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BAKALÁŘSKÁ PRÁCE

Role hudby a tance ve vyobrazení Regentské Anglie u Jane Austenové
The Role of Music and Dance in Jane Austen's Portrayal of Regency England
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ABSTRAKT

Tato bakalářská práce zkoumá význam tematiky hudby a tance v době regentské Anglie v dílech Jane Austenové a zamýšlí se nad jejich dvojí rolí jako nástrojů společenské angažovanosti a osobního vyjádření. Analýzou interakce postav Austenové s těmito formami umění studie odhaluje složitou souhru mezi společenskými očekáváními a individuální identitou. Práce se rovněž zabývá osobními názory Jane Austenové na hudbu, tanec a plesy. Cílem práce je ukázat, jak Austenová využívá hudbu a tanec nad rámec pouhého dekorativního detailu, a jak tyto slouží jako kritický komentář k tématům mezilidských vztahů, individuality postav a společenské interakce ve společnosti vyšší třídy.

KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA

Regentská Anglie, hudba, taneční sál, vyšší třída, mezilidské vztahy

ABSTRACT

This bachelor thesis explores the thematic importance of music and dance in the works of Jane Austen, reflecting on their dual role as instruments of social engagement and personal expression during Regency England. By analyzing how Austen's characters interact with these forms of art, the study reveals the complex interplay between societal expectations and individual identity. This paper also delves into Jane Austen's personal views on music, dance, and balls. The thesis aims to demonstrate how Austen's use of music and dance extends beyond mere decorative detail to serve as a critical commentary on themes of interpersonal relationships, character individuality, and social intercourse within the upper-class society.

KEYWORDS

Regency England, music, ballroom, upper-class, interpersonal relationships

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1 Introduction

Jane Austen, the author of many novels, is recognised for her portrayal of the Regency era's English society, with her narratives being distinguished by their clarity and subtle sense of humour. Her understanding of the complexities of the time can be seen in her writings that capture the intricate social hierarchy, the day-to-day living, and the customs and norms. In the Regency culture, music and dance hold a significant role, becoming a key aspect of social life. They serve not only a means of entertainment but also a medium for individual expression and social engagement. Austen's incorporation of music and dance extends beyond providing historical accuracy, as it serves as a tool to delve into her characters' minds and the dynamics of their social interactions. Her portrayal of these cultural aspects adds depth to the depiction of Regency society, enhancing the narrative's richness and presenting a comprehensive view of life of the upper-class.

The theoretical part of this thesis aims to explore the complex role of music and balls during the Regency era, examining the state, social hierarchy, and customs of the time. It acknowledges how music was pivotal for the upper classes. Music served as an essential component of their education, particularly within the context of balls, which were central to the genteel social life. These events were not merely for entertainment but were critical for maintaining social structures and networks. The second focus is on the significance of music, dance, and social gatherings for upper-class women. The art of playing musical instruments, singing, and dancing were not just pastimes, but part of their social and cultural identity. Lastly, this thesis examines Jane Austen's own enjoyment of music and her participation in the social dances of her time, which is well-documented in her personal correspondences and writings. In addition to this, the theoretical part of this thesis will scrutinise the influence of Austen's own musical and dance experiences on the depiction of these themes within her narratives.

The practical part of this thesis is focused on a detailed analysis of three of Austen's novels: *Pride and Prejudice*, *Emma*, and *Persuasion*. The analysis is structured around three pivotal criteria: characters' attitudes towards music along with proficiency in singing and instrument playing, characters' dispositions towards dances and balls, and the impact of music and dance on the unfolding of character's romantic relationships. Through this lens,

this work aims to reveal the layers in which Austen's employment of music and dance deepens the portrayal of her characters and the social critique embedded in her works, and as they serve a symbol of the romantic love.

2 Theoretical Part

2.1.1 Regency England

It is nearly impossible to discuss the works of Jane Austen without addressing the historical period that she has lived in. Regency England, spanning the period from 1811 to 1820, is recognized as a distinct and transformative era in British history. During this time, England experienced significant transitions in its political and economic realms. Politically, the era was defined by the Prince Regent ruling on behalf of his father, King George III, who was declared unfit due to “uncurable madness” (White 1). This period was marked by substantial political unrest, with the government facing challenges domestically and internationally. The Napoleonic Wars profoundly influenced the nation, shaping public opinion and government policies.

Economically, the dawn of the Industrial Revolution initiated a societal reshaping. This era witnessed the emergence of new industries and a gradual decline in traditional agrarian economies, leading to a widening economic gap between the industrializing North and the more agrarian South, and “[t]he urbanisation of England was certainly proceeding [...] the change that has taken the English from the cottage industries to the super-market” (White 17). These developments laid the groundwork for the social and economic transformations characteristic of the Victorian era.

Urban development was a hallmark of Regency England, particularly in London. The expansion of the capital and other cities involved more than just physical growth, but it also included improvements in infrastructure, including improved road systems and the eventual introduction of railway networks.

London, as always, was the biggest city, with a population of just under one million, and a worldwide trade served by the sailing ships that anchored in the Thames at the Pool of London. Outside London the next biggest cities were the northern manufacturing towns of Liverpool, Manchester, Leeds and Sheffield, with Birmingham and the port of Bristol also growing fast. (Le Faye 52)

These advancements facilitated the movement of people and goods, contributing significantly to the period's economic growth.

Class remained a pivotal aspect of society, but this period also saw the rising prominence of the middle class, spurred by the Industrial Revolution. “It was said that there were the great who lived profusely, the rich who lived plentifully and the middle class who lived well” (Le Faye 73). This emerging social class, comprising professionals, businessmen, and merchants, was driven by aspirations for social mobility, a strong work ethic, and an entrepreneurial spirit. Meanwhile, the lower class, primarily consisting of laborers and servants, continued to face economic challenges and societal marginalization. In contrast, there was a gentry or upper class, which consisted mainly of baronets and knights as well as educated professionals (Kirk 15). They enjoyed considerable privileges and exerted significant influence over political and social spheres, and White states that “[t]he Regency saw the English Gentry gentleman in the fine flower of his genius as a social type,” (50) implying that the upper-class was flourishing during this period.

The lifestyle of the upper class was characterized by luxury and leisure, grounded in a complex set of social customs which were rather impossible to escape. Wealth was typically inherited, with land ownership being a primary source of income, also meaning that the life was centered around manners and households of gentlemen (Kirk 14). Leisure activities differed from indoors to outdoors. Pastimes which took place outside include horseback riding, hunting, and shooting, which, according to Le Faye, were mainly practiced from autumn to spring (105). Indoor activities were dinner parties and balls, reading, practicing music, drawing and sewing for women, theater-going, which was “primarily an urban entertainment for the winter months” (Le Faye 105). All these pastimes were integral to their lives, reflecting both their opulent lifestyle and social standing.

The intellectual life of the era was shaped by Romanticism, a movement that placed emphasis on emotion, nature, and individualism, standing in contrast to the Enlightenment's focus on reason and science. This movement significantly influenced the arts and altered perceptions of self and the world. “Novels, especially the romantic tales of mystery and horror that were then so popular” (Le Faye 106). Literature, art, and philosophy from this period show a keen interest in exploring human emotions and the natural world.

Balls and social gatherings were central to the upper-class social life, serving as key venues for courtship, networking, and the display of status. Le Faye states, “the most socially

important was dancing, for this was the chief way in which young people could become acquainted with each other in a respectable and carefully chaperoned environment” (103). These events, noted for their lavishness, featured strict dress codes, sophisticated dances, and elaborate music. Music, in particular, was highly valued in upper-class society, not just as entertainment but as a symbol of cultural refinement. Women were often trained in instruments like the piano and harp, and music played a vital role in balls and other high-society events, serving as both entertainment and a marker of social grace, which will be discussed in a greater detail later in this thesis.

2.1.2 Male Occupations

During Regency England, the occupations and social roles of men were significant indicators of their class and status, but their leisure activities also played an important role in social life and personal fulfillment. These pursuits were more than just pastimes, as they were key to a gentleman's lifestyle and often reflected his social standing. As Kirk mentions, men of the gentry class spent a significant part of their time managing their positions in society (15). In this highly conservative period, the rules for being a gentleman were strict, and one could not avoid activities that a proper gentleman should and should not participate in.

In terms of education, young boys were mostly tutored at home, where “small boys were taught reading, writing and elementary arithmetic by their parents or by a governess; some might then be tutored in a private household” (Le Faye 81). Another option was education at a boarding school, where the discipline and routine would be rather rough. “At Winchester the boys got up at 5.30 in the morning, and in winter and summer alike washed under the pump in the courtyard, dressed only in shirt and trousers, before attending a chapel service and receiving an hour or more's tuition before breakfast.” (Le Faye 82), meaning that the obedience was taught from the very beginning. Next step was to choose whether a young man would like to join the Army, Navy or pursue his education. At the beginning of 19th century England had only two universities: Oxford and Cambridge (Le Faye 82).

For many men in the upper class, hunting was a favored leisure activity. It was not only a sport but also a social event, often involving large gatherings. Houghton states that “[m]an has been made a social being. Whether he wishes it or not, he can not very well help associating with his fellow men” (22), which emphasises that society played a pivotal role

in a life of the upper-class. Hunting events were important social occasions, offering opportunities for networking and maintaining social ties. Another popular hobby was horseback riding, which was both a practical skill and a form of recreation. Skilled riding was a sign of refinement and was essential for travel, hunting, and military purposes. Equestrian skills were highly valued, and horse races and equestrian events were common social gatherings. Another leisure activity was playing games. For those interested in intellectual pursuits, membership in literary clubs and societies were popular. “Private book clubs were also set up, whereby a group of friends would subscribe to buy books specifically requested by members of the club, amongst whom they would be distributed at the end of the year.” (Le Faye 106). These activities allowed men to engage in intellectual discussions and stay informed about political and philosophical ideas of the time. In the realm of sports, cricket and boxing were gaining popularity. Cricket matches were social events that brought together individuals from various social classes, while boxing was a sport that attracted a wide range of spectators and participants, especially those living in cities, where “tough young men would take fencing and boxing lessons from professionals” (Le Faye 84). The important note is that those pastimes were for men only, as the customs of etiquette of the time did not allow a man and a woman to spend time together in a relaxed manner.

Both sexes' behavior standards were highly restrictive, and men had a fairly extensive set of rules for being true gentlemen. Every step, word, and even their dress was strictly controlled, and there was a rule for almost every action. Houghton suggest that a gentleman is “frank and cordial in his bearing towards others, and by his graceful and pleasing speech and manners he wins the respect and admiration of all with whom he comes in contact” (25-26). Every conversation was controlled by rules, but everything that had a participation of both man and woman was controlled with even more precision. For instance, talking with a woman in the street: “[i]t is a mark of high breeding not to speak to a lady in the street, until you perceive that she has noticed you by an inclination of the head” (A Gentleman Chapter 3). In addition to this, touch was perceived as an act of intimacy, so a gentleman was not allowed to take a woman’s hand unless it was offered, and had no right to pinch or retain the hand (Houghton 77). As it was mentioned, nearly everything had to be controlled by rules. An example of that can be some advice by A Gentleman regarding the clothing of a proper man: “[i]f you are about to present yourself in a company composed only of men, you may

wear boots. If there be but one lady present, pumps and silk-stockings are indispensable” (Chapter 2).

In summary, the leisure activities and hobbies of the upper-class men in Regency England were diverse and reflected their social class and personal interests. From hunting and horseback riding to intellectual pursuits and sports, these activities were integral to a gentleman's identity, status, and lifestyle. Despite the fact that men were allowed to be engaged in a variety of different activities, in this highly conservative era the rules and manners were of a great importance, and so it was pivotal to follow the societal norms.

2.1.3 Feminine Accomplishments

During Regency England, the activities of women, that were assigned with a special word “accomplishment”, were an important part of their social identity. “We may hence from some estimate of the real value which ought to be put upon what are called accomplishments, considered as occupations.” (Edgeworth 380). These activities, which included various hobbies and daily routines, were more than just pastimes, as they were seen as indicators of a woman's refinement and education and reflected the status of her family. “A young lady, is nobody, and nothing, without accomplishments; they are as necessary to her as a fortune: they are indeed considered as a part of her fortune, and sometimes are even found to supply the place of it” (Edgeworth 380). Providing an example of a fine woman, Lady Jane Grey was called a highly distinguished lady for her accomplishment, as she “well skilled in instrumental music; wrote a fine hand; and excelled in the performances of fine needle” (Stewart 346).

In terms of what the accomplishments were, any type of an artistic, creative, and domestic activity can be mentioned, as Farrar suggest that a young lady to spend “time enough for exercise in the open air, for visit of ceremony, and visits to the poor; for family intercourse, for serious and light reading, for needle-work and accomplishments” (17). For example, needlework and embroidery were common pastimes, valued for indicating a woman's precision and patience. The detailed work in these crafts went beyond being artistic hobbies, they were signs of a woman's skill in managing domestic affairs, and Le Faye states in his work that “fine sewing could be put to practical use, in making clothes for the family or for charitable recipients, but embroidery was more often merely a way of filling in the

time on wet days.” (111). The pieces created, often displayed in homes, were a subtle yet clear sign of a woman's capability in these arts. “All female characters that are held up to admiration, whether in fiction or in biography, will be found to have possessed domestic accomplishments” (Farrar 24).

Literature and poetry were also significant in the lives of the upper-class women. Reading and discussing literary works were not only forms of intellectual engagement but also ways to demonstrate one's education, and “to every woman, whether single or married, the habit if regularly allotting to improving books a portion of each day, as far as may be practicable, as at stated hours, cannot be too strongly recommended” (Stewart 388). The most popular options were “reading the Bible, Shakespeare, other poetry and some respectable novels such as *Sir Charles Grandison*” (Le Faye 88). Art, including painting and drawing, was another area where women could express their creativity, and they were mainly female pastimes (Le Faye 111). While often pursued privately, the ability to create art was a sign of creativity and taste, and the artworks were often displayed in a family's home. Language skills, particularly in French and Italian, were encouraged, and eloquence in conversation was seen as a sign of good education and social grace. Being able to speak and converse well in these languages, as well as read books, was a valuable skill in the multilingual society of the time.

Musical skills, especially playing instruments like the piano or harp, were highly regarded. Being able to play music well was a sign of a woman's cultural upbringing and was often showcased in social gatherings. This skill was seen not just as a talent, but as a necessary part of a young lady's social education, as “music was an important part of family entertainment in the evening, and girls were usually taught to play the harpsichord, piano, harp or guitar” (Le Faye 105). Dancing was not only a physical activity but also an important social skill. Being a good dancer was essential in social gatherings, enabling a woman to move gracefully in the ballroom and adhere to the era's social etiquette. Also, it was one of the only skills that helped woman find her future husband, and for this reason dancing became one of the most valued female accomplishment (Edgeworth 385). The importance of music and dancing in women's life will be discussed later in the next chapter of the thesis.

Predominantly, a typical woman's education was seen as a reflection of her family's status and as an important element of her personal and social development. All of the skills mentioned above were crucial as they all contributed to the major goal of finding a suitable husband and becoming a good wife. This is well concluded in the statement, “accomplishments have another, and a higher species of value, as they are supposed to increase a young lady’s chance of securing a prize in the matrimonial lottery.” (Edgeworth 378). The more proficient a woman was in the arts or music, the higher her chances of attracting a respectable man, as it was believed that piano playing “might gain entry into the first circles in London” (Edgeworth 378). Another reason for learning was “that they may, on a change of fortune, furnish the means of obtaining an honest livelihood”. (Stewart 142)

Interestingly, these accomplishments were crucial only until the most significant event in a woman's life – marriage. As Edgeworth notes, “from whatever cause it arises, we may observe, that after young women are settled in life, their taste for drawing and music gradually declines.” (380). Once married, a lady would often prefer to listen to other young girls playing music or to enjoy watching the dancing couples in the ballroom.

2.1.4 Music and Women

During the Regency era in England, music held a prominent place in the cultural and social life of the upper classes, and it was a norm for every girl to play “enough music to be able to sing and play some country dances on the forte-piano or harpsichord for family entertainment” (Le Faye 87). It was seen not just as a form of entertainment, but as a vital component of education and social etiquette. For women of the upper class, musical training was deemed an essential part of their upbringing, reflecting their social status and refinement, and was essential for a successful marriage. Playing the musical instrument was so popular amongst women, that “at least one struggling female pianist was typical of every respectably prosperous family” (Burgan 60). In this context, proficiency in music was more than a cultural asset, but a matter of women’s education and the potential upward mobility (Burgan 56).

Among the various musical instruments of the time, the piano emerged as a prominent symbol of culture during Regency England. London, in particular, became a center for the creation and improvement of pianos for both domestic and concert usage.

(Burgan 54). The increased popularity and affordability of pianos, as Burgan suggests, indicate a sizable market: "the number of pianos produced in London throughout the nineteenth century suggests a sizeable market ... a small piano was within reach of the middle class." (Burgan 54). This accessibility allowed music, especially piano playing, to become a predominant occupation for women of both the upper and middle classes. Learning to play the piano was not merely a leisure activity, it also signified a woman's education. Vorachek makes a point about the fact that "piano was commonly believed to provide both discipline and an emotional outlet for women" (28), as well as her family's wealth and social standing. Coupled with the fact that the piano became not only the most widely used instrument but also a predominant skill among women, it leads to the conclusion that the piano can be recognized as a symbol of feminine accomplishment. Jane Austen's novels frequently depict female characters playing the piano, underscoring its role as an integral part of their social interactions and courtship.

Despite the importance of music in their lives, women were generally discouraged from pursuing music professionally. As Burgan notes, "most of the young women who labored to learn the piano in the nineteenth century were not intent upon mastering the intricacies of Mozart, Haydn, or Beethoven" (Burgan 56), highlighting that professional musicianship was considered inappropriate for women. Consequently, while many women were skilled musicians, their talents were often relegated to private performances in drawing rooms or for family, as with music "woman could soothe away stresses of her husband's workplace" (Vorachek 28). This era witnessed a paradox in women's musical education. On the one hand, music was a highly valued skill, taught to young women as part of their essential education, but on the other hand, "while the piano was considered the province of the female amateur musician, she was not thought capable of serious artistic achievements" (Vorachek 28). This reflects the limitations placed on women in Regency society, where their roles and accomplishments were often confined within the boundaries of the highly conservative customs.

2.1.5 Balls

In Regency England, balls were a pivotal part of the social life for the upper-class, as "ballrooms were at the heart of social life in Regency England" (Malone 434), alongside with

dinner parties and visits to country estates. They were one of the main opportunities for socializing and entertainment, as the ball could be visited by two hundred to maximum of five hundred people (Kirk 20). And these events were immensely popular and were happening all across the country, and, as Le Faye states “dances could be public, in a town's assembly room with admission by subscription, or private, when the landowner invited his personal friends and neighbours” (104), which highlights the variety of them. In addition to this, balls transcended mere celebratory functions, because “the dance floor was the best, and indeed almost the only place, where marriage partners could be identified and courtship could flourish.” (Le Faye 103). They served as crucial settings where the foundations of future alliances were discreetly laid.

In these venues, each dance and interaction carried implications for one's prospects of marriage. As it was already mentioned, the Regency Era was indeed a conservative place with strict manners and etiquette, meaning that the ballroom provided a distinct environment where young men and women could convene and engage, but only “under the watchful eye of their onlookers and within a socially sanctioned framework for discreet and chaste courtship” (Malone 433). Given the era's restrictions on direct communication between potential suitors, balls offered a unique opportunity for individuals to interact with possible partners, and it “paradoxically becomes possible in the social sphere, and dancing is one of the few ways of achieving this intimacy” (Malone 434), emphasizing that the ballroom was one of the only places to communicate with potential partner of the other sex. “Balls were the site of more than dancing, however. At their card games, elders discussed their health concerns, the old days, and potential matches among the young people” (Kirk 22), which highlights that the topic of courtship was important not only for the parents and their offspring, but rather for all the participants of such event.

On the dance floor, selecting a partner was a decision fraught with significance, and Malone states that the interaction between the dancers in the Regency were regulated and controlled. (430). The invitation itself also played an important role and was governed by a set of rules, as a woman needed a man's invitation to take part in this kind of dancing (Malone 430). Gentleman's invitation to dance was not just a casual gesture but a deliberate signal of his interest, observed and interpreted by both the lady in question and the society at large.

Agreeing to a dance was commonly interpreted as an indication of interest, whereas declining could be perceived as a significant social rebuff, and for this reason it was a common rule for a woman not to insult a man by refusing to dance with him (Kirk 22). The sequence in which a young woman accepted invitations to dance was also subject to scrutiny, believed to reflect her personal inclinations. Furthermore, the number of dances shared by a couple bore considerable importance. While tradition typically permitted two consecutive dances with the same partner, exceeding this number could prompt speculation about a more serious romantic interest or even a forthcoming engagement. On the other hand, Kirk states, that a woman was not allowed to dance with the same partner for more than three times (16). During dancing, a small talk was allowed, but it was not always recommended, as “[w]hile dancing with a lady whom you have never seen before, you should not talk to her much” (A Gentleman Chapter 11). This again highlights the fact that every interaction between a lady and a gentleman was strictly restricted by a variety of rules.

Balls also served as occasions for families to present their eligible offspring, emphasizing their attractiveness, social graces, and skills that were thought to be essential for matrimonial matches. As Edgeworth concludes:

That dancing is something more than amusement; that girls must learn to dance, because they must appear well in public; because the young ladies who dance the best are usually most taken notice of in public; most admired by the other sex; most likely, in short, not only to have their choice of the best partner in a ball-room, but sometimes of the best partner for life. (386)

This meant that the right appearance, perfect manners, and the skills of proper dancing were essential for the young generation of the time, as only in case of mastering these conservative societal norms a person was able to find the best partner. Parents and guardians monitored these interactions with the intent of facilitating future discussions regarding potential marriage arrangements. In essence, balls in Regency England were far more than conventional social gatherings, as they were strategic arenas for courtship. The intricacies of dance and the nuances of social interaction were instrumental in shaping romantic affiliations and prospective marital unions, meaning that it was in a ballroom where the destinies of many were determined.

2.2 Jane Austen's Biography

Jane Austen was born on December 16, 1775, in England, in the small village of Steventon, located in Hampshire. She became the seventh child in the family, having 5 older brothers, an older sister Cassandra, and after - a younger brother Charles. Jane's father, Reverend George Austen (1731-1805), was a well-educated man. Despite being orphaned at an early age, he managed to get an education at Oxford and become clergyman of Steventon and Dean from 1761. He also supplemented his income by farming and teaching. As Austen-Leigh notices “[t]hey were not rich, but, aided by Mr. Austen’s powers of teaching, they had enough to afford a good education to their sons and daughters, to mix in the best society of the neighbourhood, and to exercise a liberal hospitality to their own relations and friends. A carriage and a pair of horses were kept.” (17), meaning that the Austen family was part of the English gentry, and though not wealthy, they valued education and intellectual pursuits, which were integral to the family’s daily life. Austen's mother, Cassandra Leigh (1738-1827), was a housewife and devoted her time to her children.

The Austen family was close-knit, and to Jane “her own family were so much, and the rest of the world so little” (Austen-Leigh, 12). Jane had good relationships with her siblings, particularly with Cassandra, Jane's older sister, who became her most intimate friend and companion, and there was hardly nothing that could top their sisterly love for one another. (Austen-Leigh 16). “They lived in the same home, and shared the same bed-room, till separated by death” (Austen-Leigh 16). The correspondence between the two sisters is one of the most significant documents for all who study Austen's biography, as it reflects her authentic sentiments and views on life. It is also worth noting that the Austen family was characterised by a special love of art, especially literature and music. One of the most favorite pastimes of the family members was theatre (Baker 5). It was her brother James who in 1780s “organized his brothers and sisters, together with any visiting friends and cousins, into amateur theatrical performances” (Le Faye 20). The theatre that the children created was highly valued in the household:

The rectory barn became a small theater during the summers, and over Christmas and the New Year plays were performed in the Rectory itself – in addition to innumerable

card games and charades. The theatricals started in 1784 with R.B. Sheridan's *The Rivals* and Thomas Francklin's *Matilda*. (Baker 5)

In addition to this, the father of the family had a considerable library, which served as a source of knowledge and might be the reason for the beginning of Jane's writing path. The family also had a significant music collection, but this topic will be explored in more detail in the next chapter.

Jane Austen and her sister have never completed their schooling. Between 1783 and 1786, they had to change several schools. The first educational institution was in Oxford, and the next one was Reading, but the quality of education was poor in both of them. George Austin made the decision to bring his daughters home and educate them himself. By 1801, her father had a collection of approximately 500 books, to which his offspring had access (Baker 5). He instilled in them an excellent taste in literature, introduced them to the classics, encouraged discussion of the works they read, and fostered an intellectual environment in their home.

It was following her return from school that Jane Austen first started literary composition. For the next six years she wrote a number of comic essays, skits and short stories, some of them no more than a page in length and some left unfinished, which she dedicated jokingly to the various members of her family. (Le Faye 20)

One of her earliest writing, *Juvenilia*, was written in 1787 when the author was only 11 (Baker 5). This atmosphere was highly conducive to creative expression, and Henry Austen, her brother, comments that it is not surprising that Jane developed an appreciation for style at a young age and became passionate about honing her own language since her father was not only a brilliant scholar but also had excellent taste in all genres of literature. (Littlewood 37)

The beginning of the 19th century brought many changes in the life of the Austen family. The first major event was the relocation to the town of Bath in 1801. The reasons for this event are not known for certain, but it can be assumed that they were social or financial considerations. While living in Bath, Jane Austen wrote very little. She did not think much

of the town, as she found its social life very uncomfortable. The second major event in the family's life was the death of the father in 1805, which caused a significant deterioration in the financial situation, a period of uncertainty and several moves. It was not until 1809 that the women of the Austen family - Jane, Cassandra, and their mother - moved into a house in Chawton, Hampshire. Brother Edward played a major role in this event and helped them with their new home. "The house belonged to her second brother, Mr Hight (of Codmersham and Chawton) and was by him made a comfortable residence for his mother and sisters" (Littlewood 43). The period of life in Chawton is characterised by stability and Jane was highly focused on her writing, as her niece Caroline Austen notices "my Aunt's life in Chawton, as far as I ever know, was an easy and pleasant one – it had little variety in it" (Littlewood 50).

Despite the fact that during Regency period in England, marriage was the central event in a lady's life and played a huge part in it, both Austen sisters never married. It is known that Cassandra was in love with a young priest, Thomas Fowle, and agreed to become his wife. But misfortune separated them - Thomas died of yellow fever in the West Indies, where he had travelled to earn money for his upcoming wedding. At the time of his death, Cassandra was 24 years old. Jane Austen herself had several romantic relationships in her biography, and despite never being married, "she did not indeed pass through life without being the object of warm affection" (Austen-Leigh 28). Her first lover was her neighbour Thomas Lefroy, whom Jane became attracted to at the age of 20. They saw each other at several balls and the girl even mentioned him in letters to her sister. Jane wrote to Cassandra that she was waiting for a proposal from the man, but she did not specify whether it was a marriage proposal or a proposal to dance at the next ball. In the end, the affair was unsuccessful, and Thomas went to Ireland, where he built a career as a judge. The second object of Austen's interest was a young theology student, Sam Blackel. They met during the Austen family's summer holiday on the coast. Their romance did not last long. The last romantic episode in Jane's life ended with a marriage proposal and her agreement to become a wife. In 1802, at the age of 26, she met Harris Bigg-Wither, who was 5 years younger than her. The young man offered Jane to marry him, and she agreed. But the very next day she

cancelled the engagement. The authentic reasons for this action remained unknown, but it is worth noting that Harris was wealthy, and could provide her with financial comfort.

The writer's health began to deteriorate considerably in 1816. She went to Winchester for medical treatment but died there on 18 July 1817. The specific cause of death is not known, but historians are inclined to two variants - Addison's disease or Hodgkin's lymphoma. Her last work "Sanditon" remained unfinished, despite the fact that "she wrote whilst she could hold a pen, and with a pencil when a pen has become too laborious" (Littlewood 38). It should be mentioned at the time of her passing, her literary achievements were recognized within her own circle but were not yet widely acknowledged by the public. It was only in the years following her death, particularly with the publication of her novels under her own name, that her work began to receive the recognition.

2.2.1 Jane Austen and music

Music and musical instruments were an integral part of Jane Austen's life. Her engagement with music was diverse, starting from appreciation of musical performances to active participation through playing, and "female members of the Austen family learned music as part of their acquisition of the 'accomplishments'" (Brooks and Carrasco, "A Chawton Family Album"). Music played a significant role in social life of an upper-class society of the late 18th and early 19th century, and reflected its cultural values, as it was already mentioned before.

From the time she was born, Jane Austen was surrounded by music. The Austen family home was a place where playing musical instruments and participating in musical evenings was highly encouraged and was a frequent pastime. This statement can be proved by referring to the correspondence of that time: "[w]e have borrowed a Piano-Forte, and she plays to us every day; on Tuesday we are to have a very snug little dance in our parlour, just our own children, nephew & nieces, (for the two little Coopers come tomorrow) quite a family party" (Brooks and Carrasco, "A Chawton Family Album"). Piano forte, as mentioned earlier in this paper, was an integral part of the lives of many young ladies of the upper class, and Jane was no exception. Her musical education began at the age of 12. George Austen hired

a teacher, William Chard, and Jane was obliged to practice every day, and the letters to Cassandra suggest that she was happy to do so. Her niece Caroline comments on Austen's love for music: "[a]unt Jane began her day with music – for which I conclude she had a natural taste" and "[s]he chose her practicing time before breakfast – when she could have the room to herself – She practiced regularly every morning – She played very pretty tunes, I thought – and I liked to stand by her and listen to them", which can be seen as a prove that Jane Austen had not lost her habit of playing the piano consistently (Littlewood 46). In her letters to her sister Jane Austen mentions with great excitement "yes, yes, we will have a Pianoforte as good a one as can be got for thirty guineas, and I will practise country dances that we may have some amusement for our nephews and neices, when we have the pleasure of their company" (Woolsey 132), emphasising her love for music.

Moreover, the Austen family owned not only a great library, but also a collection of music books and sheets, highlighting the presence of music in their daily lives, and an appreciation for it. These collections contain pieces that Jane Austen herself may have played or enjoyed. The repertoire ranged from popular songs of the Regency England to classical pieces, suggesting a diverse appreciation for music. In total, the collection contains 18 albums of music, with around 600 pieces. This variety also underscores the social aspect of music-making in the Austen household, where playing and listening to music was a communal activity, contributing to the family's social bonds and overall entertainment.

While there is no concrete evidence to suggest that Austen composed music herself, but the musical arrangements and selections in the family's collection imply a personal involvement with music and the manuscripts. "Much that she played from was manuscript, copied out by herself – and so neatly and correctly, that it was as easy to read as print" (Caroline Austen 46). The art of preserving, creating, and adding to the collection of the music books shows the deep understanding of musical culture, and the collection that belonged to her or her women relatives consisted of 17 music albums (Brooks and Carrasco, "A Chawton Family Album"). It is plausible to consider that Austen's musical activities contributed to her artistic development, as within her novels, the piano frequently serves as a significant element in the narrative, revealing character traits, social status, and

the nuances of interpersonal dynamics. It is also worth mentioning that Austen had sung, and her brother Henry characterised her voice as incredibly charming (Littlewood 38).

In conclusion, Jane Austen's relationship with music and especially with the piano was an integral part of her life. It was not only a pastime, but a source of inspiration and creativity for the author. Through this engagement with music she had contributed to the depth and realism of her works, in which music plays an important part as well.

2.2.2 Jane Austen and Balls

Jane Austen's relationship with balls and the social dance culture is a topic that offers valuable insights into the social customs, interpersonal dynamics, and cultural practices of her time. As it was already mentioned before in this thesis, balls, as significant social gatherings, played a crucial role in the societal framework of Austen's era, serving not only as occasions for entertainment but also as opportunities for social networking, courtship, and the display of social status and manners. Austen's engagement with balls, both in her personal life and through the experiences of her characters, highlights her keen observation of social rituals and their implications for individuals and relationships.

Balls were among the most anticipated social events in the lives of the English gentry and upper classes, and Jane Austen was upset if she had to miss one of these balls because she loved them so much (Fullerton 52). Henry Austen states that his sister "was fond of dancing, and excelled in it", proving that there was a lot of personal enjoyment for her as well (Littlewood 39). Her love for dancing lasted until the very end of her life. Jane Austen's first ball happened at Enham, near Andover, where "by the time she reached the age of seventeen, in 1792, and made her debut into Hampshire society" (Le Faye 21). Even when she became a grown woman, she never stopped loving both balls and dancing. "By the time she attended those held in Southampton she was in her early thirties and, while still as keen a dancer as ever, she realistically accepted that partners would be in short supply" (Fullerton 53)

The Austen family was a part of the upper-class, meaning that they participated in both private and assembly balls. In terms of assembly balls, an annual subscription for the

tickets was paid by her parents, so that the whole family enjoyed visiting the balls (Fullerton 52). Because of the traveling across the country with the family Jane Austen had an opportunity to attend assembly balls in Dean, Lyme, Canterbury, Ashford, Bath, Faversham and Southampton (Fullerton 53). Regarding the private balls, which were very exclusionary, and so difficult to attend, there are records of the Austen family attending those as well. The Bramstons of Oakley Hall, the Harwoods of Deane, the Wildmans of Chilham, the Bigg-Withers of Manydown and the Lefroys of Ashe Rectory, are the examples of the private balls attended by the family (Fullerton 79-80).

In her correspondence and writings, Austen herself mentions attending balls, providing glimpses into her perspectives on these events, as well as her emotions and dispositions towards such events:

We were at a Ball on Saturday I assure you. We dined at Goodnestone & in the evening danced two Country Dances & the Boulangeries. I opened the ball with Edward Bridges; the other couples were Lewis Cage and Harriet, Frank and Louisa, Fanny and George. Elizabeth played one country-dance, Lady Bridges the other, which she made Henry dance with her, and Miss Finch played the Boulangeries. (Woolsey 16-18).

Her detailed letters provide delight and curiosity. In addition to this, the great interest in the social and observational opportunities that balls afforded could not be overlooked. These observations translated into her literary work, where balls often serve as pivotal moments in the narrative, facilitating character development, romantic encounters, and the unraveling of social conflicts.

3 Practical Part

3.1 Characters' disposition towards music and playing the musical instruments

In Jane Austen's novels, the relationship characters have with music often reflects their personalities, societal roles, and emotions. Elizabeth Bennet from *Pride and Prejudice*, Emma Woodhouse from *Emma*, and Anne Elliot from *Persuasion* each interact with music in ways that reveal key aspects of their characters and personal traits.

3.1.1 *Pride and Prejudice*

Elizabeth Bennet, the protagonist in *Pride and Prejudice*, has a pragmatic approach to life and societal expectations, which is revealed through her relationship with music. She participates in musical activities as per the norms of her social environment of the Regency England, but she does not allow these activities to define or consume her. Her approach to music is reflective of her broader characteristics—intelligent, sensible, and self-assured. Elizabeth's practicality is evident in her acknowledgment of her musical skills. She displays a casual yet competent approach to music. Despite the fact that people enjoy listening to her play, as can be seen in the quote: "Elizabeth, easy and unaffected, had been listened to with much more pleasure" (*Pride and Prejudice* 32), her attitude towards playing the piano is modest, and she does not consider herself a serious musician, but enjoys music as a form of personal entertainment and social engagement:

"My fingers," said Elizabeth, "do not move over this instrument in the masterly manner which I see so many women's do. They have not the same force or rapidity, and do not produce the same expression. But then I have always supposed it to be my own fault—because I would not take the trouble of practising. It is not that I do not believe *my* fingers as capable as any other woman's of superior execution." (*Pride and Prejudice* 219-220)

This statement underlines her self-awareness, reflecting her balanced approach to accomplishments. Elizabeth participates in music because it is expected of her as a woman

of the upper-class, but she is honest and straightforward about not being a great musician, which shows her modesty.

On the contrary, Elizabeth's sister Mary is often portrayed through her interaction with music, which reveals much about her personality and social aspirations. She is the middle sister in the Bennet family, often overlooked and not as socially adept as her sisters. She takes refuge in music, seeing it as a means to gain attention and distinguish herself. However, her performances often fail to engage her audience, and her seriousness does not help her cause. Mary Bennet is introduced as someone distinctly different from her other sisters, with specific traits that set her apart: "Mary had neither genius nor taste, and though vanity had given her application, it had given her likewise a pedantic air and conceited manner" (*Pride and Prejudice* 33), and "Mary, who having, in consequence of being the only plain one in the family, worked hard for knowledge and accomplishments, was always impatient for display" (*Pride and Prejudice* 33). This description indicates that Mary has turned to academic and musical pursuits not out of passion but as a way to develop some form of distinction for herself, as well as to gain some accomplishments, which highly contrasts with the approach of Elizabeth, who engage in music and other accomplishments with either genuine enjoyment or strategic social engagement.

Through Mary Bennet, the limited avenues available to women for self-expression and achievement are being criticised. Mary's struggle with music reflects her broader struggle to find her place in a society that values women primarily for their beauty, charm, and ability to entertain. Her character is a poignant commentary on the position of women who do not fit the conventional standards of attractiveness or charisma and who attempt to compensate through other means, often without success, which again is on the opposite side with Elizabeth's disposition towards music and class.

As it was already discussed, music, as well as manners and etiquette, played a pivotal role in the life of the upper-class women during the Regency Era. Despite the fact that Elizabeth is fully aware of her being rebellious, which can be proved by her conversation with Mr. Darcy: "[y]ou were disgusted with the women who were always speaking, and looking, and thinking for *your* approbation alone. I roused, and interested you, because I was so unlike them" (*Pride and Prejudice* 467) and "[m]y beauty you had early withstood, and

as for my manners—my behaviour to you was at least always bordering on the uncivil, and I never spoke to you without rather wishing to give you pain than not” (*Pride and Prejudice* 467), she sometimes uses accomplishments, such as engagement with music not solely for personal pleasure or display but also as a social tool. For instance, during her stay at Netherfield, Elizabeth uses the piano as a means to maintain a polite distance from the hostess, Miss Bingley, who is often unkind to her: “[m]iss Bingley moved with alacrity to the pianoforte; and after a polite request that Elizabeth would lead the way which the other as politely and more earnestly negatived, she seated herself” (*Pride and Prejudice* 65). This shows that she uses the piano to fit into social situations, and thus reflects her intelligence in managing her social interactions, understanding when to step forward and when to retreat.

Elizabeth’s attitude towards music also signifies her broader perspective on the role of women and their accomplishments. While she participates in music, she does not prioritise it as a vital skill for securing a husband or enhancing her social status, as many women of her time did. She views love as an important part of marriage: “I am perfectly serious in my refusal. You could not make me happy, and I am convinced that I am the last woman in the world who could make you so” (*Pride and Prejudice* 136). Therefore, her focus remains on more substantive qualities and genuine connections, which is evident in her relationships and conversations that frequently delve into matters of character, morality, and intellect rather than superficial accomplishments. Her attitude towards music also reflects her views on the role of women. Elizabeth believes that women shouldn't have to excel in music or other arts just to find a husband or improve their social standing. She values meaningful qualities and real connections with people more than just being good at something because society expects it. Elizabeth’s candidness about her moderate musical ability highlights her understanding that her value does not hinge on excelling in every traditional accomplishment expected of young women of her status. Furthermore, Elizabeth’s attitude towards music also speaks to her broader views on the expectations placed upon women of her time. Unlike many women who diligently cultivated musical skills to attract suitors or enhance their social value, Elizabeth views these accomplishments with a level of indifference when it comes to defining her worth. In addition to this, she criticizes Mr. Darcy for his conservative idea of an accomplished woman: “I am no longer surprised at your knowing only six accomplished women. I rather wonder now at your knowing any” (*Pride and Prejudice* 51). This

perspective is evident when she discusses the accomplishments expected of women with Lady Catherine, who inquires about her skills.

Throughout the novel, Catherine de Bourgh's daughter Anne is mostly a passive figure, reflecting the constraints of her health and her mother's control. Her lack of active engagement in any described musical events or other social activities emphasizes her role as more of an observer than a participant, which can be considered as another highlight of Elizabeth's difference. This passivity extends to Anne's limited interactions and almost non-existent development as a character within the narrative. She is very much in contrast to Elizabeth's personality, and they show two complete opposites. Elizabeth, being a protagonist and a rebel, is portrayed as a lively, witty and active, whereas Anne is a passive character. Anne de Bourgh is a character whose presence and disposition are subtly portrayed, primarily through the expectations and commentary of others, particularly her mother, Lady Catherine de Bourgh. Anne's relationship with music, while not depicted through personal engagement or performance, is characterized through the expectations of an accomplished woman of her social class and her mother's aspirations for her. However, Anne's poor health seems to prevent her from actively engaging in these accomplishments: "Miss de Bourgh was pale and sickly; her features, though not plain, were insignificant" (*Pride and Prejudice* 203). This description suggests that despite her mother's ambitions, Anne's physical condition limits her active participation in society.

Lady Catherine often speaks of her daughter in terms of potential and expected accomplishments. During a conversation with Elizabeth Bennet, Lady Catherine asserts, "[t]here are few people in England, I suppose, who have more true enjoyment of music than myself, or a better natural taste. If I had ever learnt, I should have been a great proficient" (*Pride and Prejudice* 217). Through this, Lady Catherine indirectly projects her own desires and unfulfilled aspirations onto Anne, suggesting that she is expected to be proficient in music due to her mother's influence and societal expectations, which are contrasted starkly with her actual capabilities and engagements. Anne's character does not exhibit personal enthusiasm or initiative but appears to be shaped and limited by her health, her mother's dominating personality, and the accomplishments. Her life is dictated not by personal choice or inclination but by the expectations of her social position and the overbearing will of Lady

Catherine: "I often tell young ladies that no excellence in music to be acquired without constant practice" (*Pride and Prejudice* 217). This again helps the reader to understand the unique, rebellious position held by Elizabeth Bennet in the upper-class society, who makes a comment: "I never saw such a woman. She would certainly be a fearsome thing to be married to."

This nuanced portrayal of Elizabeth's engagement with music underscores her balanced personality—neither overly accomplished to the point of arrogance nor dismissive of the social norms that guide her society. Her practical approach to music mirrors her approach to life, where her priorities are clear, her self-esteem is secure, and her interactions are grounded in realism rather than pretense. Through Elizabeth's balanced and realistic approach to music, Austen presents a character who is self-assured, genuine, and grounded in her values. Elizabeth does not conform blindly to societal expectations but instead navigates them on her terms. She values authenticity and meaningful interactions over superficial displays of accomplishment. This approach not only sets her apart from other female characters in the novel but also serves as a critique of the societal expectations imposed on women during the Regency era. Elizabeth embodies the idea that being true to oneself and maintaining personal integrity is more important than conforming to restrictive social norms.

3.1.2 *Emma*

In *Emma*, the protagonist Emma Woodhouse embodies the genteel accomplishments expected of a young woman of her social standing, with music serving as a prominent indicator of her refinement and social adeptness. Emma's engagement with music, although competent, is treated with a casual indifference that mirrors her approach to many of her other duties and social activities. Her musical ability is sufficient to fulfill societal expectations without reflecting a deep personal passion or commitment.

Emma Woodhouse is portrayed as a young woman of many accomplishments, of which music is one. It is mentioned that she is competent in it, which reflects her status as a well-bred lady. Austen initially sets up Emma's character with a description that suggests she is well-accomplished:

She was the youngest of the two daughters of a most affectionate, indulgent father; and had, in consequence of her sister's marriage, been mistress of his house from a very early period. Her mother had died too long ago for her to have more than an indistinct remembrance of her caresses; and her place had been supplied by an excellent woman as governess, who had fallen little short of a mother in affection. (*Emma* 1)

While this passage does not mention music directly, it frames her background in a manner consistent with being highly accomplished, which is typical of women in her social position.

Emma's casual approach to music, despite her acknowledged skill, is indicative of her comfortable social standing, which does not require her to excel in these areas to secure her position or future.

I have none of the usual inducements of women to marry. Were I to fall in love, indeed, it would be a different thing! but I never have been in love; it is not my way, or my nature; and I do not think I ever shall. And, without love, I am sure I should be a fool to change such a situation as mine. Fortune I do not want; employment I do not want; consequence I do not want: I believe few married women are half as much mistress of their husband's house as I am of Hartfield; and never, never could I expect to be so truly beloved and important; so always first and always right in any man's eyes as I am in my father's. (*Emma* 55)

This highlights her understanding of her comfortable social position, and gives her the ability to not practice accomplishments in a way most of the women during Regency Era would. Emma also admits to her own shortcomings in diligence when it comes to improving her musical skills, which is reflected in her conversation with Harriet about accomplishments: “[t]hose who knew any thing about it, must have felt the difference. The truth is, Harriet, that my playing is just good enough to be praised, but Jane Fairfax's is much beyond it.” (*Emma* 150). This reflects her own recognition of where she stands in terms of musical skill.

Jane Fairfax is the character who is opposed and compared to Emma. Her musical talent is highly regarded in Highbury and serves as a focal point in her social interactions,

often drawing admiration from the community. Her skill at the piano is one of her most notable accomplishments, acknowledged by all who hear her play. Austen provides a glimpse into the community's perception of Jane through Emma's praise: "Jane Fairfax was very elegant, remarkably elegant; and she had herself the highest value for elegance" (*Emma* 107). This recognition is vital for Jane, as her future largely depends on the goodwill and support she can garner through such social accomplishments.

Unlike Emma, who views her musical ability as one of many social tools, Jane engages with music both out of a genuine passion and a necessity. Her dedication to her music is evident in the seriousness with which she approaches it, often spending hours at the piano. Such commitment reflects her need to utilize her skills to their fullest potential, understanding that her prospects in life might hinge on her abilities to impress and connect with influential members of society. Furthermore, Jane's relationship with music also reveals her personal struggles and the limited opportunities available to her as a woman in her position: "if she does play so very well, you know, it is no more than she is obliged to do, because she will have to teach" (*Emma* 150). Her excellence in music underscores her discipline and perhaps a quiet desperation, as she must rely on these talents to secure some form of stability or advancement. This aspect of her character is sympathetically portrayed by Austen, who uses Jane's musical accomplishments to highlight the broader societal challenges faced by women of lesser means. Emma, on the other hand, quite dislikes Jane Fairfax:

Why she did not like Jane Fairfax might be a difficult question to answer; Mr. Knightley had once told her it was because she saw in her the really accomplished young woman, which she wanted to be thought herself; and though the accusation had been eagerly refuted at the time, there were moments of self-examination in which her conscience could not quite acquit her. (*Emma* 106-107)

This comment provides insights into Emma's jealousy of the character of Jane Fairfax, whose skills were praised by Mr. Knightley, as well as her understanding of Jane's superiority in this accomplishment, that can also be proven by the statement that Emma makes to Harriet "My playing is no more like her's, than a lamp is like sunshine." (*Emma* 150).

Jane's use of her musical talents as a means to navigate her challenging circumstances contrasts sharply with Emma's more privileged engagement with music. This contrast not only deepens the understanding of Emma's character but also highlights the varying significances of musical accomplishment depending on one's social and economic conditions.

Through the character of Emma Woodhouse, Austen explores the nuanced interplay between societal expectations and personal disposition. Emma's engagement with music is emblematic of her overall approach to her responsibilities and social interactions: performed with enough competence to satisfy observers but without the passion that might make it personally fulfilling. This serves as a critique of the social norms that dictate the behavior and accomplishments of women in Regency England, highlighting the often superficial nature of these pursuits and their limited role in personal development. Emma's story, intertwined with music, thus reflects both her compliance with and subtle resistance to the societal expectations placed upon her, capturing the complexities of conformity and individuality in her social milieu.

3.1.3 *Persuasion*

Anne Elliot, the protagonist of the novel *Persuasion*, has a nuanced relationship with music that reveals much about her inner life and restrained emotions. Music serves as a refuge for her, providing a means of expressing feelings that must otherwise be kept hidden due to her social and familial circumstances. Unlike many of Austen's heroines, Anne is portrayed as a person who appreciates music and has a profound emotional response to it. During various social gatherings, while others partake in conversation, Anne often turns to the pianoforte. For example, at the Musgrove household, where music and dance are lively parts of the gathering, Anne uses the piano to distance herself from the emotional discomfort of watching Captain Wentworth interact with others and his indifference. Her playing is described not in terms of technical skill but as a heartfelt accompaniment to the bustling, often emotionally charged environment around her. She is described as seeking refuge at the instrument: “[i]n music she had been always used to feel alone in the world; and Mr and Mrs Musgrove's fond partiality for their own daughters' performance, and total indifference to any other person's, gave her much more pleasure for their sakes, than mortification for her own” (*Persuasion*

41). This quote reflects Anne's self-perception of her musical role—as peripheral, yet also as a necessary retreat, highlighting her feelings of exclusion and emotional isolation.

Austen also uses Anne's relationship with music to highlight her emotional resilience and depth. The narrative suggests that her music is more heartfelt than technically impressive, serving as an outlet for the emotions she must otherwise suppress. “She knew that when she played she was giving pleasure only to herself; but this was no new sensation” (*Persuasion* 41). This quote illustrates Anne's genuine enjoyment of music and her emotional connection to it and emphasises her heartfelt engagement with music, contrasting with the more technical appreciation that others might have. Anne's playing and listening are tied to her emotional state and her personal experiences.

The societal context of Anne's musical engagement is also noteworthy. In the world of *Persuasion*, music is a common accomplishment for women, yet it carries different implications for Anne. For many women, musical talent is a means to gain social standing or secure a marriage. However, Austen describes Anne as a humble and often overlooked: “Anne had been too little from home, too little seen. Her spirits were not high” (*Persuasion* 13), suggesting that for Anne music became a personal matter rather than a tool for social advancement. Her engagement with music reflects her internal feelings and provides a contrast to the more superficial engagements of others in her social circle.

Anne's musical talent is recognised and appreciated by those around her, though she herself remains modest about her abilities. When she plays, it is with genuine feeling rather than for the sake of display. During her stay at Uppercross, Anne often plays the piano to provide accompaniment for others: “Anne, very much preferring the office of musician to a more active post, played country dances to them by the hour together” (*Persuasion* 41). This act of playing for others rather than performing highlights her selflessness and her desire to bring enjoyment to those around her. Anne's modesty about her musical skills contrasts with her genuine enjoyment and emotional engagement with music. This is exemplified by her interactions with others who acknowledge her talent, yet Anne remains humble and unassuming.

In contrast, Mary Musgrove's engagement with music highlights her social insecurities and her desire to be acknowledged within her social circles. Mary does not play

music herself, instead, her interaction is often through her reactions to it at social events. Unlike Anne, who seeks emotional depth in her musical engagement, Mary uses these occasions to assert her social status or to voice complaints about her circumstances. During a concert scene in Bath, for example, Mary is more preoccupied with the social implications of attending the concert than the performance itself. Mary's interactions with music often also serve as a backdrop for her to express her discomforts or dissatisfaction with her surroundings, highlighting her self-centered nature. Her focus during musical events is on her own experiences—whether she is comfortable, adequately attended to, or sufficiently acknowledged. This external focus on social dynamics and personal comfort during musical events starkly contrasts with Anne's internal and emotional engagement with music.

Even during moments that aren't explicitly about music but occur within musical settings, Mary's commentary often centers on social dynamics rather than the music itself. For instance, she is keenly aware of the interactions around her, such as when she notes her arrival at an inopportune moment because Mrs. Musgrove was engaged in a comfortable conversation with Captain Wentworth. This keen observation of social interactions, particularly in settings meant for leisure and enjoyment like musical events, further highlights Mary's constant preoccupation with her social standing and the dynamics around her, which highly contrasts with Anne's approach to it.

This dichotomy between Anne and Mary in their disposition towards music mirrors their overall characters and roles in the novel. Anne, with her depth of feeling and strong internal compass, uses music as a means of emotional expression and connection, reflecting her genuine, introspective nature. Mary, on the other hand, views music and social gatherings as opportunities to enhance her social standing and to vocalize her often trivial complaints, reflecting her superficiality and constant need for external validation.

3.1.4 Comparison

Elizabeth Bennet treats music as one of many accomplishments expected of young women of her era. Her approach to music is practical and devoid of pretension. Elizabeth plays the piano adequately enough to meet the expectations set for someone of her social standing, but she does not exhibit a deep passion for it, nor does it express her emotions. Her involvement in music is more about social obligation than personal enjoyment or artistic expression, but

she also uses music as an excuse to escape the society. Elizabeth's realistic and somewhat indifferent stance on her musical abilities reflects her broader views on societal expectations—acknowledging them but not allowing them to define her. This approach underscores Elizabeth's pragmatic nature and her desire to remain true to herself.

Emma Woodhouse also sees music as part of her accomplishment, but unlike Elizabeth, views it as a necessary skill that enhances her role as a leader in local society, meaning that she uses music to participate in the social interactions. Emma's proficiency in music is part of her broader array of genteel accomplishments, which she uses to maintain her social position and influence, but it is worth noticing that she does not use it to find a suitable husband. Similarly to Elizabeth, Emma does not pursue music with great passion or as a personal solace. Instead, music is one of the tools she employs to orchestrate gatherings and manipulate social situations to her liking, reflecting her confident and somewhat meddling personality.

Anne Elliot presents a drastic contrast to both Elizabeth and Emma in her relationship with music. Anne is the only character to whom music is a deep emotional outlet and a form of personal expression in the life that is constrained by class obligations and societal expectations. Anne's moments at the pianoforte are passionate, reflective, and often melancholic. Her engagement with music allows her to express feelings that she must otherwise suppress, especially those related to her romantic history with Captain Wentworth. Unlike Elizabeth and Emma, for whom music is more about social obligation and utility, Anne uses music to navigate her emotional world, offering her a rare avenue for self-expression and introspection in a restrictive environment.

In conclusion, while Elizabeth, Emma, and Anne each engage with music, their interactions reflect their distinct personalities and circumstances. Elizabeth's practical engagement speaks to her pragmatic approach to life and societal expectations. Emma uses her musical skills as a social tool, enhancing her influence and enjoyment of her position within her community. Anne, in contrast, finds in music a deeply personal and emotionally resonant form of expression that highlights her inner life and struggles. Through these characters, Austen explores the varied roles music can play in personal identity, social

interaction, and emotional expression, enriching the understanding of each heroine and her narrative.

3.2 Characters' disposition towards balls and dancing

As well as music and playing the musical instruments, dancing and balls play a major role in gaining the insights of the character's feeling, emotions, traits and motivations in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, *Emma*, and *Persuasion*.

3.2.1 *Pride and Prejudice*

Elizabeth Bennet thoroughly enjoys the social engagement that balls and dancing provide. Her enthusiasm is evident from the outset, where she embraces the opportunity to participate and observe the social dynamics at play. At the Meryton ball, despite being slighted by Mr. Darcy's refusal to dance with her, she remains cheerful and active. Her reaction to Darcy's snub that "he is a most disagreeable, horrid man, not at all worth pleasing. So high and so conceited that there was no enduring him!" (*Pride and Prejudice* 17), which illustrates her being resilient and independent. Rather than letting Darcy's behavior dampen her spirits, she continues to enjoy the event, showing the ability to remain unaffected by judgments.

Elizabeth's fondness for dancing goes beyond mere enjoyment, it is also an avenue for her to exercise her keen observational skills and wit. She uses these social gatherings to form impressions about others and to engage in meaningful conversations. For instance, at the Netherfield ball, her interaction with Mr. Darcy during their dance is particularly telling. She teases him about his serious demeanor and challenges him with her sharp intellect: "[i]t is your turn to say something now, Mr. Darcy. I talked about the dance, and you ought to make some kind of remark on the size of the room, or the number of couples" (*Pride and Prejudice* 116). This moment highlights Elizabeth's comfort in social settings and her ability to hold her own against someone as imposing as Darcy. Her playful banter and refusal to be intimidated underscore her strong and independent character. As it was already discussed, he does not have a goal of finding a suitable husband and this is the reason why she is able to stay authentic even in this setting.

In contrast, Mr. Darcy's initial attitude towards balls and dancing is marked by reluctance and discomfort. His behavior at the Meryton ball sets the tone for his early

character portrayal. Darcy's refusal to dance with anyone outside his immediate circle, especially his dismissal of Elizabeth, indicates his disdain for the event's social dynamics: "[s]he is tolerable, but not handsome enough to tempt me" (*Pride and Prejudice* 15). This statement not only offends Elizabeth but also reflects Darcy's belief in maintaining strict social hierarchies and his discomfort in engaging with those he considers socially inferior.

Darcy's reserved nature and aloofness at social gatherings underscore his preference for privacy and his discomfort with the public scrutiny that comes with such events. His reluctance to dance is not merely about pride but also about his personal discomfort in the performative aspects of these social rituals. At the Netherfield ball, despite his growing interest in Elizabeth, Darcy still shows signs of his inherent discomfort. However, he makes an effort to engage by asking Elizabeth to dance, a significant step given his earlier refusals. This reluctant participation reveals his internal struggle with the expectations of his social role and his personal inclinations. Darcy's thoughts on dancing are further illuminated through his interactions with others. For instance, when Sir William Lucas teases him about his reluctance to dance, he replies: "[e]very savage can dance" (*Pride and Prejudice* 33). This comment underscores his view of dancing as a superficial activity, one that does not require true sophistication or intellect. Darcy's attitude contrasts sharply with that of his friend Mr. Bingley, who truly enjoys dancing and is more socially adept, as well as with Elizabeth, whose lively spirits are particularly seen in the ballroom.

3.2.2 Emma

For Emma Woodhouse, balls and dances are occasions to exercise her social influence and to engage in matchmaking, an activity she takes particular interest in throughout the novel. Emma views these social gatherings as opportunities to arrange favorable connections, not just for herself but for her friends, as seen with her attempts to match Harriet Smith with suitable gentlemen. Her enthusiasm is evident during the planning of the ball in the Crown Inn. Emma's anticipation and preparations show her involvement and investment in social events: "It appears to me a plan that nobody can object to, if Mr. and Mrs. Weston do not. I think it admirable; and, as far as I can answer for myself, shall be most happy—It seems the only improvement that could be. Papa, do you not think it an excellent improvement?" (*Emma* 163). The process of organisation brings Emma joy, as she "was most happy to be

called to such a council” (*Emma* 164). This proves that her personal trait of love for social gatherings and intricacies is portrayed through balls.

However, it is at the Crown Inn ball itself where Emma’s social strategies and personal growth are most prominently displayed. During this event, her interactions with Mr. Knightley and Frank Churchill, as well as her care for Harriet, reveal her complex motivations and growing self-awareness. The ball is a turning point for Emma, showcasing her realisation of deeper feelings for Mr. Knightley and her genuine concern for Harriet’s happiness. The action of Mr. Knightley, who steps in to dance with Harriet after she is slighted by Mr. Elton, highlights Emma’s evolving perception of Knightley not just as a critic but as a moral compass and potential romantic interest: “[i]n another moment a happier sight caught her;—Mr. Knightley leading Harriet to the set!—Never had she been more surprized, seldom more delighted, than at that instant” (*Emma* 213-214) This moment has brought her “all pleasure and gratitude”, and it is in that moment when Emma admires him not only as a saver of a friend, but also as a man, as “[h]is dancing proved to be just what she had believed it, extremely good” (*Emma* 214). It is then that she comes to the realisation that Mr. Knightley is not merely a friend, but a potential object of her feelings.

Mr. Knightley as a character, in contrast to Emma, holds a more grounded and somewhat critical perspective on balls and dances, reflecting his practical nature and maturity. It is in these settings where his role as a moral compass in *Emma* is evident because of his behavior at social events. Knightley’s engagement at balls is marked by his considerate and protective actions rather than a pursuit of personal enjoyment of dancing. Knightley’s sense of duty and kindness is vividly illustrated at the Crown Inn ball, particularly when he steps in to dance with Harriet Smith after she is snubbed by Mr. Elton. The comment on his action declares him to be “[v]ery good-natured,” (*Emma* 214) emphasizing how society views his intervention as a moral obligation. This instance underscores his commitment to ensuring fairness and comfort for others.

Additionally, Emma’s own reflections on Knightley's participation reveal much about his influence and her perceptions. She feels disturbed by his initial reluctance to dance, indicating his significant presence and role in her social sphere: “She was more disturbed by Mr. Knightley not dancing than by anything else” (*Emma* 212). This moment not only

highlights Knightley's integral role in the social fabric of Highbury but also signals Emma's growing awareness and appreciation of his steadfast nature. Through these actions and reflections, Knightley's participation in balls and dances emerges as acts of integrity and community care, contrasting sharply with Emma's more frivolous and sometimes misguided enthusiasm for social maneuvering. His steady and considerate demeanor at these events underscores his essential decency and deep-seated respect for authentic relationships over mere social engagements.

3.2.3 *Persuasion*

Anne Elliot exhibits a complex relationship with dancing and balls. Although she is graceful and well-mannered, Anne's enjoyment of these social events is tempered by her reserved nature and the weight of her past experiences. Her attitude towards dancing is shaped by her maturity and her broken engagement with Captain Wentworth. Unlike her more lively peers, Anne approaches balls with a sense of duty rather than delight. She participates in those activities because it is expected of her as a lady of her social standing, but she does not seek these occasions with enthusiasm or enjoyment, as shown in a quote: "Anne, very much preferring the office of musician to a more active post, played country dances to them by the hour together" (*Persuasion* 41). Further highlighting Anne's attitude towards social gatherings, another quote underscores her composed presence: "[t]he evening ended with dancing. On its being proposed, Anne offered her services, as usual; and though her eyes would sometimes fill with tears as she sat at the instrument, she was extremely glad to be employed, and desired nothing in return but to be unobserved" (*Persuasion* 63). This reflects her tendency to fade into the background, preferring not to draw attention to herself at such events.

At the concert in Bath, Anne's participation is more about fulfilling social obligations than seeking enjoyment. She is observed to be more comfortable in quieter, more intimate settings where she can engage in meaningful conversations rather than the big loud public of a ball. Anne's reluctance to dance is noted by others, such as when Louisa Musgrove remarks, "[o]h, no; never; she has quite given up dancing. She had rather play. She is never tired of playing" (*Persuasion* 64). This quote illustrates Anne's polite but distant engagement with dancing, reflecting her subdued approach to these social activities.

Captain Frederick Wentworth, in contrast, has a more dynamic presence at social gatherings. As a naval officer, Wentworth is accustomed to a life of action and social interaction, which gives him the ability to feel more confident at balls. However, his attitude towards dancing is also influenced by his practical nature and his initial emotional distance from Anne. At the start of the novel, Wentworth's return to social life includes attending various gatherings and balls, where he is observed to be a charming and desirable partner, as Charles comments that he "had never seen a pleasanter man in his life; and from what he had once heard Captain Wentworth himself say, was very sure that he had not made less than twenty thousand pounds by the war" and he was sure "Captain Wentworth was as likely a man to distinguish himself as any officer in the navy" (*Persuasion* 67). His participation in these events is marked by a sense of duty and enjoyment, reflecting his adaptability and ease in social situations.

Wentworth's approach to dancing is pragmatic and reflective of his social obligations. He understands the importance of these events in maintaining social connections and fulfilling societal expectations. However, like Anne, he does not exhibit a deep personal passion for dancing. Instead, his involvement is more about being present and engaging with the community. At times, Wentworth's participation in dancing appears more strategic, allowing him to navigate the social landscape and maintain his reputation.

In summary, Anne Elliot and Captain Wentworth exhibit contrasting dispositions towards dancing and balls in *Persuasion*. Anne's reserved and reflective nature leads her to approach these social events with a sense of duty rather than enthusiasm, preferring quieter and more meaningful interactions. Her participation is polite but distant, reflecting her emotional maturity. Captain Wentworth, on the other hand, engages more dynamically in social gatherings, fulfilling his social obligations with confidence and charm. His pragmatic approach to dancing highlights his adaptability and ease in social settings.

3.2.4 Comparison

In comparing the attitudes and dispositions of Elizabeth Bennet from *Pride and Prejudice*, Emma Woodhouse from *Emma*, and Anne Elliot from *Persuasion* towards dancing and balls, one can gain a deeper understanding of their characters and how they navigate the social

events of their respective novels. Each heroine's approach reflects her personality, social standing, and personal growth throughout the story.

Elizabeth Bennet, as well as Emma Woodhouse, enjoy dancing and balls, but for different reasons. Miss Bennet values them for the lively atmosphere and meaningful social interaction they provide. Her enthusiasm and enjoyment are evident as she participates with genuine pleasure, using these events to observe and interact with others. Elizabeth's spirited nature is shown through her witty and engaging conversations during dances, such as her lively exchange with Mr. Darcy at the Netherfield ball. Her approach to these social gatherings reflects her desire for meaningful connections and her ability to remain true to herself amidst societal pressures.

Emma Woodhouse, on the other hand, sees balls and dances as opportunities to exercise her social influence and engage in her favorite pastime of matchmaking. Her enjoyment of these events is tied to her social status and the control she wields within her community. Emma's anticipation and involvement in organizing social events, like the Crown Inn ball, highlight her desire to orchestrate and manage the social interactions around her. Her perspective on dancing and balls is less about personal enjoyment and more about social maneuvering and maintaining her position in Highbury.

In contrast to both Elizabeth and Emma, Anne Elliot's relationship with dancing and balls is more subdued and reflective. Anne approaches these events with a sense of duty rather than delight, participating because it is expected of her as a lady of her standing. Her reserved nature and past experiences temper her enjoyment of social gatherings, making her more comfortable in quieter, more intimate settings. Anne's reluctance to dance and her composed demeanor at social events underscore her inner strength and emotional maturity, setting her apart from livelier Elizabeth and socially ambitious Emma.

In conclusion, Elizabeth Bennet, Emma Woodhouse, and Anne Elliot each have distinct approaches to dancing and balls that reflect their unique personalities and social contexts. Elizabeth's lively and genuine enjoyment of these events contrasts with Emma's socially strategic and controlling approach. Meanwhile, Anne's reserved and dutiful participation highlights her reflective and mature nature. Through balls and dancing Jane

Austen explores the varied ways in which social events impact and reveal the complexities of her heroines.

3.3 Influence of music and dance on the romantic relationship

Both music and dancing play determining role in the romantic relationships in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, *Emma*, and *Persuasion*. They help reveal characters' sincere emotions and feelings, also serving as means that significantly influence the development of the romance.

3.3.1 *Pride and Prejudice*

In *Pride and Prejudice*, the connection between Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy's is highly influenced by everything that happens in the ballroom. These activities provide a backdrop for their evolving understanding and eventual admiration of one another.

The Meryton assembly, the first significant social gatherings in the novel, introduces key characters and establishes the framework for future relationships. It is here that Elizabeth Bennet first encounters Mr. Darcy. His aloof pride immediately establishes his role in the social hierarchy. The comment "[s]he is tolerable; but not handsome enough to tempt me" (*Pride and Prejudice* 15) and the refusal to interact with anybody except of his own party makes Elizabeth dislike him instantly. Their first interaction at the ball foreshadows the first marriage proposal. When Darcy first proposes, he does so in a manner that highlights his sense of superiority, much like his initial demeanor at the ball, "[h]is sense of her inferiority, of its being a degradation, of the family obstacles which judgment 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" (*Pride and Prejudice* 237). Elizabeth's rejection of his proposal is as pointed as her earlier rejections of his social advances, as she criticises not only his manner but also the substance of his proposal:

From the very beginning, from the first moment, I may almost say, of my acquaintance with you, your manners impressing me with the fullest belief of your arrogance, your conceit, and your selfish disdain of the feelings of others, were such as to form that groundwork of disapprobation, on which succeeding events have built so immovable a dislike; and I had not known you a month before I felt that you were

the last man in the world whom I could ever be prevailed on to marry. (*Pride and Prejudice* 241)

However, as the story reveals, their relationship progresses. Darcy invites Elizabeth to dance at the Netherfield ball, which shows his growing interest. When Elizabeth agrees to take his hand, she “took her place in the set, amazed at the dignity to which she was arrived in being allowed to stand opposite to Mr. Darcy, and reading in her neighbours” (*Pride and Prejudice* 115). Their conversation during the dance is filled with wit and underlying tension. Elizabeth’s spirited responses to Darcy’s remarks highlight her intelligence and confidence. Darcy, while initially aloof, begins to see Elizabeth in a new light. Their exchange during the dance is revealing: “I have always seen a great similarity in the turn of our minds. We are each of an unsocial, taciturn disposition, unwilling to speak, unless we expect to say something that will amaze the whole room” (*Pride and Prejudice* 116). This moment marks a shift, as Darcy starts to admire Elizabeth’s sharp mind and lively spirit.

In addition to this, it foreshadows his later, more significant invitation—his proposal of marriage. Darcy’s second proposal, much like the dance, shows his increased understanding and respect for Elizabeth’s personality and feelings. By the time he proposes again, he does so with greater humility and genuine regard for Elizabeth’s own perspective, and understands his own mistakes: “my behaviour to you at the time had merited the severest reproof. It was unpardonable. I cannot think of it without abhorrence” (*Pride and Prejudice* 451). Thus, the dance and the proposal become intertwined symbols of the evolving relationship between Elizabeth and Darcy, marked by initial misunderstandings and ultimate harmony. Through these parallel interactions, Austen underscores the growth in both characters.

The role of music is further highlighted at Rosings Park, where Elizabeth visits her friend Charlotte and her husband, Mr. Collins. Lady Catherine de Bourgh, Mr. Darcy’s aunt, pressures Elizabeth into playing the piano. Elizabeth’s performance, though modest, impresses Darcy. “My fingers,” stated Elizabeth, “do not move over this instrument in the masterly manner which I see so many women’s do ... [b]ut then I have always supposed it to be my own fault—because I would not take the trouble of practising”, when Darcy smiled

and said, “You are perfectly right. You have employed your time much better. No one admitted to the privilege of hearing you can think anything wanting. We neither of us perform to strangers” (*Pride and Prejudice* 219-220). This subtle admiration of her skills is another hint into the changing relationship of Mr. Darcy to Elizabeth and highlights the wit and insularity that they both share. Another important conversation happens during the visit at Rosings Park, as Lady Catherine’s criticism on Elizabeth’s education and skills caused Darcy to defend Elizabeth. “Mr. Darcy looked a little ashamed of his aunt’s ill-breeding, and made no answer” (*Pride and Prejudice* 217). This showcases the growing respect Darcy has for her. Elizabeth’s ability to remain poised under Lady Catherine’s scrutiny and her refusal to be cowed by her criticisms underscore her strength of character. This scene also allows Darcy to see Elizabeth in a new context, further enhancing his admiration.

In summary, music, the piano, and dance are not merely social activities in *Pride and Prejudice*, but essential components that influence the intimate bond between Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy. Through these interactions, they come to understand and appreciate each other’s true qualities, moving beyond initial judgments and prejudices.

3.3.2 *Emma*

In *Emma*, music and dance play important roles in the development of the attachment between Emma Woodhouse and Mr. Knightley, serving as means for changing their view on one another and helping their evolving sentimental union.

Music, particularly the piano, is a significant part of Emma’s social life, though she engages with it more as a social obligation than a passion. Emma’s musical performances are adequate but not exceptional, reflecting her casual approach to her accomplishments. Mr. Knightley, while appreciating music, does not specifically praise Emma’s musical abilities in the novel. However, his appreciation for Emma’s efforts in social settings and her overall talents is evident in his general behavior and interactions with her. A pivotal moment involving music occurs when both Jane Fairfax and Emma play the piano. Later, Mr. Knightley will comment: “You and Miss Fairfax gave us some very good music. I do not know a more luxurious state, sir, than sitting at one’s ease to be entertained a whole evening by two such young women; sometimes with music and sometimes with conversation”

(*Emma* 109). This scene is significant because it showcases how Mr. Knightley's appreciation for their talent also makes Emma more aware of her feelings and her position, as well as Emma's sense of jealousy.

Dance plays a crucial role in Emma and Mr. Knightley's relationship. The ballroom is the place where the opinions and feelings of one another are changed from mere friendship to romance, but this happens through the involvement of others rather than direct interaction between them. For instance, during the ball at the Crown Inn, Mr. Knightley takes the initiative to dance with Harriet Smith after she is snubbed by Mr. Elton. This act of kindness not only elevates Harriet's spirits but also makes a deep impression on Emma, making this a significant event where the dynamics of their relationship begin to shift. She realises the depth of Mr. Knightley's character and his genuine kindness, which contrasts sharply with the superficiality she sees in others. Emma reflects on this act, and it deepens her understanding and appreciation of Mr. Knightley's true character. In addition to this, yet another situation at the ball shows their changed feeling towards each other. Firstly, Jane Austen portrays Emma's growing interest in Mr. Knightley:

She was more disturbed by Mr. Knightley's not dancing than by any thing else. There he was, among the standers-by, where he ought not to be; he ought to be dancing,—not classing himself with the husbands, and fathers, and whist-players, who were pretending to feel an interest in the dance till their rubbers were made up,—so young as he looked! (*Emma* 212).

Secondly, the interaction between Frank Churchill and Emma seem to concern Mr. Knightley:

He seemed often observing her. She must not flatter herself that he thought of her dancing, but if he were criticising her behaviour, she did not feel afraid. There was nothing like flirtation between her and her partner. They seemed more like cheerful, easy friends, than lovers. That Frank Churchill thought less of her than he had done, was indubitable. (*Emma* 212)

This situation highlights the change of their disposition towards each other. Also, Mr. Knightley admires Emma's fine dancing skills, but again through the help of another person,

in this case Jane Fairfax: "I must have asked Miss Fairfax, and her languid dancing would not have agreed with me, after yours". This comment is a compliment given to Emma and a new turn in the romantic relationship for the characters, which is yet again connected to dancing.

Musical expression serves as metaphor for the harmony and balance in Emma and Mr. Knightley's relationship. With the help of it, they move from a place of misunderstanding and miscommunication to one of mutual respect and affection. Mr. Knightley's willingness to dance, despite his initial reluctance, symbolises his readiness to and engage with Emma on a more intimate level. The significant quote related to this moment is:

"Whom are you going to dance with?" asked Mr. Knightley. She hesitated a moment, and then replied, "With you, if you will ask me". "Will you?" said he, offering his hand. "Indeed I will. You have shewn that you can dance, and you know we are not really so much brother and sister as to make it at all improper." "Brother and sister! no, indeed." (*Emma* 216).

This moment marks a turning point, as Emma begins to see Mr. Knightley not just as a family friend but as a potential romantic partner.

Melody and movement are essential elements in the development of Emma Woodhouse and Mr. Knightley's relationship in *Emma*. These activities provide key moments for interaction and reflection, facilitating the gradual transformation of their feelings towards each other. Through music and dance, Austen illustrates the evolving dynamics between Emma and Mr. Knightley, ultimately leading to a deeper understanding and appreciation of each other's true character.

3.3.3 Persuasion

In *Persuasion*, pianoforte and ballroom play important roles in the rekindling of the romance between Anne Elliot and Captain Wentworth. They act as catalysts, bringing the characters into closer contact and allowing them to express their emotions in ways that words alone cannot.

Anne Elliot's connection to music, as it was already discussed before, is deeply personal and emotional. Her engagement with the piano is not merely an accomplishment

but a means of solace and self-expression. Anne's playing is described with a sense of grace and quiet passion, reflecting her inner turmoil and unspoken emotions of love towards Captain Wentworth. At Uppercross, Anne Eliot is playing the piano as a way to avoid lively social interactions. She is treated indifferently by Captain Wentworth, who approaches her with "cold politeness ... [and] ceremonious grace" and cannot be "induced to sit down" (*Persuasion* 64) near here. Here, her kind offer to accompany others on the piano as they dance appears to integrate her into the group, but in reality, it gives Anne the freedom to quietly retreat. Anne does not let herself dance, even if she is willing to play the piano. Miss Elliot responds, "[o]h! no, never; she has quite given up dancing," when Captain Wentworth inquires about if she has "never danced" (*Persuasion* 64). Dancing does not bring happiness and Captain's attitude towards her brings her pain and stops from enjoying the party. Jane Austen never depicts Anne Eliot dancing, and, as it was already mentioned before, we know that Anne does not participate in dancing anymore and her mood is sad during the joyful event: "[t]he evening ended with dancing. On its being proposed, Anne offered her services, as usual; and though her eyes would sometimes fill with tears as she sat at the instrument, she was extremely glad to be employed, and desired nothing in return but to be unobserved" (*Persuasion* 63). However, the importance of dancing for their romantic relationship with Captain Wentworth can be estimated by the dances that took place seven years in advance. It is known that there had been a marriage proposal that was rejected, and, due to the traditions and customs of the time, the dancing at the ball should have been an integral part of their relationship in the past. The fact that Anne retreat from dancing can highlight her deep affection and love that has never ended.

The concert in Bath is a pivotal social event, where music serves as a backdrop to significant developments in Anne and Captain Wentworth's relationship. At the concert, Anne is deeply moved by the music and is centered on it. She has "feelings for the tender, spirits for the gay, attention for the scientific, and patience for the wearisome; and had never liked a concert better" (*Persuasion* 163). She is affected by the beauty of the music, which yet again reveals her sensitive nature and deep appreciation for art. Music also serves as a connection to Captain Wentworth, as he "was very fond of music" (*Persuasion* 157). She desires to rekindle this romance, and she is "quite impatient for the concert evening" (*Persuasion* 157). The concert stirs memories and feelings associated with him. It is in this

setting that they are both reminded of their shared past and the lingering emotions between them. The concert allows Anne and Wentworth to experience a shared emotional journey, which helps to bridge the gap created by years of separation. However, the concert becomes ruined for her and she can not enjoy the music anymore, as Captain Wentworth “seemed to be withdrawn from her” (*Persuasion* 165). From this moment, the concert becomes “an hour of agitation” (*Persuasion* 166).

Another pivotal conversation happens at the concert, when Anne asks Wentworth, “[i]s this song not worth staying for?” as he is about to leave the event. “No! There is nothing worth my staying for,” he responds (*Persuasion* 167). They both understand that the topic of conversation is their relationship rather than the melody, so music becomes a symbol for their love and affection. All these elements create opportunities for them to reconnect and understand each other on a deeper level. Anne’s musical talent and the social settings of the concert allow her to express emotions indirectly, leading to moments of introspection and revelation that are crucial to their relationship’s development.

In conclusion, through these musical activities, Austen skillfully portrays the evolution of their feelings, the rekindling of their love, and the deepening of their mutual respect and understanding. The subtle interplay of music and dance underscores the emotional depth of their relationship, ultimately leading to their reconciliation and renewed commitment to each other.

4 Conclusion

This thesis is concerned with music and balls being critical elements in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, *Emma*, and *Persuasion*, having a major part in revealing personal traits of characters and influencing their romantic relationships. These activities are not merely decorative aspects of the Regency era but are deeply interwoven into the narratives, providing a lens through which the characters' personalities, social dynamics, and evolving relationships are explored.

In *Pride and Prejudice*, music and balls are central to both revealing the character of Elizabeth Bennet and the development of her relationship with Mr. Darcy. The lively spirit of Elizabeth is shown through her interactions at balls, while the pianoforte is highlighting her adequate feelings towards accomplishments, that do not define her. The ballroom scenes highlight Elizabeth's joyful and independent spirit and Darcy's initial aloofness and subsequent admiration for her. Music and dance act as a medium through which misunderstandings are confronted and deeper connections are forged. The social gatherings allow Elizabeth and Darcy to observe each other's character, leading to a gradual breakdown of prejudices and the growth of mutual respect and affection.

In *Emma*, Emma's casual approach to music contrasts with Jane Fairfax's serious dedication, highlighting Emma's privileged position and her relaxed manner in terms of approaching the accomplishments. She enjoys both music and dancing, as they serve her as tools to manipulate social interactions to her liking. In addition to this, balls serve as turning points in Emma and Mr. Knightley's relationship, revealing Emma's blind spots and Mr. Knightley's steadfastness. Their interactions on the dance floor at the Crown Inn ball mark the beginning of Emma's realization of her true feelings for Mr. Knightley, ultimately leading to their romantic union.

In *Persuasion*, Anne's musical talent and her experiences at social gatherings underscore her emotional depth and resilience, revealing her true feelings. She is one of the only heroines who loves music and finds a refuge from reality in it. Music becomes a conduit for Anne's unspoken emotions, particularly during the concert in Bath, where shared memories and lingering feelings between Anne and Wentworth come to the forefront. Music relates to the emotional journey shared by Anne Elliot and Captain Wentworth. The dances

and social settings provide opportunities for him to witness Anne's grace and composure, gradually rekindling his affection and leading to their reconciliation.

Overall, in these three novels, Austen uses music and balls to reveal the inner qualities of her characters and to facilitate the progression of their romantic relationships. These activities of the Regency era serve as a backdrop for critical social interactions and character developments. Through music and dance, Austen illustrates the complex interplay between societal expectations and personal desires, ultimately demonstrating how these activities influence the paths to love and happiness for her protagonists. Thus, music and balls are not merely social conventions in Austen's works but are essential elements that drive the narrative forward, deepen characterizations, and shape the romantic arcs of the central characters.

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