

tiness and constraining decorum of the lives she describes. Others, such as Alistair Duckworth and Marilyn Butler, understand her as a thoughtful upholder of the prevailing order of class and gender. Feminist critics and biographers (Nina Auerbach, Claudia L. Johnson, Susan Fraiman, Deborah Kaplan) have engaged the question of how Austen's fiction fits with and acts on the political culture she knew, as have commentators on the tensions and accommodations of class in Austen's fiction (David Spring, Edward Ahearn). The different answers their readings offer to the question illuminate the complexities of Austen's fiction and of the political moment in which it was written and first read.

In the selection of essays and chapters from books included in this edition, I have tried to represent these ethical, psychological, social, and political understandings of Austen in general, and of *Pride and Prejudice* in particular. I have also included some remarks on the recent BBC video version of the novel, which tells us a great deal about what we make of Austen at the end of the twentieth century, and some essays and passages from books by Dorothy Van Ghent, Stuart Tave, Susan Morgan, and Tara Ghoshal Wallace that in their close attention to Austen's craft—another traditional topic in the commentary on her novels—call up social, moral, and epistemological issues. I am grateful to the authors of all these commentaries for their permission to reprint them. When I have deleted passages not immediately relevant to *Pride and Prejudice* or to the topics of the conversation about Austen I wanted to reproduce in this edition, I have tried to preserve the shape and force of their arguments. If I have failed, it is not because the arguments are loose or weak.

The text of *Pride and Prejudice* reprinted in this edition is fundamentally that of the first edition of 1813. The type for the novel was completely reset for its second edition, published in the same year. Austen had no part in the second edition, but I have adopted some of the changes in its text that are obvious corrections of misprintings in the first edition. I have also incorporated some changes entered by her sister Cassandra Austen in her copy of the first edition, and corrected a passage in which, Jane Austen complained in one of her letters, the faulty punctuation of the printers had made two speeches into one. Finally, I have corrected some obvious typographical errors of the 1813 first edition still uncorrected in the second edition, some in spelling ("propect" for "prospect," for example), others in the punctuation of dialogue in which quotation marks were either absent or incorrectly added. In the few instances in which I have changed one word for another ("time" for "mite" in Darcy's speech in Volume I, Chapter III, for example) I have preserved the 1813 text in a footnote. I have not changed Austen's characteristic spellings of such words as "angle," "stile" (for "style"), and "staid" (for "stayed"). Nor have I modernized the excessive, to our eyes and ears, punctuation of the 1813 text. *Pride and Prejudice* was read aloud, before and after it was put into print, by Austen and members of her family. The punctuation of the 1813 printing gives us an idea of how it sounded, to her and to them.

## The Text of PRIDE AND PREJUDICE



## The Humiliation of Elizabeth Bennet

\* \* \*

\* \* \* Mr. Bennet is not actually a bad father—just a modern one. Smooth-browed advocate of instruction over discipline, user of reason instead of force, he typifies the benevolent father proposed by John Locke in his often reprinted tract, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693). \* \* \* Apparently benign to the point of irresponsibility, Mr. Bennet may seem to wield nothing sharper than his sarcasm, but what he actually wields is the covert power of the Lockean patriarch, which is all the more effective for its subtlety. This aloof, unseen power of Mr. Bennet's suggests to me, for several reasons, the peculiar power of an author. As evidence of his literary disposition, Mr. Bennet takes refuge from the world in his library, prefers the inner to the outer life, chooses books over people. He asks two things only: the free use of his understanding and his room, precisely those things Virginia Woolf [in "A Room of One's Own"] associates with the privilege of the male writer and privation of the female. Above all, among women whose solace is news, Mr. Bennet keeps the upper hand by withholding information—that is, by creating suspense.

In the opening scene, for example, Mr. Bennet refuses to visit the new bachelor in town, deliberately frustrating Mrs. Bennet's expectation and desire. In fact, "he had always intended to visit him, though to the last always assuring his wife that he should not go; and till the evening after the visit was paid, she had no knowledge of it." Like any writer, Mr. Bennet relishes the power to contain his reader's pleasure and then, with his dénouement, to relieve and enrapture her. But the suspense is not over, for Elizabeth's father continues to be as stingy with physical description as some fathers are with pocket money. He controls his family by being not tightfisted but tight-lipped, and in this he resembles Austen herself. George Lewes<sup>1</sup> first noted the remarkable paucity of concrete details in Austen, her reluctance to tell us what people, their clothes, houses, or gardens look like. If female readers flocked to Richardson for Pamela's meticulous descriptions of what she packed in her trunk,<sup>2</sup> we may imagine their frustration at Austen's

reticence about such matters. So Mr. Bennet only follows Austen when, secretive about Bingley's person and estate, he keeps the ladies in the dark. Their curiosity is finally gratified by another, less plain-styled father, Sir William Lucas, whose report they receive "second-hand" from Lady Lucas. For much as women talk in this novel, the flow of important words, of what counts as "intelligence," is regulated largely by men; in this verbal economy, women get the trickle-down of news.

The scene following Mr. Collins's proposal to Elizabeth offers another instance of this, as Mr. Bennet again contrives to keep his female audience hanging. In a stern prologue he pretends to support his wife—insisting that Lizzie marry her clerical cousin—only to undermine Mrs. Bennet in a surprise conclusion: "An unhappy alternative is before you, Elizabeth. From this day you must be a stranger to one of your parents.—Your mother will never see you again if you do not marry Mr. Collins, and I will never see you again if you do." Not only this particular coup but the entire episode demonstrates the efficacy of paternal words. Throughout his proposal, much to Elizabeth's distress and the reader's amusement, Mr. Collins completely ignores her many impassioned refusals. He discounts what she says as "merely words of course," for even his dim, self-mired mind correctly perceives that a lady's word carries no definitive weight. Mr. Collins accuses Elizabeth of wishing to increase his love "by suspense, according to the usual practice of elegant females," yet creating suspense is exactly what Elizabeth, rhetorically disadvantaged, cannot do. She has no choice but "to apply to her father, whose negative might be uttered in such a manner as must be decision." Mr. Bennet's power resides, as I say, in his authorial prerogative, his right to have the last word.

Though Mr. Bennet uses this right to ridicule and disappoint his wife, he uses it in an opposite fashion to praise, protect, and apparently enable his daughter. Like so many heroines in women's fiction, Elizabeth has a special relationship to her father. She is immediately distinguished, both as a family member and as a character, by his preference for her and hers for him. Entail aside, she is in many respects his heir, for Mr. Bennet bequeaths to Elizabeth his ironic distance from the world, his habit of studying and appraising those around him, his role of social critic. Colleagues in this role, father and daughter scan Mr. Collins's letter together, dismissing man and letter with a few, skeptical words. Mr. Bennet enables Elizabeth, in short, by sharing with her an authorial mandate that is Austen's own: the need and ability to frame a moral discourse and to judge characters accordingly. Through her father, Elizabeth gains provisional access to certain authorial powers. But Mr. Bennet also shares with her, illogically enough, his disdain for women. He respects Elizabeth only insofar as she is unlike other

† From *Unbecoming Women: British Women Writers and the Novel of Development* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993) 69–87. Copyright © 1993 Columbia University Press. Reprinted with the permission of the publisher. Some references have been revised to a form consistent with bibliographic citations in this volume.

1. George Henry Lewes, "The Novels of Jane Austen," *Blackwood's* 86 (1859): 99–113.

2. See Ian Watt's comments on the "wealth of minutely described domestic detail" in Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* (1740): *The Rise of the Novel* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957) 153.

girls, so that bonding with him means breaking with her mother or even reneging on femaleness altogether. In this sense Elizabeth is less a daughter than a surrogate son: like a son, by giving up the mother and giving in to the father, she reaps the spoils of maleness. Freud's charting of female development supplies an alternative view. In this scheme, girls turn, disillusioned, from the mother to the father out of penis envy. To complete their oedipal task, however, they must cease to identify with the powerful father, come to accept their own "castration," and learn to desire a baby as a substitute for the phallus.<sup>3</sup> In these terms the cocky Elizabeth of the book's first half is charmingly arrested in the early phase of male-identification, victim of what Freud would call a "masculinity complex." And in either case—whether one sees her as an honorary boy who has completed his oedipal task or as a backward, wayward girl who refuses to complete hers—Elizabeth's discursive power arises from an alliance and identification with her father. As the scene with Mr. Collins shows, the force of her words is highly contingent, any authority she has merely borrowed. Like a woman writing under a male pseudonym, Elizabeth's credibility depends on the father's signature.

\*\*\* For in Austen the male bonding between father and daughter is set up to collapse. Sooner or later, what Adrienne Rich calls "compulsory heterosexuality"<sup>4</sup>—a conspiracy of economic need and the ideology of romance—forces Elizabeth out of the library, into the ballroom, and up to the altar. The father's business in this ritual is, in every sense, to give the daughter away. If Mr. Bennet is supportive up to a point, her marriage obliges him to objectify Elizabeth and hand her over. At this juncture, he not only withdraws his protection and empowerment but also gives away her true "castrated" gender, revealing her incapacity for action in a phallogocentric society.<sup>5</sup> This ceremony—posing father as giver, daughter as gift—could be said to underlie and ultimately to belie the relation of fathers to daughters in *Pride and Prejudice*.

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3. The relevant essays are "The Dissolution of the Oedipus Complex" (1924), "Some Psychological Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction between the Sexes" (1925), "Female Sexuality" (1931), and "Femininity" (1932). Nancy Chodorow [in *The Reproduction of Mothering* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978)] offers a helpful recapitulation of Freud on fathers and daughters (94–99); see also Sarah Kofman [*The Enigma of Woman: Women in Freud's Writings*, trans. Catherine Porter (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985)] for a further glossing of the Oedipus and masculinity complexes (199–206).

4. Adrienne Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence," *Signs* 5 (1980): 631–60.

5. In a letter to a favorite niece, Austen more explicitly and bitterly represents marriage as a loss, for women, ushering in a period of inactivity: "Oh! what a loss it will be, when you are married. You are too agreeable in your single state, too agreeable as a Neice. I shall hate you when your delicious play of Mind is settled down into conjugal & maternal affections" (*Jane Austen's Letters*, 3rd ed., ed. Deirdre Le Faye [Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1995], 20–21 Feb 1817, 329).

In his discussion of marriage and the incest taboo, Lévi-Strauss<sup>6</sup> famously proposed that the exchange of women among kin groups serves, like the exchange of money or words, to negotiate relationships among men. He explained that women function as a kind of currency, their circulation binding and organizing male society (61), and I am suggesting that *Pride and Prejudice* may offer a similar anthropology. Here, too, marriage betrays the tie between father and daughter in favor of ties among men with agendas of their own, involving both male sexuality and male class ambitions. To begin with the first, I appeal to Georges Bataille<sup>7</sup> regarding the (bestowing) father's libidinal investment in the marriage ceremony:

Marriage is a matter less for the partners than for the man who gives the woman away, the man whether father or brother who might have freely enjoyed the woman, daughter or sister, yet who bestows her on someone else. This gift is perhaps a substitute for the sexual act. (218)

According to Bataille, marriage substitutes for the incestuous heterosexual act a homoerotic exchange in which the father gives his own flesh, as it were, to another man. Dropping the daughter from the sexual equation except as a mediating term, this substitution italicizes male sexuality at the expense of female sexuality. Revising Bataille, one might say that marriage is at once an expression/renunciation of the father's desire for the daughter and the renunciation of the daughter's right to a sexual agenda of her own. As anthropologist Gayle Rubin observes in "The Traffic in Women,"<sup>8</sup> the systematic exchange of women imprisons female desire in a "debt nexus":

If a girl is promised in infancy, her refusal to participate as an adult would disrupt the flow of debts and promises. It would be in the interests of such a system if the woman in question did not have too many ideas of her own about whom she might want to sleep with. (182)

\* \* \*

The fathers' other interest in the daughter's circulation concerns, as I say, class ambitions. Mr. Bennet's obvious interest in the Elizabeth-Darcy match is similar to Elizabeth's own. He may laugh at Mrs. Bennet's schemes, but the fact remains that he, too, will benefit from a noble connection. And despite his philosophic detachment, Mr. Ben-

6. Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*, revised edition, translated by James Harle Bell, John Richard von Sturmer, and Rodney Needham (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969).

7. *Death and Sensuality: A Study of Eroticism and the Taboo* (New York: Arno, 1977).

8. In *Toward an Anthropology of Women*, ed. Royna R. Deiter (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975).

net is not without a streak of pragmatism—after all, he has always intended to visit Mr. Bingley. Capable of being impressed by wealth and rank, he is frankly delighted that Darcy has used his money and influence to straighten out the Lydia-Wickham affair. “So much the better,” he exults. “It will save me a world of trouble and economy.” Sounding even, for a moment, strangely like Mr. Collins, Elizabeth’s father consents to her marriage with little of his habitual irony. “I have given him my consent,” he tells her. “He is the kind of man, indeed, to whom I should never dare refuse any thing, which he condescended to ask.” Though Mr. Darcy’s class interests may seem to rule against a tie to the Bennets, they too are subtly at work here. Eighteenth-century Cinderella matches not only brought titles to the middle class but also, by distributing merchant profits, put oft-needed cash into the coffers of the well-born. Only with *Persuasion*’s Sir Walter Elliot does Austen fully represent the material as well as moral impoverishment of her landed contemporaries; yet by *Sense and Sensibility* she has already given us one Willoughby who, unsure of his aristocratic heritage, leaves Marianne for a certain Miss Grey with fifty thousand pounds. Of course, in *Pride and Prejudice* capital flows the other way, but even here a decline in aristocratic welfare is nevertheless suggested by the sickly Miss De Bourgh. It may well be the enfeeblement of his own class that encourages Darcy to look below him for a wife with greater stamina. As a figure for the ambitious bourgeoisie, Elizabeth pumps richer, more robust blood into the collapsing veins of the nobility, even as she boosts the social standing of her relatives in trade. Most important, however—to the patriarchs of both classes—she eases tensions between them. By neutralizing class antagonisms, she promotes the political stability essential to industrial prosperity and the fortunes of middle-class and noble men alike. What does it mean, *Pride and Prejudice* encourages one to ask, for female development and destiny to be thoroughly entangled in patriarchal enmities and interests so far beyond the purview of any one girl?

\* \* \*

This brings me to Mr. Darcy—a father by virtue of his age, class, and a paternalism extending to friends and dependents alike. A man given to long letters and polysyllables, a man with an excellent library and even hand, Darcy may also be seen as an aspiring authorial figure. If Mr. Bennet sets out to create suspense, Mr. Darcy hankers to resolve it. They are literary as well as sexual rivals, and Elizabeth is the prize—or would be, were this surrogate son, father’s heir, not herself a contender for authorial status. In these terms, Elizabeth’s and Darcy’s matching of wits, more than flirtation, is a struggle for control of the text. There are two heated and defining moments in this struggle: Elizabeth’s refusal of Darcy’s first proposal and the morning after

when he delivers his letter. The first begins with Elizabeth alone at the Collins’s house in Kent, studying Jane’s letters. Suddenly Darcy bursts in and blurts out a proposal; the chapter closes by resuming Elizabeth’s internal dialogue, “the tumult of her mind” after Darcy’s departure. But where has the reader been throughout this chapter if not in the heroine’s formidable mind? By all rights this should be Darcy’s scene, his say, while in fact Austen transcribes relatively few of his actual words. His amatory discourse is quickly taken over by a narrator who represents the scene and renders even Darcy’s language wholly from Elizabeth’s point of view: “His sense of her inferiority . . . [was] dwelt on with a warmth which . . . was very unlikely to recommend his suit.” The text of Darcy’s proposal is completely glossed and glossed over by Elizabeth’s response to it. Of her refusal, on the other hand, Austen includes every unmediated word, a direct quotation four times as long as that permitted Darcy, and this sets the pattern for what follows. Each time Darcy opens his mouth, he is superseded by a speech of greater length and vehemence. She answers his question—why is he so rudely rejected?—with a tougher question of her own.

I might as well enquire . . . why with so evident a design of offending and insulting me, you chose to tell me that you liked me against your will, against your reason, and even against your character? Was not this some excuse for incivility, if I was uncivil?

Conceding nothing, she accuses him at some length of everything: of breaking Jane’s heart and unmaking Wickham’s fortune, of earning and continually confirming her own dislike. She betters his scorn for her family by scorning him. “I have every reason in the world to think ill of you,” she declares. Her language, her feelings, and her judgments overwhelm his and put them to shame. Driving poor Darcy to platitude, apology, and hasty retreat, they leave Elizabeth the easy winner of this first rhetorical round.

The following day, however, Elizabeth is obsessed by Darcy: “It was the impossible to think of anything else.” As the man crowds out all other thoughts, so the letter he delivers soon crowds out all other words, monopolizing the narrative for the next seven pages. Longer than the entire preceding chapter, it completely dispels Elizabeth’s inspired performance of the day before. If Darcy was not “master enough” of himself then, he regains his mastery now. In a play for literary hegemony (to be author and critic both), he recovers his story and manages its interpretation. The letter establishes, for example, that Darcy’s judgment of Jane was entirely impartial:

That I was desirous of believing her indifferent is certain,—but I will venture to say that my investigations and decisions are not

usually influenced by my hopes and fears.—I did not believe her to be indifferent because I wished it;—I believed it on impartial conviction.

As for Wickham, the letter documents Darcy's early suspicions and the events that follow, proving him right. It demonstrates, too, Darcy's fatherly influence upon others, the moral sway he holds over Bingley and Georgiana: his friend has "a stronger dependence on [Darcy's] judgment than on his own"; his sister, fearing big brother's disapproval, decides not to elope after all. Only after Darcy's unabridged text does the narrator describe Elizabeth's reaction to it. She reads "with an eagerness which hardly left her power of comprehension, and from impatience of knowing what the next sentence might bring, was incapable of attending to the sense of the one before her eyes." Darcy's letter saps her power to comprehend, disables her attention. She is addressed as reader—recall with what certainty she dispatched a letter from her previous suitor—only to be indisposed in this role. At first Elizabeth protests: "This must be false! This cannot be! This must be the grossest falsehood!" She rushes through the letter and resolves to put it away forever, but the text, unrelenting, demands to be taken out, to be read and read again. Against the broad chest of Darcy's logic, Elizabeth pounds the ineffectual fists of her own. She puts the paper firmly down, then "weighed every circumstance with what she meant to be impartiality—deliberated on the probability of each statement—but with little success." Resolutions, procrastinations, do nothing to stop the inexorable drive of Darcy's narrative to its foregone conclusion. \* \* \*

Soon after receiving Darcy's letter, Elizabeth meets up with Kitty and Lydia. Officer-crazy as ever, Lydia gushes on about Brighton and her plans to join the regiment there for its summer encampment. This first reference to Brighton unfolds into an unexpectedly earnest seduction plot—latent perhaps in Lydia's very character, throwback to earlier, too sentimental heroines—that might be more at home in a novel by Richardson or Burney. That such a seemingly anomalous plot should surface now and dominate for more than seven chapters is not accidental. For one thing, the Lydia-Wickham fiasco serves to reveal both Bennet's inadequacy and Darcy's capacity. Elizabeth first doubts her father regarding his decision to let Lydia go to Brighton, and she blames him bitterly for the subsequent scandal. For Darcy, by contrast, the calamity is a chance to display his nobility of heart and purse, his wish to rectify and his power to do so. The Lydia plot thus accomplishes Elizabeth's separation from her father as well as her reattachment to another: a changing of the paternal guard. By showcasing

Darcy, the upstart story that appears to delay and even to replace Elizabeth's and Darcy's courtship actually works to advance it.

But there is another reason that Lydia's seduction moves into the foreground at this moment. It happens to occupy the curious gap between Elizabeth's first, private softening and her final, public surrender to Darcy. This leads me to suspect that Elizabeth's narrative is displaced for the length of these chapters onto her sister's, that Lydia's seduction codes an emotional drama—of coercion, capitulation, and lamentation—missing from but underlying Elizabeth's story proper. Far from being an unrelated plot, Lydia's may be its ruder, telltale twin. Of course Lydia is a foil for Elizabeth, one sister's folly held up to the other's wisdom, yet there remains a sense in which they, or their fates, are similar. When Lydia calls Mary King "a nasty little freckled thing," Elizabeth admits that "however incapable of such coarseness of *expression* herself, the coarseness of the *sentiment* was little other than her own breast had formerly harbored." Taking seriously this point that Lydia and Elizabeth may differ more in style than substance, I find that Lydia's interpolated tale does not so much distract from the central courtship as distill its darkest meaning. While the overread version of Elizabeth's *Bildung* marks her gaining of self-knowledge and security, the eruption into Elizabeth's midst of Lydia's more sordid history points to a counternarrative of seduction and surrender.

\* \* \*

According to one critical truism, *Pride and Prejudice* manages a kind of bilateral disarmament: Elizabeth gives up her prejudice, while Darcy relinquishes his pride.<sup>9</sup> I am arguing, however, that Darcy woos away not Elizabeth's "prejudice," but her judgment entire. For while Darcy defends the impartiality of his views, Elizabeth confesses to the partiality of hers; while his representation of the world is taken to be objective, raised to the level of universality, hers (like that of women generally) is condemned for being subjective and dismissed as mere "prejudice." But what does Austen's record actually show? Elizabeth was certainly wrong about Wickham, but was she really that wrong about Darcy? He may warm up a bit, and his integrity is rightly affirmed, but he is hardly less arrogant than Elizabeth at first supposed.

9. John Halperin (*The Life of Jane Austen* [Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984]) is particularly complacent before this formulation: "It is unnecessary to rehearse again the process by which Darcy's pride is humbled and Elizabeth's prejudices exposed—'your defect is a propensity to hate every body,' she tells him early in the novel; 'And yours . . . is wilfully to misunderstand them,' he replies" (70). Alison Sulloway (*Jane Austen and the Province of Womanhood* [Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989]), by contrast, revises the cliché by historicizing the terms *pride* and *prejudice*, demonstrating their embeddedness in eighteenth-century feminist texts (66–69); in the polemical writings of Mary Astell, Catherine Macaulay, Mary Wollstonecraft, and Mary Hays, as in novels by Burney, Edgeworth, and Austen, these frequently used terms come to operate as "code words to describe men's pride in their dominion and their prejudice against the sex they dominated" (66).

Her comment to Fitzwilliam is ever exact: "I do not know any body who seems more to enjoy the power of doing what he likes than Mr. Darcy." And what about Darcy's own accuracy? His judgment of Jane is just as mistaken—and, though he denies it, as partial—as Elizabeth's view of Wickham. Yet Darcy's credibility remains intact. Finally admitting to having misinterpreted Jane, Darcy explains that he was corrected not by Elizabeth but by his own subsequent observations, and on this basis he readvises the ever-pliant Bingley. Whereas Lizzie's mistake discredits her judgment for good, Mr. Darcy's, far from disqualifying him, gives him an opportunity to judge again. What happens in *Pride and Prejudice*, then, is not simply that an a priori prejudiced character at last sees the error of her ways. Rather, a character introduced as reliable, whose clarity of vision is evidently the author's own, is re-presented—in the context of her marriageability—as prejudiced. In my reading, the psychological drama of a heroine "awakening" to her true identity is brought into conflict with the social drama of an outspoken girl entering a world whose voices drown out her own.

If Elizabeth does not overcome her "prejudice," neither does Darcy abandon his pride. Early in the book Elizabeth declares, "I could easily forgive *his* pride, if he had not mortified *mine*." But by the last volume she suggests just the opposite:

They owed the restoration of Lydia, her character, every thing to him. Oh! how heartily did she grieve over every ungracious sensation she had ever encouraged, every saucy speech she had ever directed towards him. For herself she was humbled; but she was proud of him.

There is a rueful women's joke about how "it was one of those love-hate relationships: by the end of it we both loved him and both hated me." At the outset, Elizabeth and Darcy are each proud, each skeptical of the other, yet finally they reach what is in some sense the conjugal consensus of this joke: in the end both are skeptical of her, both proud of him. But wait. Doesn't Darcy make a pretty speech to his bride confessing, "By you, I was properly humbled"? Here it is useful to see how the novel itself defines "pride" and how this definition relates to Mr. Darcy. The bookish Mary (another figure for Austen, if a self-mocking one) distinguishes "pride" from "vanity": "Pride relates more to our opinion of ourselves, vanity to what we would have others think of us." As for Darcy, Charlotte Lucas contends that his pride is excusable: "One cannot wonder that so very fine a young man, with family, fortune, every thing in his favor, should think highly of himself. If I may so express it, he has a *right* to be proud." A younger Lucas puts it more bluntly: "If I were as rich as Mr. Darcy, I should not care how

proud I was. I would keep a pack of foxhounds and drink a bottle of wine every day." The practical Lucases have a point. Darcy's richness gives him if not the "right" then the ability, in Mary's formulation, to be proud. A man in Darcy's social position need not consider any opinion but his own; he is proud because he does not have to be vain. In this sense, pride is less a psychological attribute than a social one—it comes with the territory and is therefore, if anything, heightened by Darcy's enhanced status in *Pride and Prejudice*'s last act.

Vanity, by contrast, is the adaptive strategy of those who depend on the kindness of strangers. In these terms, pride and vanity are arguably gender as well as class specific. \* \* \* Dependent on what the neighbors say for their status as proper ladies, reliant on male admiration and marriage for their economic survival, middle-class women are vain because they cannot afford to be proud. The story I am tracing of Elizabeth's decline involves not only the interrogation of her judgment but her fall from a "male" impersonation of pride into the vanity of other girls. John Berger<sup>1</sup> might put it that the heroine shifts from proudly "acting" on her own behalf to merely "appearing" in the eyes of others; from seeing the world herself to seeing only herself *being seen* by the world.

To begin with, Elizabeth resists maternal efforts to school her in self-display. Warned by Mrs. Bennet that if she walks to Netherfield she "will not be fit to *be seen*," Elizabeth firmly activates her mother's passive voice. "I shall be very fit to *see* Jane—which is all I want," she replies (my emphases). Three chapters later, Miss Bingley and Mr. Darcy stroll along discussing Elizabeth's portrait, recasting their guest as an appearance for acquisition and exhibition. At that moment, they encounter the object of their speculation/specularity. As if refusing to sit for her portrait, Elizabeth quickly inverts the visual economy by assuming the position of artist who studies and composes them: "No, no; stay where you are.—You are charmingly group'd, and appear to uncommon advantage. The picturesque would be spoilt by admitting a fourth. Good bye." Running "gaily off," she still defies any attempt to capture and frame her. A volume and a half later, Elizabeth approaches Pemberley with a similarly assertive eye. She wants particularly to see the area without being seen by Darcy: "But surely I may enter his country with impunity, and rob it of a few petrified spars without his perceiving me." Driving through the park she gazes long and delightedly over the grounds. After "examining the nearer aspect of the house," she enters the building and surveys the dining-parlor with appreciation, admiring the good taste of the furniture. With increasing excitement, she stares out of every window, commands the

1. *Ways of Seeing* (London: Penguin, 1972).

view from each room. She does not merely look, but looks with a desire to possess—from thinking to rob Darcy's county "of a few petrified spars," she now imagines herself mistress of his estate. Challenging the usual gender of the aggressive gaze, she positively leers.<sup>2</sup>

In the picture gallery, Elizabeth's desire to behold Mr. Darcy's portrait seems part of the visual assault she has mounted thus far. "At last it arrested her—and she beheld a striking resemblance of Mr. Darcy, with such a smile over the face, as she remembered to have sometimes seen, when he looked at her." Like Darcy's letter, his picture is terribly compelling. Though she sets out to track it down, it arrests her and, before she can leave the gallery, draws her back to it again. Most remarkably, it reorganizes the pattern and sexual politics of seeing—for even as Elizabeth looks at the painting, it reminds her of Darcy looking at her. She marvels at the vast proportions of his influence "as a brother, a landlord, a master."

And as she stood before the canvas, on which he was represented, and fixed his eyes upon herself, she thought of his regard with a deeper sentiment of gratitude than it had ever raised before. (my emphasis)

Elizabeth, visual libertine, is suddenly shy and conventionally vain. Now her act of looking unexpectedly fixes his eyes on her; now her gaze sees only how she looks to him. It is clear from this passage that Elizabeth's deepening gratitude, the change of heart that propels her into marriage, coincides with a novel concern for Darcy's "regard," a heightened awareness of herself as the object of his gaze and estimation. But surely this bit of description, dramatically reversing what people usually do in front of a painting, is self-consciously strange; for the woman positioned as spectator to fix the eyes of the image upon herself cannot but strike us as perverse. As with Darcy's letter, which seizes the female reader and turns her into the object of its force and her own hatred, here is another striking inversion—one that by flipping

2. My remarks throughout this section are indebted to the body of work on looking and power developed in the past fifteen years primarily by feminist film theorists. Much of this work, following the lead of Laura Mulvey's "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (*Screen* 16 [1975] 6–18; reprinted in *Visual and Other Pleasures* [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989]), has emphasized the aggressive "maleness" of the gaze intrinsic to classical cinema's way of seeing. More recently, however, critics like Judith Mayne, Mary Anne Doane, Linda Williams, and Mulvey herself have raised questions about women as spectators—for example, as the audience addressed by the "woman's film" of the 1940s (Doane); as classical and avant-garde filmmakers (Mayne); and as female characters whose active looking and desiring is often violently punished (Williams). These last may have something in common with the investigative Elizabeth Bennet, well aware of her crime against propriety in gazing on Pemberley and an image of its master, without herself being seen. In the terms suggested by Williams's "When the Woman Looks," Elizabeth's humiliation may be the punitive fate of a woman who dares to look aggressively; I have been arguing, however, that Austen leads her readers to question the naturalness and rightness of this fate. The essays by Mayne, Doane, and Williams can be found in *Re-vision: Essays in Feminist Film Criticism* (Frederick, MD: University Publications of America, 1984); see also *Feminism and Film Theory* (New York: Methuen, 1988), edited by Constance Penley.

the idiom sets up the moment as a problem, making the reader pause and consider. The result, I would say, is once more to phrase Elizabeth's humiliating loss of pride as an awkward disordering, to defamiliarize the clichés of female development.

Of course, one continues to admire Elizabeth. She may care for Darcy's regard, but she is never so utterly enslaved by it as Miss Bingley. She may hesitate to laugh at Darcy, but she does show Georgiana that a wife may take (some) liberties. She is admirable because she is not Charlotte, because she is not Lydia. I want nevertheless to insist that Elizabeth is a better friend to Charlotte and closer sister to Lydia—that one version of her story runs more parallel to theirs—than previous readings have indicated. The three women live in the same town, share the same gossip, and attend the same balls. Why, as some critics have claimed, should Elizabeth alone be above the social decree? There are, in Elizabeth's marriage, elements of both crass practicality and coercion. Elizabeth is appalled by Charlotte's pragmatism, yet in her own preference for Darcy over Wickham she shows herself beguiled by the entrepreneurial marriage plot.<sup>4</sup> And though clearly embarrassed by the family connection to Lydia, Elizabeth, too, is implicated by the formal intersection of their stories: in the course of the novel she loses not her virginity but her authority. For while the heroine marries a decent man and a large estate, Austen seems concerned to show that she pays a certain price. If Mr. Bennet embodies the post-Enlightenment, modified patriarch, Mr. Darcy harks back to an earlier type and time, before fathers were curbed by Lockean principles, before aristocrats began to feel the crunch. Recall how ambiguously his power looms before Elizabeth: "How much of pleasure or pain it was in his power to bestow!—How much of good or evil must be done by him!" Darcy disempowers Elizabeth if only because of their unequal positions in the social schema—because he is a Darcy and she is a Bennet, because he is a man and she is his wife. \* \* \*

3. I have in mind D. W. Harding ("Regulated Hatred: An Aspect in the Work of Jane Austen" *Scrutiny* 8 [1940]) [see pp. 296–99 in this volume—Editor] and Marvin Mudrick (*Jane Austen: Irony as Defense and Discovery* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1952]), old guard of the subversive school. While I am indebted to this tradition, I disagree with Harding's and Mudrick's view that Austen challenges her society by having Elizabeth transcend it. Mudrick contends, for instance, that "the central fact for Elizabeth remains the power of choice" (124); to his liberal imagination, Elizabeth represents the "free individual" (126). In my opinion, *Pride and Prejudice* is about the heroine's inextricability from the social context, not her independence of it.

4. It is interesting that Hollywood—of venal habits and puritanical tastes—should recognize and be uneasy with the suspiciousness of Elizabeth's position as Austen wrote it. In the 1940 film version of *Pride and Prejudice* (directed by Robert Z. Leonard, with a screenplay by Aldous Huxley and Jane Murnin), Lady Catherine De Bourgh threatens to cut Darcy out of her will if he goes ahead and marries a Bennet. Elizabeth proves her romantic integrity by vowing to marry him anyway. Needless to say, Austen conspicuously chose not to test Elizabeth in such a manner. Agreeing that "Austen is at pains from early in the novel to show us Elizabeth's response to Darcy's wealth," Karen Newman ("Can This Marriage Be Saved Jane Austen Makes Sense of an Ending," *ELH* 50 [1983] 693–710) adds that critics as early as Sir Walter Scott remarked on the heroine's fascination with Pemberley (698).

\* \* \* By the end of the book, Mr. Bennet's paternal role has been assumed by Elizabeth's uncle, Mr. Gardiner. Though "gentlemanlike," Mr. Gardiner lives by trade "within view of his own warehouses" and represents, more than Mr. Bennet, the rising middle class. No wonder Elizabeth fears that Darcy will rebuff him, given that nobleman's past intolerance for her vulgar relations. She is quite unprepared for Darcy's civility to Gardiner and for the apparent power of fishing to overcome class differences. Perhaps their shared fondness for Elizabeth, their lengthy haggle over Lydia, as well as their equal passion for trout serve to reinforce the shared social/economic advantages of Darcy's and Gardiner's alliance. They become, in any case, suggestively close; indeed, the very last paragraph of the novel informs us that

with the Gardiners, they were always on the most intimate terms. Darcy, as well as Elizabeth, really loved them; and they were both ever sensible of the warmest gratitude towards the persons who, by bringing her into Derbyshire, had been the means of uniting them.

At first this seems an oddly insignificant note on which to end. On second glance it appears to confirm the suspicion I have had—that just as the Gardiners have been the means of uniting Darcy and Elizabeth, so Elizabeth has been useful as the means of uniting Mr. Darcy and Mr. Gardiner. *Pride and Prejudice* attains a satisfying unity not only between a man and a woman but also between two men, an intercourse not merely personal but social, a marriage of two classes no less than a marriage of true minds.

## DEBORAH KAPLAN

### Circles of Support†

Biographers and critics, in stressing the role of Austen's kin, have ignored the general impact of their community's culture while insisting that the influence of the novelist's family, after getting her started as a writer, continued unchanging. Throughout her life her family is said to have stimulated and supported her talent.<sup>1</sup> "Her novels remained to the last a kind of family entertainment," according to Mary Lascelles.<sup>2</sup>

† From *Jane Austen Among Women* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992) 96–97, 99–106, 108. The author's notes have been edited to provide references to the recent edition of Austen's letters. Reprinted by permission.

1. Park Honan provides the most elaborated version of this view in *Jane Austen: Her Life* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988) [see pp. 267–69 of this edition—Editor] and in his subsequent article, "The Austen Brothers and Sisters," *Persuasions*, no. 10 (1988): 59–64.

2. *Jane Austen and Her Art* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1939), 146, 32.

Mary Poovey concurs with Lascelles' representation of Austen's relatives: "Jane Austen wrote her first stories for the amusement of her family. . . . Austen's first longer works . . . were also apparently family entertainments, and, even after she became a published author, she continued to solicit and value the response of her family as she composed and revised her novels."<sup>3</sup> But just as the family's influence was permeated by the culture of Austen's community in her childhood, so that influence was reshaped by the community's values in Austen's adulthood. "Family" became a smaller circle in Austen's adult life, but that group, though private and exclusive, was still not disconnected from the community and patriarchal culture surrounding it.

The literary interests and pursuits of Jane Austen's family and community explain how, as a young girl, she came to be interested in literature and to try imaginative writing, but they cannot account for Austen's mature writing. In the second half of the 1790s Austen was becoming a serious, committed writer. We can follow the transformation by considering her productions. The majority of her juvenilia, like the works of her family and neighbors, are very brief; some mere fragments or, as she called one selection of them, "Scraps." Most of the longer pieces are unfinished. *Lady Susan*, the first composition written after the juvenilia in 1793–94, while not incomplete, is brought to a quick finish with a short, tacked-on conclusion. But beginning in 1795, Austen wrote and completed three extended manuscripts: "First Impressions" [*Pride and Prejudice*], "Elinor and Marianne" [*Sense and Sensibility*], and "Susan" [*Northanger Abbey*] and those efforts changed the nature of Austen's creative life, differentiating it both from her work on her earlier fictions and from the leisure-time composing of other members of the gentry. The manuscripts required sustained concentration. They took time.

We have only to remember the dictums of the widespread ideology of domesticity to appreciate the potential subversiveness of that writing. The ideal woman was to engage in activities that served her family, contributing either to the pleasures of her husband or to the education of her children. Certainly, a young girl or even an adult woman who whiled away an occasional solitary afternoon by composing a poem or by writing brief parodies could not be accused of putting herself first in an "unfeminine" way. But to write three books in four years? Although biographers and critics have routinely portrayed the charming family context for Austen's girlhood precociousness, they have not provided a persuasive rendering of that context for the novelist's dif-

3. Mary Poovey, *The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer: Ideology as Style in the Works of Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Shelley, and Jane Austen* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1984) 202. See also Alison Sulloway, *Jane Austen and the Province of Womanhood* (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1989), 86, 87, 92. Sulloway stresses the lifelong role of the family, particularly Austen's father and her brother Henry. She also singles out Austen's mother and sister as decidedly unsupportive and unhelpful.



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