layouts. Joseph Roman (2006) sheds more light on the topic and further explicates its general meaning. According to him, glocalization refers to the interplay between the global and the local to generate not only economic relations, but political and social as well. As already mentioned, the term is still making its steps into the world which explains the reason why the literature in relation is not quite expansive. Then, the interest that the term has created within cross-disciplinary fields extends its focus toward multiple case studies of which education happens to be one.

A glocalised education would be to teach universal literature within a locally-related mould to undo the estrangement and to familiarise students with the contexts not to feel far removed. The aim would be to get learners to establish a connection with the text, to be able to empathise better with the characters and to take more interest in the subject. Nguyen Thi Cam Le (2005) further explains that the chief source for English

teaching materials originates mostly from countries where English is either a native or a second language. These materials remain foreign in nature to EFL students who would feel remote, thus, ill-equipped and hesitant to take part in classroom activities. The solution, according to Nguyen is to “*localize materials, which entails revising them so they relate more specifically to the culture and experience of the EFL students, who would otherwise not respond to materials that have no connection to their lives.*” (Nguyen, 2005: 01).

In an interestingly-put title, Earl Stevick (1976) writes about *Teachers of English as an alien language* and how a foreign material is a crucial factor in alienating students from both native and target cultures, and at times even from themselves. Globalisation comes to undo the estrangement in EFL classes adding a local component that is meaningful and relatable to into globalised education. Students would no longer be lost within a syllabus that is deemed as culturally detached from their own reality and language context.

A glocalised literature classroom would be one that matches unfamiliar cultural settings and language contexts with students’ home culture, learning needs and personal preferences. The process is not quite as complicated as it sounds. Teachers need to put careful thought into the particulars of texts to be selected so that they “*identify where to best represent local culture and where to explain nonnative elements*” (Nguyen Thi, 2005:03). Before introducing **PP** and **SS** into groups two and four, the researcher sat down and sought the angle which would be best to use as an accessible entry to her learners. Gender dualities were the pick, with still a recurrent reference to society. Whenever possible, the teacher made simulations to Algerian society such as in the cases of the urge to marry the Miss Bennets and Dashwoods in both novels. When contexts

differ, explanation was due. An example is the fact that women had to contribute a dowry into their marriage, unlike in Algerian settings, and that is why the Miss Bennets and Dashwoods' chances at marriage were seen as low. Learners stopped at the bowing scenes featured in videos from **PP** and **SS** movie adaptations. It was the form of greeting back then, the teacher clarified. Reference was, then, made to local culture: how do we greet people in Algeria? Teacher asked. The answer was unanimous in both groups: we kiss people, those we know and do not know alike, on the cheeks. British people would find it weird if someone approaches them for kisses, the teacher explained to students' utter amazement. They, however, admitted, that examples like these are revealing and in some way clarifying of cultural ambiguities which helps them fill in the gap between the foreign and local societies.

Of the many advantages that glocalisation offers literature teachers, the most rewarding one is that it activates learners' participation in the classroom, they will no longer feel lost or estranged. Having acquired a certain degree of awareness of the foreign content, students' understanding of the target culture increases along with their ability to relate to it (Nguyen, 2005). When patriarchy was first introduced during novels sessions, both groups judged the system as incomprehensible, unfair and disturbing. The debate generated by topics such as women's deprivation of inheritance and total dependence on men stemmed first from a culturally-blind perspective. Learners showed a more embracing attitude when a history of the system along with the reasons why it was introduced were given.

One of the instances students have judged as baring resemblance, to a great or less extent, to their local culture is the one where both the Bennets and the Dashwoods would attend as many balls and parties as part of the husband-hunting plan. Algerian women



never miss a wedding or an invitation in the hope of securing husbands as well, learners remarked. Most Algerian mothers are a Mrs Bennet chasing anyone with few dinars in their pockets, were other answers. Students, having possessed a general grasp of the target culture combined with their local one, decided the points where the two coincided or differed. They were able to relate to instances from real life and later sufficiently equipped to write a play inspired by the novels and customized into an Algerian version. The teacher is left to decide how to approach a literary text from an angle that would be easy to relate to for students and to pick the most appropriate one for a simulation between what is global and what is local.

### ***2.2.5. The New Millennium: Expanding the horizons***

With global fever taking over the world, it is quite strange to find that literature is still taught same old ways. Therefore, I would here allow a reference to technology and its revolutionary effects on both learning and teaching. Teachers, in general and of literature particularly, have access to an endless fount of material as well as techniques to try inside class: books, articles, newspapers, ready-made templates, videos, films, games, online exchange, video conferences, songs...etc. As teachers, we cannot overlook the technological storm blowing everything and everyone around us. Flexibility is needed, the readability and willingness to try new things in class. We cannot keep *servng* lectures and lessons in old-fashioned ways to a generation of Facebook and i-phone users. Süleyman Nihat Sad, a Turkish EFL teacher, offers his fellow instructors creative ways to use the mobile phone “*which is not typically considered an educational tool*” (Süleyman, 2008: 34) advantageously inside the classroom. Not only does the use of mobile phones

extend the horizons of learners' imagination and creativeness, it also helps the teacher involve all of them, regardless of their level of motivation in an affordable, yet fun way.

John Swales (2004) highlights the importance of being up-to-date with the quick pace of technology not to miss the advantages. Swales backs his claim with an anecdote of his colleague's experience with Microsoft PowerPoint which has affected, to a great extent, the preparation, delivery and reception of his lectures: "*I am seen as the animator rather than the source of the utterance. Instead of my speaking with the aid of some visual device, the text is speaking with my aid*" (Myers, in Swales 2004: 07).

The Cloud<sup>32</sup> offers services and options that mushroom with every passing minute. It is up to us to catch up with the wave and start taking advantages of the leverages granted to us. Thanks to the internet, teachers can download thousands of literary texts, have access to related analyses from acclaimed websites, Google activities suggested and created by fellow teachers from all over the world, engage in active discussions about issues in their classroom on teaching forums, seek professional help from authors themselves, keep tabs on their classrooms, offer students online courses; the options are infinite.

A wise teacher would not keep her class divorced from what happens outside and extra-terrestrial to world changes. Students would feel the disconnection between the classroom and their day to day life and would soon lose interest in their classes. However, and while it is imperative to integrate technology-related activities into class, it may get overwhelming, especially if not well used or mastered. What starts as advantageous may backfire to enslave teachers and strip them off their control over the lesson and their role as knowledge-providers.

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<sup>32</sup> Cloud is an alternative name for internet

With technology, internet, Google engine, free book websites, smart phones and devices, social networks and much more at hand, can we not find strategies and techniques to serve each lesson differently? I bet we can. We just settled for easy things, and skipped our part of the deal. Teaching is a deal foremost; a teacher is to leave a piece of her behind every time she leaves the class. We have the chance to FORM people, we have the chance to have an impact, make change; how come have we given up that chance? Why are we not sticking to our part of the deal? It is high time to consider this teaching business with more careful thought and attention.

### ***2.3. Teachers: much ado about everything***

On the other side of the learning equation, there is the teacher. Although teachers are much involved with what relates to students, their to-do list has more to it. It is no easy task to carry out, teaching takes putting much thought into the different stages of the process, pouring much sweat every step of the way, and having much patience when facing difficulties.

#### ***2.3.1. Teach with joy and enthusiasm***

A teacher who seeks to have an explosive class of highly motivated learner should make the first step. Benjamin Lee Wren (2004) asserts in his book *Teaching Civilization with Joy and Enthusiasm*, that both joy and enthusiasm are key components in making the learning process successful. Otherwise, he adds, students will pick on the teacher's lack of interest in the subject and will eventually lose it too. We cannot ask for something 'gratis', we cannot forfeit our part of the deal. It is pure art to walk the door each time

with zeal, with tides of enthusiasm that promise learners a *joyful ride*. The Latin mantra says: *Nemo dat quod non habet* (one does not give what one does not have, it should also say that: one does not get what one does not offer).

### 2.3.2. *An effective teacher is reflective*

Another secret to be unfolded is that of reflection; an effective teaching is a reflective one. Moving on and not looking back at past experiences can be an anathema to teaching. Teachers should have that '*moment of truth*' with themselves, a pause to ask: How was my performance? Did my students respond positively? What went wrong there? One should admit strengths and reinforce them, and acknowledge weaknesses and better them. It is somehow as if teachers are scientists drown within constant experimentations and meditative observations having themselves as subject study. "*Good teaching requires self-knowledge: a secret hidden in plain sight*" (Palmer, 1998: 03).

On the other hand, there is that 'Others mirror' we should consider. It can't be denied that evaluation is a key; it may be life changing at times. As humans, we tend to overlook, not intentionally, our defects and it is through the others that we come to realize that such and such is not our best. A lot of prestigious colleges suggest this as a technique towards better teaching and achievement. Each two teachers are paired and they, on regular basis, visit each other's classes to observe and take notes. After the session, both meet and discuss what went on during. Needless to say, the advantages are surprising and some reflective remarks are eye-opening. Stronge (2007) argues that '*good*' teachers are not afraid of receiving feedback and criticism. Not only would teachers exchange ideas and suggest solutions to each other, they may end up learning a new trick or two added to her jar of teacher's tricks.

Students can show their teachers a something or few things at times. When given the right to provide their comments and feedback about their teacher, learners may surprise us with the critical eyes and minds they turn out to have. Even the smallest detail can mean a lot to students and thus make a big difference if attended to. Jyl Lynn Felman writes about how she never forgot a student's remark, as silly as it might seem, about her choice of clothes "*Why does she always wear B-L-A-C-K?*" (Felman, 2001: xvi). The introduction of some colours in her wardrobe has changed a great deal, mostly about her; she was a different teacher, a better one, thanks to a note. It is but evidence that learning occurs through the eyes of the other and Stronge argues that teachers should welcome reflection with acceptance and readiness to make it work for their own advantage "*Effective teachers invite feedback by eliciting information and criticism from others*" (Stronge, 2007: 31).

After the first term exam, I had an 'open-talk' with my students where they were invited to comment on things they appreciated, disliked, wanted to have more, wanted to do differently, suggest to have...etc. I, then, had to offer explanations, welcome suggestions, negotiate demands and offer alternative. With all that taken into consideration, I spent the holidays putting together a teaching plan that would fulfill my promise to my class: "things are going to be better during second term."

### 2.3.3. *The Class's a stage*

Shakespeare once dubbed the world as a stage. The classroom, as well, is no longer a four-walled space, it becomes an open stage where the teacher has to perform all sorts of roles: a knowledge-provider, a poet, a historian, a comedian at times... etc. Parini (2005) mentions this notion of playing roles in his book **The Art of Teaching** where he

actually refers to them as masks which the teacher tries on for a while to decide which best suits her class and the context she is in (2005).

Felman (2001) further extends on this idea of treating the classroom as a theatre. While she takes a more feminist approach to her teaching, the stage part to it can be adopted by non-feminists as well. Felman (2001) describes the change that takes place in her classroom every time she walks in with a new persona, to play a new role, as of a major effect on both her performance and her students' involvement and improvement.

A student may only learn to appreciate the beauty of a literary work when hearing the teacher blow life into those so-called dead words. Another may prefer interactive activities and games as a way to better retain the target vocabulary. A third learner may want to be more involved in the learning process through personal projects and individual productions.

During literature sessions, students were provided with excerpts of a novel in class. At first, students were not very enthused with the idea and their readings were spiritless. I had to intervene and show the class how to read a literary text properly. Once learners were shown how to employ the different intonations to express joy, sadness, surprise, sadness...etc., their attention and participation were secured. Having put on a literature persona helped me gain my students back; they even were tried to imitate my way of reading, and asked me to re-read particular passages.

#### 2.3.4. *Marketing Literature: a Game of words and much more*

Marketing literature 101 starts with asking questions: How to advertise literature? How to sell it to students? How to use the power of words to achieve such ends? The idea of advertising literature can be basically related to the idea of ‘entertainment’; literature is an escape from reality. Note how a movie is advertised for with all the crafted trailers and the buzz to make people crowd in cinemas to watch it. Why not try to find ways to do the same with literature? To advertise and create the buzz, the thriller, and the desire in learners to come to like it, to feel eager to walk into the classroom and find out what is to be offered them.

Why not treat a literary class as a food menu, in a highly reputed restaurant, quality dishes only! It is an unlikely simulation, an interesting one though. Start first by studying the clients, students, what do they want? What are they looking for? A teacher is most successful and productive when they educate, empower, inspire and engage in ways that make best use of their students’ strengths and intelligences. It is half job already done to know what the expectations are; it is to be one step ahead.

I have orchestrated a *tripartite teaching menu* that consists of appetizers, main courses, and desserts, none of which involve actual food. For starters, I suggest that teachers in general, and literature teachers in particular, would begin the class with an appetite-whetting activity that would put learners on explosive mode ready for what is to be served next. When it comes to main dishes, they differ according to the course being taught and they take the biggest share of time. At times, the course would become *heavy* because it goes for long; as a result, students lose interest. When I often see that the class tempo is going down, I try to break the length of the course with small activities. This has

two advantages, on the one hand it helps pick up the pace, and on the other hand it tells my students that I care about how much interest they take into my classes. A dialog, a gap-filling exercise, a pair-work activity, an illustrative video or a set of questions may be introduced to change the rhythm from going-monotonous to back-to-interesting. Dessert activities serve as closure to the course, and they usually take about the same time as entrées, 5 to 15 minutes. My vision for this section is to keep it learner-related. Let us, teachers, dedicate some time to give free space of expression and creativity for our students.

It all comes to the teacher's creativity in coming up with new ticks, adopting and adapting old ones to the nature of her class, profiles of students, and different contexts. After all, a teacher should keep away from monotonous same things and same ways in presenting lessons; variety is the spice of teaching. One important thing to stress is to establish the rule: no bad deed goes unpunished, no good deed goes unrewarded.

#### 2.3.4.1. *Appetizers*

Entrées should be kept fun, interactive, still instructive. They usually take up from five to fifteen minutes. The following is a list of activities that have been tried by the researcher and could make for great ice-breakers at the beginning of each session.

##### a. *Literary quotations*

Introduce a saying, a quote by a literary figure or that is related to literature at the beginning of sessions to fuel the energy and have them reflect upon it. I usually go for quotes that grab the attention, around the curiosity and at times triggers laughter. Basic



information is given with regard to the figure, name, country and what they are famous for.

Examples would be: *“A person, be it a lady or gentleman, who does not take pleasure in reading a novel, must be intolerably stupid”* Jane Austen. *“The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you'll go.”* Dr Seuss. *“Do not read, as children do, to amuse yourself, or like the ambitious, for the purpose of instruction. No, read in order to live.”* [Gustave Flaubert](#) . *“Literature is a textually transmitted disease, normally contracted in childhood.”* [Jane Yolen](#).

[Students would then vie to offer their own interpretations of the sayings, their understandings, and at times their applications. A quote can have different effects on different learners and they would see it under various lights. It can be the needed dose of inspiration to start the course.](#)

### ***b. Vocabulary-builder***

On the board, the teacher writes down up to fifteen separate alphabets, consonants and vowels included, students are invited to contribute ones as well, and then they are asked to build as many correct English words as they can. Needless to say that the class goes boom with every possible hand risen high for permission to have a say. Whenever a word comprising a letter that was not on board, the student was asked to spell it out loud to check if it does fit, the student would acknowledge the mistake and go back at once to putting together the letters into words. It was highly competitive and fun at the same time. Spice up with some rules; they cannot repeat the alphabet more than once, words that stand out get plus stars, words that are inspired from the literary text being studied, like we did during novels' sessions, get plus stars...etc.

This game is to a certain extent inspired by the famous Scrabble with some personal modifications. The teacher can be as much creative with the rules to fit to the literary text and context. She can add more letters or give bonuses on tough letters such as the Y and X, to simulate Scrabble. Her choices are open-ended.

### *c. Classictionary*

The word is a personally coined one, combined from ‘class’ and ‘dictionary’, to mean a dictionary that is exclusive to my class. Throughout the month, four new words are introduced by different students, who volunteer to come up with a word that is unique and rarely known to their classmates. The choices are limited to literature-related vocabulary, within a literature class, and can be customised to fit different modules. In each session, the volunteer student would write their word on the whiteboard, explains, and exemplifies, if necessary to their mates. The rest of the class is left to vote the ‘newness’ of the word. If their classmate has succeeded in their choice, the class vote him for three stars, if not the teacher automatically grants one star to reward the effort. Now the *catch* is that at the end of every month, when Classictionary reaches four words, the teacher assigns an essay for students to write using those accumulated expressions as key-words. In the essay, the teacher should go for the imaginative approach.

This appetizer has proven to be a *hit* in my Oral Expression classes which I did not expect when I first introduced the idea. My biggest fear has been that students would be too lazy to make an effort and would end up bringing familiar words. Few sessions after Classictionary started, there were many fingers raising in the air asking for permission to be the next lucky one who contributes a new word. Competition was at height with everyone trying to bring the most unfamiliar expressions, to win the credit of the teacher

and mates and add up three stars to their accounts. When it was time to write the essay, I was bountifully rewarded with tens of excellently crafted imaginative ones. There were mistakes of course, but none matter at the sight of many silent students in class, so creatively loud on paper<sup>33</sup>.

d. *Brain-warming*

Teacher gives students a word, keeps the vocabulary text-related, and point to a student and ask them to come up with a word that starts with the last letter from the word that has been given, e.g. if the teacher says literature, the student must give a word that starts with 'e'. And then another student is pointed at to do the same with the word their classmate would give.

The activity might seem a bit game-ish, but one would be surprised at how inadequate learners' vocabulary would turn out to be. The teacher can add in some rules, same words cannot be repeated; rhythm should be fast so if anyone stutters or lingers, they are out; whenever someone misses they sit down, the last one standing gets plus stars. The teacher can repeat this appetizer at different spans of time and judge for themselves the evaluation of their learners' lexical luggage and the ease they would have coming up with words quicker than before.

e. *Man Vs. Woman*

If the teacher opts for a gender reading of the literary text, this appetizer could make for a good introduction. The teacher can draw a table on board with two columns, one for man and the other for woman. Other columns can be added to include specific details:

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<sup>33</sup> For more details, and for essays' samples, refer to my Oral Expression classes' Facebook page at: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/664184753602618/>

body, mind, heart (love), personality, wear, work, marriage, and studies...anything that would be fit to context. Students would, then, brainstorm descriptions that would go along with each gender and for each category.. Examples would be: fair sex, soft, beautiful, weak, feminine versus tougher sex, harsh, manly, strong/muscular, and masculine, when it comes to bodily-related descriptions. These delineations can be later exploited in eliciting further gender-related particulars, such as stereotypes, or to develop in topic discussion and class debates.

***f. Pass the ball***

This game might seem class improper, but once tried it generates such a light ambiance in class. The teacher can play the game to recap the novel –literary text- events after having introduced in class for two or more sessions. All the class would stand up, the teacher starts the game, passes the ball to a student and ask them to name a character, an event, a term, or any particular that has previously been introduced in class and they have to say something about it, describe, recap, explain. The ball keeps going round the class. Whenever someone fails to provide the correct answer, they sit, and the last one standing gets plus stars.

***g. Guess who***

This is yet another recap activity. After having introduced a literary text in class, the teacher can start a session with a ‘Guess who?’ review of previous events in relation to the characters. The teacher can give different descriptions, information and hints about a character in the story without giving their name and have students guess who they are. An example would: She was young and beautiful, she is a chatterbox, she hunts for bachelors, she always complains about her poor nerves. The answer would: Mrs Bennet.

Hints can be about the character's physical appearance, if detailed in the text, marital status, age, personality traits, what others think of them, events that are related to them. For students it might be a way to earn extra stars, but they are unconsciously paying careful attention to details, exploring the vocabulary and actually acquiring enough knowledge about the literary text. Before they would even know it, students would be able to remember much more about a novel, short story, than its title.

#### ***h. Pictionary***

This is more of a fun light way to start a session, and be able to go over the accumulated vocabulary previously explored in sessions. It can be played individually or in groups. In the first case, the teacher would invite one student to the whiteboard, write down a word that has been explained or encountered in previous courses, with relation to the literary text if possible, and ask them to draw it for their classmates. The first student who guesses the word gets a star. If the class is divided into groups, as in book clubs or class families, it would be even better. The competition would be limited to two clubs or families only, and the student who is invited to the board would be from a neutral group. The catch would be to use vocabulary that is related to neither of the clubs' texts or families, while it is relevant to the student drawing. The idea is to make it challenging for the competing groups and to guarantee they would be more attentive to their mates in later occasions. An example would be to have the Bennets and the Bingleys face off and ask a student from the Lucasses, Darcys to the board. Suggestions might include: barouche, chaise, ball, militia, soldier, pianoforte, cottage, vestibule, flannel coat, pointers, a character in the text having distinctive traits...etc. In the post-questionnaire, most of respondents could not provide examples of the vocabulary they said they have

retained during novels' sessions. Pictionary ensures that newly acquired words are retained in a more creative as well as memorable way.

#### 2.3.4.2. *Main courses*

There is not much to detail in here that has not been already detailed in previous recommendations. The main course refers to the chief part of a literature course; the text in question. Teacher can have their ways with how they want to introduce the novel, short story, book clubs and class families, in paperback, digital version or projected excerpts. ICC can be exploited to clear cultural misunderstandings, the global texts<sup>34</sup> can be locally simulated to undo feelings of alienation, and technology should be the means to make it all happen in a spontaneous way. Reflection is to be maintained along the way so as to allow a healthy instructive growth for both teachers and students. Joy and enthusiasm are key factors to keep the classroom rhythm going and invite learners' involvement. The teacher can be as creative with the angles they choose in approaching a particular text, gender can be a spicing ingredient to try out.

Main courses are, however, the longest part of the course and to be doing the same thing for one hour or so may sink the classroom in monotony. Teachers are, thus, to break the length of the session, the literary text with small things not to make it too heavy. In such cases, students will drown in drowsy rhythm, and some might eventually snore. From time to time, the teacher may give them something to get them out of that same-pace rhythm. Ideas might include:

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<sup>34</sup> Used to refer to texts that pertaining to British, American and African literatures that differ from Algerian culture.

#### *a. Guess what happens next*

The activity has been tried during **PP** and **SS** class sessions and it has proven quite successful. Instead of going on with lengthy passages from the novels, the teacher would pause every fifteen minutes or so and ask her students: Guess what would happen next? The guessing included events and characters alike. It helps activate learners' attention and have them fully involved within the text and responsive with the teacher. Students would entertain personal twists of what they think might happen now and then, to this character and that. It may be so out of script, so odd, or all too funny at times, what matters is that learners are attentive and are fully tuned with the story. The teacher has to be creative with the pauses, and choose instances of suspense and decide when to leave things at a cliff-hanger.

#### *b. Pictures and Videos*

A picture speaks a thousand words, why not use it to advantage? There are such instances when the teacher might be unable to communicate the effect or intensity of a passage in the literary text. Pictures and videos can come to the rescue. Caricatures, paintings, images to download off the internet, or to put together (for computer savvies), can be used to best capture a situation. Clips from movie adaptations of literary texts make for a good intermission activity. Parodies will do as well. With blogs, social networks, and videos channels well spread, there is a guarantee that choices are infinite.

#### 2.3.4.3. *Desserts*

*Saving the best for last* does apply to the very idea of a dessert. It is that one thing of a lasting taste that we keep at the very end to savour long after it is done. The final activities of a literature classroom should have the same effect. The only way to have

something unique to delight in would be to dedicate this space for students. Suggestions may include:

*a. Group X Got Talent*

Inspired by the international famous TV show, this class version is limited to literary creations only. At the end of each session, have students take up the stage and share personal work with the rest of their classmates. It can be course-inspired: an essay that discusses an important question that was raised during class discussion; a short story that simulates, satirizes, or completes the event of a text being studied, a poem, a play, anything with a personal touch. Teachers can even turn it into a contest, to add in a punch of competitiveness, and have two students take the stage, and leave the winner to be decided by their classmates to be awarded with stars. The teacher may offer novels and short stories as rewards. This is a space where the teachers dig in for those buried talents in class as well as a way to encourage students with talent to come forward, uninterested ones to take interest and start trying.

One of the examples tested in class is a one that involves imagination. Students are assigned different tales, Beauty and the Beast, Little Riding Hood, Cinderella, Snow-White, Ali Baba, Robin Hood...etc. and are asked to turn them into a twenty-first century version. Students have to decide what is to change and how to change it. Learners set their wildest imagination free and penned some unexpected twists. Beauty would marry the Beast because he has a villa and is rich. The wolf in Little Riding Hood is in fact a werewolf who turns into human, and who has fallen in love with Little Riding Hood, that is way he keeps following her. Suffice it to say that if given the chance to express, to share and to shine, students might up surprising us, their teachers.



## *Conclusion*

Chapter four has come to conclude this dissertation after rounds of analyses, experiments and research. The shortcomings have been detailed in a lengthy report of all those factors that have hindered the course of this work. The researcher has been more than forthcoming in admitting her own limitations, those of her line of thought, and her experiment. It serves best to preserve the credibility of the research.

Next part has been a *wild* tour into the researcher's mind. Her own unorthodox, unconventional, at times, vision of how literature classes ought to be is put into words and sets of ideas. The researcher has taken the liberty to put forward different suggestions for fellow teachers in an attempt to revolutionise the same-old-ways literature has been taught for so many years. A *menu* of nuanced activities has been devised to offer teachers endless options to try out and students manifold reasons as to why their literature class worth their while.

# General Conclusion



It is fact universally acknowledged that a good researcher in possession of unquenchable curiosity and enduring motivation must be in want of a carefully chosen topic. *Between and Beyond the Lines* is a research that carries the claim that a literary text is more than a bed-time story. Novels like *Pride and Prejudice* and *Sense and Sensibility* are not for literature fans only; they provide a rich corpus of work awaiting to be explored.

However minor or major the setbacks have been, the researcher has attempted to offer a different reading for two novels that have been in print for so long. When read through the lens of gender, Jane Austen's novels **PP** and **SS** have proven to be more than just a happy ever after tale. The researcher has, likewise, envisaged a literature classroom where things are done differently, then, set on to turn the vision into reality. The gender reading which is exploited in chapter one is skilfully employed in the classroom to make the literary texts appealing to learners and inviting for their curiosity and interest. The combination of a novel reading of Austen's texts along with a fresh fashion for literature teaching have been put into four chapters.

The lines between **PP** and **SS** revealed how the duality men vs. women could be detected in every form of the life the characters lived. Though not mentioned explicitly, it was not hard to perceive how patriarchy has discriminated between the sexes in social matters and fiscal affairs. It reflected the suffering of many females like the Miss Bennets

and the Miss Dashwoods back in Austen's time who were entrapped between two options, one far worse than the other: to wait till they are tossed out of their homes once their patriarch is dead; or go about and hunt for husbands who might end up to be as disagreeable as Mr Collins. However sexist and male-biased the system seemed, as the novels tell more of both families' dilemma, further readings in the history of patriarchy and to why it was introduced in the first place, has revealed a deeper claim: to protect lineage from extinction.

Gender was also present when male and female relationships were scrutinized. Different motives drive either part to act and behave in certain ways towards the other sex. Money-wanting, blinding beauty and untamed pride were but few reasons that induce a man to harm a woman, or a woman to entrap the man as her victim. It seemed that gender relations were highly built on leverage; whoever owned it used it at the advantage of the other. The effects were of different degrees and significance, at times only ephemeral, at others lasting.

In her delineation of characters, Jane Austen was so meticulous as to give us enough traits of gender stereotypical images that readers can identify. There is the bossy rich woman Lady Catherine de Bourgh in **PP**, Fanny Dashwood and Mrs Ferrars in **SS**, the constant Darcy in **PP** and Edward in **SS**, the frail Lydia in **PP** and Lucy in **SS**, the self-centred Mr Collins in **PP** and Mr John Dashwood in **SS**, the Poker Face Jane in **PP** and Elinor in **SS**, the Don Juan Wickham in **PP** and Willoughby in **SS**, the pestering Mrs Bennet in **PP** and Mrs Palmer in **SS**, the stonewalling Mr Bennet in **PP** and Mr Palmer in **SS**...etc. The researcher only included a sample from each novel. These two different stereotypes have revealed oppositional facts about men's and women's personality,

speech, emotional states, psychology all so explicitly delineated between the lines of each story.

**PP** and **SS** were later brought inside the four walls of two Oral Expression classrooms under the scrutiny and assessment of forty first year students. Chapters two and three have been dedicated to the didactic experiment. The researcher has designed two questionnaires that have been intermitted with a series of six novels' sessions. The pre-questionnaire came to detect the respondents' general views with regard to literature and Brit-Lit classes. Twenty-five answers were given by twenty respondents from groups two and four. The twenty copies revealed common issues, such as reading deficiency, and literature phobia, as it highlighted students' different worries and struggles in a Brit-Lit classroom.

The findings of the pre-questionnaire helped the researcher develop a series of six sessions with different focal points. Through a medley of activities and strategies, the teacher has managed to give enough insights into both novels, **PP** and **SS**, to her students that affected their not so much favourable view of literature. Four sessions were dedicated to teaching the novels themselves during which selected excerpts, summaries, videos were offered. The researcher invested the gender analysis made in chapter one in the novels' sessions, it was teaching through a lens of gender, at that point. Session five was a stage space for students' creativity in turning **PP** and **SS** into their own versions. In a way, doing the play was a livelier summary of the novels. Students who took part in it had the chance to be the characters themselves, and those who were stage-phobic still found it a memorable way for the story to stick in their heads.

Session six opened up chapter three as the crossroad that saw the coming of the pre-questionnaire's twenty respondents from both groups two and four together. Students were brought for a more gender-focused discussion of the novels' sessions. Questions asked revolved around the efficiency of the duality man vs. woman in teaching the novels, the way of teaching, and how far altered were learners' views of what a literature class ought to be. The general feeling was positive as students found the gender element to the sessions attention-grabbing, interesting, and a crucial factor in their understanding of different characters and the plot overall. Adding gender to the teaching equation was seen as refreshing and inviting. It did, in a way, help students explore the fun, appealing, and still instructive side to literature which was previously unknown to them. There was an expression of sheer readiness to read and discover more.

The conclusion of session six came with the introduction of the post-questionnaire. Constituted of forty-seven questions, the post-questionnaire left no question unasked. The twenty respondents, once again, did not abstain from giving answers, evaluations, criticisms and suggestions. The common feeling was that of change, a change in students' perception of literature, literature classrooms and literature teaching. Shortcomings were highlighted and strong points were accentuated. The respondents made the best out of the chance to reflect and had their say about the novels, the settings, techniques, activities, the teacher, the gender approach, and much more.

The three chapters of this dissertation helped make the foundation of the last one. The researcher dedicated a first stop for the limitations of this work. The number of respondents could not exceed that of twenty, for reasons previously detailed, which deprived the research from richer student-feedback. Despite the fact that time dedicated

for the different sessions allowed the teaching of both novels to an averagely satisfying degree, a longer span would have granted students the chance for a better understanding. The researcher admitted that however numerous the setbacks have been throughout this study, it did not curb the stream of her motivation. Thus, recommendations that would help in the teaching of literary works in general, and novels in specific, follow. The researcher has put her vision of teaching literature into a collection of suggestions to affect students, syllabus and teachers.

By way of conclusion, the research at hand is a first step to invite students to reconsider their judgments about literature classes. Those same ones who get swoon at the mention of the word literature, those who get into a comatose daze upon hearing the name novel, those who have never given novelists like Jane Austen the chance to sweep their fears away, those who look down at non-contemporary writings, it is about time they give it a try, they might end up believers, lovers and even bewitched. It is an attempt to give learners what they want and expect upon entering a literature class. It is likewise a call to assure the teachers in search for answers for questions as: How to regain learners' attention? How to have them love to read? How to make a literature classroom worth attending? It may not be a hopeless case. A literature *Shangri-La* may not be that imaginary after all for teachers still stand the chance to resurrect that fading interest and turn the impossible classes into sparkling fireworks.

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## *Appendices*

### *Appendix 01: Translated quotations*

#### *From French to English*

##### *Page 13*

« Elle dénonce les périls que font courir à une société d'ordre et de solidarité les ravages causés par l'égoïsme et l'individualité. »

(Alamichel, Fabre, Monfort, and Soupel, 1995: 149)

##### *Page 79*

“La littérature est une fête, un enchantement pour l'esprit de ceux qui aiment ouvrir les livres... On s'arrête au grès de désirs, de souvenirs, des découvertes, des retrouvailles... On relit les mêmes poèmes, les mêmes romans pour les vivres en nouveauté ” (Digeon, 1947 : IV)

## Appendix 02 : Austen's life moments

1775	Born in Hampshire
1793-95	Wrote parodies and tales
1797	Finished writing <i>First Impressions</i> , an early form of <i>Pride and Prejudice</i> .
1801	Settle in Bath.
1803	<i>Susan</i> (first version of <i>Northanger Abbey</i> ) accepted by a London publisher, though not published.
1806	Moved to Southampton after her father's death, then to Hampshire in 1809.
1811	Publication of <i>Sense and Sensibility</i> (anonymously, like the rest of her works).
1813	<i>Pride and Prejudice</i> published.
1814	<i>Mansfield Park</i> published.
1816	<i>Emma</i> published.
1817	Died in Winchester.
1818	Posthumous publication of <i>Northanger Abbey</i> and <i>Persuasion</i> .

(Jean Briat and Annie Lhérété, 2000: 190)

## Appendix 03: Major Events

POLITICS AND SOCIETY		LITERATURE AND THE ARTS
1780	Gorden riots in London	
1783	End of the american War of Independance	
1785		COWPER : <i>The Task</i> .
1786		BURNS : <i>Poems</i> . BECKFORD : <i>Vathek</i> .
1789	The Storming of the Bastille.	BLAKE : <i>Songs of Innocence, The Book of Thel</i> .
1792		M. WOLLSTONECRAFT : <i>The Rights of Women</i> .
1793	Execution of Louis XVI. Beginning of the war between England and France.	GODWIN : <i>Political Justice</i> . BLAKE : <i>The Marriage of Heaven &amp; Hell</i> .
1794		BLAKE : <i>Songs of Experience</i> . A. RADLIFFE : <i>The Mysteries of Udalpo</i> .
1796		LEWIS : <i>The Monk</i> .
1798	Irish rebellion	WORDSWORTH & COLERIDGE : <i>Lyrical Ballads</i> . MALTHUS : <i>An Essay on the Principle of Population</i> .
1801	Act of Union with Ireland.	
1802	Peace of Amiens between France and Britain.	
1803	The war starts again.	
1804	Napoleon becomes Emperor.	
1805	Trafalgar.	
1812		BYRON : <i>Childe Harold</i> .
1813		J. AUSTEN : <i>Pride and Prejudice</i> .
1814		W.SCOTT : <i>Waverley</i> .
1815	Waterloo.	J. AUSTEN : <i>Emma</i> .
1816		COLERIDGE : <i>Kubla Khan</i> . <i>Chrisabel</i> .
1818		KEATS : <i>Endymion</i> .
1819	Peterloo massacre (dispersion of a Parliamentary reform meeting in Manchester).	BYRON : <i>Don Juan</i> .
1820	Accession of George IV.	SHELLEY : <i>Prometheus Unbound</i> .
1821	Greek declaration of Independance.	DE QUINCEY : <i>Confessions of an English Opium-eater</i> .
1823		LAMB : <i>Essays of Elia</i> .
1829	Catholic Emancipation Act.	
1830	Accession of William IV.	
1832	Reform Bill.	
1833	Abolition of slavery in the British colonies.	CARLYLE : <i>Sartor Resartus</i> .
1836		DICKENS : <i>The Pickwick Papers</i> .
1837	Accession of Queen Vitoria.	CARLYLE : <i>The French Revolution</i> .
1847		CH. BRONTE : <i>Jane Eyre</i> . E. BRONTE : <i>Wuthering Heights</i> .

(Jean Briat and Annie Lh  r  t  , 2000: 154)

## ***Appendix 04: Novels' Summaries***

### ***Pride and Prejudice***

“The action covers fifteen months, from the autumn of one year to the Christmas of the next” (Le Faye, 2002:178); within such a period, myriad events take place at the *Longbourn House* in Hertfordshire. All events are seen through the heroine’s eyes –Elizabeth Bennet. In describing the Bennet family, Miss Austen is most exquisite, most creative. She delineates them as characters that we feel and interact with, whose every breath and every heartbeat we can hear and whose joys and sorrows we affectionately share.

*Marry well* is Mrs. Bennet’s tenet; from the opening scene, it is clear that she is up for some laborious husband-hunting on behalf of her five daughters. Her first stalk is Mr. Bingley. Mr. Bennet, so patiently, has to endure his wife’s ongoing speeches about futuristic plans and aspirations and to put up with her endless nagging and poor nerves. Not that he does much to escape her noisy complaints, Mr. Bennet seeks refuge in his peaceful library.

The Miss Bennets are finally introduced to the eligible Mr. Bingley at a ball. Once there, he shows up with his intolerable sisters and his much richer friend, Mr. Darcy. And while Bingley is entirely entranced with Jane’s beauty, Darcy finds Lizzie<sup>35</sup> not handsome enough to tempt him. Catching his coarse words with much indifference yet with a *mortified pride*, Eliza grows a strong dislike towards Darcy.

Soon afterwards, Mr. Darcy’s well shielded heart gives way to Lizzie’s charms and falls prey for the the pleasure of her dark eyes. However, Eliza’s attitude towards Darcy was decided – to loathe him for eternity. In her pursuit of a revenge to her hurt dignity, Elizabeth coincides with Darcy in judgment that their good opinion once lost, it is forever.

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<sup>35</sup>Lizzie and Eliza are pet names for Elizabeth Bennet.

Mr. Wickham, a soldier in the Meryton regiment, introduces himself to Elizabeth and her family as a most agreeable young man. Not long after they become acquainted, Wickham's allegations about Darcy's crudity to him ascertain Elizabeth's dislike further. The new charmer, Mr. Wickham, who has *very pleasing address* artfully accounts for the horrendous misfortunes Darcy has caused him out of jealousy and envy.

Later on, the Bennets' cousin, Mr. Collins, the lawful heir of their home and possessions, arrives at Longbourn for a visit and matchmaking plans. Collins is more of a chatterbox, a man who sounds like a wearied summer weather forecast due to over rehearsal of every possible flattery he gives. With the support and blessings of Mrs. Bennet, Mr. Collins proposes to Elizabeth in a most *awkward* manner there could ever be. Lizzie's rejection to his advances, repeated three times to convince him it is not a woman's trick, throws him in the way of her best friend – Charlotte. This latter, unlike Elizabeth, is not romantic and sacrifices *every better feeling to worldly advantage* and says "Yes, I do".

Lizzie takes some time to be reconciled with such a union, for just like Jane Austen who has created her character, she believes that she can endure anything rather than to marry without affection. Elizabeth, then, pays a visit to Charlotte, now Mrs. Collins. At Rosings Park, Lizzie runs into Darcy, Lady Catherine's nephew, and both converse with evident tension. Darcy seems changed, more open for talk, and more cordial towards Lizzie. While she chooses to avoid meeting his eyes ignorant of what is going within him, Darcy is at liberty to ogle Elizabeth admiringly from distance.

When the opportunity suits most, Darcy confesses his love and asks Elizabeth to do him the honour of accepting his hand. Elizabeth is beyond astonished, yet she manages to contain such feelings and rejects him with great endeavour at civility. The surprising proposal which starts out like a fairy tale devolves into Darcy demeaning Lizzie's family connections and dwelling on her inferiority. Eliza loses all compassion for the pain she might have caused him and bursts with an ice-coated answer that he is the last man on earth she could marry. Outraged



for not expecting such a humiliating rejection, Mr. Darcy leaves with mixed up feelings of resentment, disappointment as well as pain. His pride is now hurt and Elizabeth has finally got her payback. Darcy does not fully withdraw; he rather sets his mind on winning her good judgment in hope of winning her heart later. He writes her a letter in which he vindicates his attitude against Lizzie's charges, and defends his deeds towards Wickham exposing him for the deceitful fraud he truly is.

After Darcy's chivalrous deeds, Eliza tones her prejudicial opinions of him, and is inclined to change her initial decision. Darcy's concern about Eliza's welfare induces him to take the trouble of finding Lydia after having eloped with Wickham. Upon finding out all he has done, Elizabeth's feelings towards Darcy are further altered, and she is in hope he may still feel the same. Mrs. Bennet, who has secured a second son-in-law when Bingley proposes to Jane, has no idea she is about to have a third most unexpected one. On a walk towards the Lucases, Elizabeth accompanied with Kitty and Mr. Darcy; benefits the opportunity to thank him and make amends for her unfair prejudices. Darcy senses a moderation of address in Lizzie's words, a warmth that boosts him to renew his proposal for his affections were not changed. This time, his feelings are fairly requited with Elizabeth's *yes* and later blessed by her father's consent.

*'Pride'* and *'Prejudice'* is foremost an epigram ingeniously put into action by Jane Austen throughout the novel. Admiration and resentment, respect and contempt, pride and humbleness are not everlasting. One never knows what the upcoming days have in store; who knows? In a matter of days, one may discover that the person one cannot stand most, is the only one not to be resisted. One's good opinion of someone so much loved and venerated may be lost after their masks fall down. And one's disdain for someone's demeanour may just be life changing to both.

## *Sense and Sensibility*

After she takes over their house, the Dashwoods' sister-in-law, Fanny, wastes no time in making their stay insufferable in an attempt to force Elinor off her brother's way – Edward. Hence, the two young ladies along with their mother and sister Margaret rather leave the place they ever cherished as their sweet home than put up with such facinorous a woman.

At Sir Middleton's –Mrs. Dashwood's distant cousin – most obliging request, the family moves to Barton Cottage in the countryside where all nature beauties majestically adjoin. There, they become acquainted with Colonel Brandon, and his flannel coat. The Colonel falls for Marianne at first sight. She, however, is all anticipation for that special day when she meets that special person who would sweep off her feet; when she falls in love, it will be forever. Soon after, that long expected day comes. While enjoying the refreshing breeze and the mesmerizing allure of a showery day, Marianne trips and sprains her ankle. Out of nowhere shows up her prince charming, later found out to be John Willoughby. The chivalric hero, which one only reads about in books of fiction, rushes to the falling beauty and carries her home. There, Willoughby is thanked heartily by the Dashwoods and widely complemented after he leaves.

Overwhelmed with his chivalry, and eyes, Marianne is wholly conquered and imprudently flaunts her feelings wherever she sets foot. Again, in love, the *sense* and *sensibility* dichotomy prevails, with both sisters falling in love, except in different fashions: one openly and the other reservedly.

Later on, Willoughby's affection for Miss Dashwood is trumped by his selfishness, and he walks away on her for some richer woman. Marianne falls sick and is beyond devastated for she never thought that love can so easily alter; she has probably believed in the Bard's words that love does not alter or change.

Elinor is not doing better herself when it comes to her knowledge that Edward has been secretly engaged to a deceitful scheming Miss Steele. Though anguished and miserable at such a heartbreaking intelligence, Elinor never let her feeling show and has to play the role of the comforter to everyone, even when she is in far greater distress.. Elinor gives no chance for her heart to ache, or for her feelings to pine. To her, one's heart never tells the right thing to do, it is better to use one's head.

When eventually coming back to her usual liveliness, Marianne learns that there is more in a prince charming than a man who comes out of misty fog to carry her between his arms to safety, a man who reads prose with passion and recites poetry with high relish, a man who sports much and dances well. What she rather needed is a man who would offer her protection and respect and she has found it all within the affectionate Colonel Brandon.

At last, as Miss Austen reveals all secrets and unmask all characters, the Miss Dashwoods find their way to a happy ending. Marianne falls truthfully for Colonel Brandon and makes him the happiest of men when she accepts his hand. Elinor, to her tremendous relief, learns that Edward is freed from his engagement to Miss Steele, and is all hers as he comes forward confessing his fervid feelings.

*Sense and Sensibility* is the utmost lesson for both Miss Dashwoods. For Elinor it is always wise to keep one's sensibilities subdued as she confessed that she will always choose sense. Nonetheless, it is as equally wise to listen to one's heart at times, to soften one's hardness with the tenderness of love.

As for Marianne, she comes to see the fallacy of her sensibility, the falsities claiming that to love is to burn on a fire of flaming emotions. She realizes that the sagas of everlasting romances have gone past long ago, gone with lovers like Romeo and Juliet, Guinevere and

Lancelot, Layla and her Majnu. Marianne learns that sense might be the best judge at times when the heart is too blind to see.

## Appendix 05: Pre-Questionnaire

This questionnaire aims at surveying learners' opinions about literature in general and British literature particularly. You are kindly invited to provide answers that best reflect you and your personal views. The credibility of this study relies on your contribution, so do please take the time to answer. **Thank you** in advance!

**Year:** -1 ar      -2 ar      - 3 ar      -4 ar  
**Gender:** Fe       le

### Questions

1. Do you read?    Yes          No   

2. What do you usually read?

3. Do you read novels in Arabic?    Yes          No   

If yes, name a few titles of novels you have read.....  
.....

4. Do you read novels in English?    Yes          No   

5. Do you read novels in another language?    Yes          No   

If yes, name some titles.....  
.....

6. In a few words, how would you define **literature**?.....  
.....

7. In a few words, how would you describe **British literature** classes you had so far?  
.....  
.....

8. What are the major **difficulties** you face in a Brit-Lit class?.....  
.....

9. What do you think of the **material** being taught to you in Brit-Lit class?.....

.....

10. On a scale from **1 to 9**, how would you rate the degree of **your** interest in literature classes, in Brit-Lit more specifically?

1-3 not interested       4-6 averagely interested       7-9 highly interested

11. How would you evaluate your **Brit-Lit classes**? (You can choose more than one answer)

1. Very useful for language learning.

2. Useful for language learning.

3. Not useful for language learning.

4. Very Interesting in content.

5. Interesting in content.

6. Not interesting in content.

7. Very well taught.

8. Well taught.

9. Badly taught.

12. And why?.....

13. What do you **enjoy most** in a Brit-Lit class? .....

14. And Why? .....

15. What do you **like the least** in a Brit-Lit class? .....

16. And why? .....

17. According to you, what makes a Brit-Lit class **interesting/ worth attending**? ....

.....

18. If you were given the chance, what would you **add** to your Brit-Lit class?.....  
.....
19. Why? .....
20. If you were given the chance, what would you **do differently** in your Brit-Lit class?.....
21. Why?.....
22. If you were given the chance, what **literary texts** would you suggest in Brit-Lit classes?  
.....
23. Why?.....
24. What **activities** would you like to have in Brit-Lit classes? .....
- .....
25. Feel free to add anything you may have concerning literature classes/ suggestions...etc.....  
.....

*Appendix 06: CD*



## Appendix 07: Post-Questionnaire

This questionnaire aims to survey students' feedback post the study that has been conducted in class. You are kindly invited to provide answers that best reflect you and your personal views. The credibility of this study relies on your contribution, so do please take the time to answer. *Thank you* in advance!

Novel: *Pride and Prejudice*

*Sense and Sensibility*

### Questions

1. Did you enjoy the novel? Yes  No
2. Why?.....
3. Were you satisfied with the novel choice? Yes  No
4. If no, what would you suggest instead?.....
5. Has your view of Literature/ literature classes changed after the novel sessions? Yes  No
6. If yes, in what ways?.....
7. Do you wish to learn more about literature/literary texts? Yes  No
8. Why?.....
9. How likely is it that you'd read the entire novel?
  - a. most likely
  - b. may be
  - c. not likely
10. Why?.....
11. How likely is it that you'd read other novels?
  - a. most likely
  - b. may be
  - c. not likely
12. Why? .....
13. Was the allocated time enough to grasp the plot? Yes  No
14. Why?.....
15. Did the novel teach something new? Yes  No
16. If yes, what did it teach you?.....
17. How difficult to understand did you find the novel?
  - a. not at all
  - b. a little difficult
  - c. somewhat difficult

- d. quite difficult
- e. very difficult

18. Explain briefly what, if anything, you found difficult:.....  
 .....

19. On a scale from **1 to 9**, how would you rate the degree of **your** interest in the novel sessions?

1-3 not interested  4-6 averagely interested  7-9 highly interested

20. How would you evaluate the novel sessions? (You can choose more than one answer)

- a. Very useful for language learning.
- b. Useful for language learning.
- c. Not useful for language learning.
- d. Very Interesting in content.
- e. Interesting in content.
- f. Not interesting in content.
- g. Very well taught.
- h. Well taught.
- k. Badly taught.

21. And why?.....  
 .....

22. Did you acquire new vocabulary items? Yes  No

23. If yes, name few. ....

24. What activities motivated you to participate more?.....

25. Why?.....

26. What activities did you enjoy the least?.....

27. Why? .....

28. Do you think that the novel is mere fiction? Or is there some reality to it?.....  
 .....

29. Were you able to relate to the novel events? Yes  No

30. If yes, how so?.....

31. Were you able to empathize with/relate to the characters?

- a. never
- b. occasionally
- c. fairly often
- d. quite often
- e. very often

32. Describe briefly how doing so affected your ideas and feelings about the character and the novel  
 .....  
 .....
33. Did the novel offer you the chance to voice your opinion more in class? Yes  No
34. Why? .....
35. Do you think that a gender reading invites more debate and discussion? Yes  No
36. How so?.....
37. Do you find that the men Vs. women dualities make the novel more interesting? Yes  No
38. If yes, how so?.....
39. Did the gender-opposed descriptions of characters help you better understand? Yes  No
40. Did you like the way the novel was taught? Yes  No
41. Why?.....
42. Do you think that the teacher was able to deliver the novel plot to you? Yes  No
43. Do you think that the teacher helps you take more interest in literature/ literary texts? Yes  No
44. Did the play help you better understand and remember the novel? Yes  No
45. If yes, how so?.....
46. If you were given the chance, what would you do different in sessions?.....
47. What recommendations do you have? (About the novel/students/ teacher)  
 .....  
 .....  
 .....