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Conduct Books and *Pride and Prejudice*

Like many families in Regency England, the Bennets of *Pride and Prejudice* owned a copy of Fordyce's *Sermons for Young Women* (1766). Lydia Bennet's horror at the thought of hearing it read aloud, and Elizabeth Bennet's failure to satisfy those who thought themselves qualified to speak for society have led critics to think the novel a rejection of conduct-book morality. I read the novel differently, however, and argue that Elizabeth marries Fitzwilliam Darcy and becomes mistress of Pemberley because she follows the advice of Fordyce and his peers, managing her life with the touchstones of virtue, sense and prudence. She does not, as some critics have suggested, throw over conventional ideas about female propriety and deference, but interprets them within the tradition Fordyce helped to create so that, by the end of the novel, the middle-class morality of Samuel Richardson and the conduct books triumphs over the superficiality and display of those (like Lady Catherine de Bourgh) who are devoted to society and the season.

1 Elizabeth and the Conduct Books

For those interested in the marriage choices of young women of the gentry and professional classes at the end of the eighteenth century, a key literary text is Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (begun in 1793, published twenty years later) – a work that is often thought to celebrate the triumph of individual desire over conventional behaviour,¹ but which, as I will show, validates the conventions laid out in the conduct books of the time. Although Lydia Bennet is horrified at the thought of listening to readings from the best-known of them, James Fordyce's *Sermons to Young*

1. Mary Poovey, *The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer: Ideology as Style in the Works of Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Shelley, and Jane Austen* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), p. 194; David Monaghan, "Jane Austen and the Position of Women," in *Jane Austen in a Social Context*, ed. David Monaghan (London: Macmillan, 1981), 105–21, p. 108; Johanna M. Smith, "The Oppositional Reader and *Pride and Prejudice*," in *A Companion to Jane Austen Studies*, ed. Laura Cooner Lambdin and Robert Thomas Lambdin (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2000), 27–40, p. 35. Judith Lowder Newton describes *Pride and Prejudice* as "Austen's fantasy of female autonomy": *Women, Power, and Subversion: Social Strategies in British Fiction, 1778–1860* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1981), p. 74.

Women (1766 – it had reached its fourteenth edition by 1813), her sister Elizabeth’s actions reflect the importance of such works; indeed, it is hardly an exaggeration to say that she only becomes mistress of Pemberley by following their advice. Readings that presume that Elizabeth “defies every dictum about female propriety and deference propounded in the sermons and conduct books”² are far from the mark.

To note this is not to say that Austen was comfortable with all of the (male) views of gender, knowledge and power that are found in these works. There is no reason to doubt the bitterness of her aside in *Northanger Abbey* (1817):

To come [before others] with a well-informed mind, is to come with an inability of administering to the vanity of others, which a sensible person would always wish to avoid. A woman especially, if she have the misfortune of knowing any thing, should conceal it as well as she can.³

It is not surprising, therefore, that critics have thought that Elizabeth, blessed with the “quickness” which her father admires and the “liveliness of . . . mind” which attracts Darcy, superior to the conduct-book ideal of womanhood. Such books stressed the need for female diffidence and discretion,⁴ and since these seem to be qualities that Elizabeth lacks those looking for parallels have turned to Mary Wollstonecraft’s *Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792) rather than Fordyce’s *Sermons*.⁵ However, conduct-book advice was more nuanced than critics have realized. Sarcasm and the display of learning was criticized in men and women when it would humiliate those with a lesser understanding,⁶ and style of address was linked to social distance. Intelligence and wit – or in Fordyce’s

2. Claudia L. Johnson, *Jane Austen: Women, Politics, and the Novel* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1988), pp. xxiii–xxiv.

3. Jane Austen, *Northanger Abbey*, ed. Susan Fraiman (New York: Norton, 2004), p. 76.

4. See, for example, *The Polite Lady; or, A Course of Female Education in a Series of Letters, from a Mother to her Daughter* (1760), 1st American ed. (Philadelphia: Matthew Carey, 1798), p. 205.

5. Mary Wollstonecraft, *Vindication of the Rights of Women*, ed. Charles W. Hagelman, Jr. (New York: Norton, 1967), p. 81; cf. Lloyd W. Brown, “Jane Austen and the Feminist Tradition,” *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 28 (1973) 321–38, p. 332.

6. Although such displays were thought particularly inappropriate in women – see Frances Burney, *Evelina; or, A Young Lady’s Entrance Into the World* (1799), ed. Stewart J. Cooke (New York: Norton, 1998), p. 283; cf. Fordyce, pp. 97–98; *The Spectator*, ed. Donald F. Bond, 5 vols. (Oxford Clarendon Press 1965), vol. 1, p. 465 (issue 113, 10 July 1711) – such behaviour was not excused in men either. Mr Knightley faults Emma Woodhouse for her rudeness at Box Hill because she spoke without respect for Miss Bates’ “character, age, and situation,” not because she transgressed gender roles (Jane Austen, *Emma* [1816], ed. Stephen M. Parrish, 3rd ed. [New York: Norton, 2000], pp. 243, 245).

words, “sprightliness and freedom, when supported by sense, and chastened by decency”⁷ – were valued in the family, among friends, and in the company of those who would not presume familiarity.⁸ Conduct-book authors did not expect “that women should always utter grave sentences, nor men neither. It were inconsistent with the state of mankind.”⁹

Such authors did, however, counsel discretion. As Thomas Gisborne would explain, when cautioning against too much freedom in conversation in his *An Enquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex* (1796):

Women in various occurrences of life are betrayed, by a desire of rendering themselves agreeable, into an indiscreet freedom of manners and conversation with men of whom they perhaps know but little and still more frequently into a greater degree of freedom with those of whom they have more knowledge, than can be fitly indulged except towards persons to whom they are connected by particular ties.¹⁰

In short, freedom which might be enjoyed amongst family members or between friends could be quite inappropriate when offered in public – a point that Austen did not contest, and indeed makes herself in *Pride and Prejudice*.¹¹

Another possible objection to the idea that Austen accepted conduct-book values might be that authors like Fordyce could adopt an evangelical tone, and Austen

7. James Fordyce, *Sermons to Young Women*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: M. Carey, 1809), vol. 1, p. 87; for the importance of decency cf. the criticism of Mary Crawford in *Mansfield Park* (1814): “She was in high spirits, and surrounded by those who were giving all the support of their own bad sense to her too lively mind” (Jane Austen, *Mansfield Park*, ed. Claudia L. Johnson [New York: Norton, 1998], p. 285). Seventy years before delicacy was expected of men as well as women; see Hugh Jones, *An Accidence to the English Tongue* (London: John Clarke, 1724), pp. 56–57; cf. Samuel Richardson, *Pamela; or, Virtue Rewarded* (1740), ed. Thomas Keymer and Alice Wakely (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 298.

8. John Gregory, *A Father’s Legacy to his Daughters* (Manchester: G. Nicholson, 1797), pp. 9–10. In Burney’s *Cecilia*, published the year before Austen began work on *Pride and Prejudice*, the eponymous heroine discovers that unwittingly allowing a man too much freedom in conversation could be both unpleasant and socially damaging. Cf. Frances Burney, *Cecilia; or, Memoirs of an Heiress*, ed. Peter Sabor and Margaret Anne Doody (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 136.

9. Fordyce, vol. 1, p. 92.

10. Thomas Gisborne, *An Enquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex* (London: T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1796), pp. 184–85, cf. pp. 270–71.

11. Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, ed. Donald Gray, 3rd ed. (New York: Norton), pp. 124, 150.

is well-known to have observed that she did not like the Evangelicals.¹² However, Austen's religious thinking is more complicated than such a throw-away line would suggest. Writing to her niece Fanny Knight in 1814, she responds to Fanny's doubts about a suitor who seemed to be betraying signs of incipient Evangelicalism by recommending the young man, and going on:

And as to there being any objection from his *Goodness*, from the danger of his becoming even Evangelical, I cannot admit *that*. I am by no means convinced that we ought not all to be Evangelicals, & am at least persuaded that they who are so from Reason & Feeling, must be happiest & safest.¹³

Besides, although Austen had little sympathy with their theology, she was very much concerned with the social issues Evangelicals raised.¹⁴ She might laugh at exaggerated fears of the evils of the metropolis,¹⁵ but she recognized that London could be corrupt and life in society had its dangers. Had she read the contemporary reflections of the Methodist writer Hester Ann Rogers that, as a young woman, "Sin had so blinded [her] eyes that [she] could not at this time believe, or at least would not, that dancing, cards or attending plays was sinful," Austen would have found Rogers' talk of sin unhelpful if not uncomfortable,¹⁶ but she would have recognized that dancing, cards, and attending plays could be problematic activities. Though the first was often begun with "gaiety and innocence of heart," it could be a prelude to seduction,¹⁷ and card-playing could be dangerous when the party was "playing high."¹⁸ And as for at-

12. Letter to Cassandra Austen, 24 January 1809 (Letter 65), in R. W. Chapman, ed., *Jane Austen's Letters to her Sister Cassandra and Others*, 2nd ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1952), p. 256 (henceforth referred to as *Letters*).

13. Letter to Fanny Knight, 18 November 1814 (Letter 103), *Letters*, p. 410.

14. Letter to Cassandra Austen, 8 September 1816 (Letter 133), *Letters*, p. 467; Doreen M. Rosman, *Evangelicals and Culture* (London: Croom Helm, 1984), p. 43. Mary Waldron suggests that "From poking fun at Fordyce in *Pride and Prejudice*, Austen seems almost to have joined forces with him [in *Mansfield Park*]" ("The Frailties of Fanny: *Mansfield Park* and the Evangelical Movement," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 16 [2004] 259–81, p. 261); however, this misreads both novels.

15. Letter to Cassandra Austen, August 1796 (Letter 3), *Letters*, p. 7.

16. Hester Ann Rogers, *A Short Account of the Experience of Hester Ann Rogers* (New York: The Methodist Connection in the United States, 1813), p. 9; for Austen's views on sin, see Irene Collins, *Jane Austen and the Clergy* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 1993), pp. 184–88.

17. For the innocence, see Gregory, p. 16; Fordyce, vol. 1, p. 125; for the dangers, see the way Elizabeth prepares "for the conquest of all that remained unsubdued of Wickham's heart" (*Pride and Prejudice*, p. 61).

18. *Pride and Prejudice*, p. 26; letter to Cassandra Austen, 7 October 1808 (Letter 56), *Letters*, p. 215. Austen enjoyed playing cards (see e.g. the letter to Cassandra Austen, 4 January

tending plays: although Austen did not share the evangelical horror of the theatre, she distrusted the stage, and when she herself attended the theatre it was to see the “safe” adaptations of restoration comedy that the conduct books recommended.¹⁹

2 Morality and Marriage

Austen did not need to have read widely in the conduct literature of her day for my thesis to hold. No doubt she knew Henry Mackenzie’s *The Mirror*, for her mother was a subscriber,²⁰ and she certainly read Fordyce; the *Sermons* would have been in the rectory library at Steventon, and textual evidence suggests that in any case she had them to hand – or had recently looked into them – when she was at work on *Northanger Abbey* in 1803.²¹ But by the late eighteenth century conduct books were no longer an aristocratic preserve²² – and, as is always the case with best-sellers, they would have been more talked about than read. Con-

1809 [Letter 63], *Letters*, p. 247), but she understood the conviction of conduct-book authors that money and time could be better spent. For this see Fordyce, vol. 1, p. 124; Gisborne, pp. 206–207; Gregory, p. 17.

19. Lady Sarah Pennington, *An Unfortunate Mother’s Advice to her Absent Daughters* (1761), in *The Young Lady’s Pocket Library or Parental Monitor* (Dublin: John Archer, 1790), pp. 90–91; Austen to Anna Lefroy, 29 November 1814 (Letter 112), *Letters*, p. 415. Even latitudinarians thought the contemporary theatre “not fit to be permitted in a civilized, much less Christian country” (John Tillotson, *The Works of John Tillotson, Late Archbishop of Canterbury*, 10 vols. [London: Richard Priestley, 1820], vol. 9, p. 114); this explains the importance of such texts as Gisborne’s *Enquiry* for Fanny Price’s disapproval of private theatricals: Gisborne, pp. 173–74; Austen, *Mansfield Park*, ed. Claudia L. Johnson (London & New York: Norton, 1998), pp. 93, 108, 151; David Morse, *The Age of Virtue: British Culture from the Restoration to Romanticism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000), pp. 171–72.

20. Irene Collins, *Jane Austen: The Parson’s Daughter* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 1998), p. 68; cf. *Northanger Abbey*, p. 166, with its reference to the 6 March 1779 issue. More generally, see Phillipa Hardman, “Jane Austen and the Periodical Works of Henry Mackenzie,” *Studia Neophilologica* 52 (1980) 323–31.

21. George Holbert Tucker, *Jane Austen the Woman: Some Biographical Insights* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1994), p. 133; Katie Halsey, *Jane Austen and Her Readers* (London: Athlone Press, 2012), p. 42. Cf. Laura Mooneyham White’s list of at least nine sermon collections that Austen knew in *Jane Austen’s Anglicanism* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), p. 47. For Austen’s pleasure in Thomas Sherlock’s sermons (most probably *Several Discourses Preached at the Temple Church*, 1756), see the letter to Anna Lefroy, 28 September 1814 (Letter 108), *Letters*, p. 406.

22. Nancy Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction: a Political History of the Novel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 68.

duct-book values structured drawing room conversation even when those talking had not actually read Fordyce and the others.

The importance of this point should not be exaggerated. These books *were* read, and could even feature on the reading list of those who would happily pick up works of gothic fiction or contemporary politics. For example: amongst the “recent reading” of Agnes Porter in the spring 1804 (Porter was governess to the children of Lord Ilchester, and at the time around fifty years old), we can find Agnes Maria Bennet’s “pretty novel,” *Ellen, Countess of Castle Howel* (1794), William Vincent Barré’s *History of the French Consulate, under Napoleon Buonaparte* (1804) – and Fordyce’s *Sermons*.²³ We see a similar range in the reading of the twenty-eight-year-old Austen,²⁴ who (as noted) had probably tackled the *Sermons* the year before, but my point is not that Austen read this or that particular work, but that she, like many of her contemporaries, took note of what conduct books said. If, as Mary Lascelles suggested, at the end of the eighteenth century the novel provided “a common ground of intercourse among readers of all sorts,”²⁵ novelists themselves were usually echoing the conventions of the conduct books. Such works, no less than the novel, provided a common ground.

On the subject of marriage there was a general agreement amongst conduct-book authors. First, the advice went, marriage should be companionate (based on love and respect, not dynastic need), for it was more likely to be successful when the married couple liked each other than when they were yoked together at parental behest. “The first thing which parents ought to consult in disposing their children in marriage is certainly their inclination,” William Buchan explained in 1769, in his popular handbook *Domestic Medicine* (it had reached its eleventh edition by 1790).²⁶ But (and this was a second point made), inclination should not be equated

23. Joanne Martin, ed., *A Governess in the Age of Jane Austen: The Journals and Letters of Agnes Porter* (London: Hambledon Press, 1998), p. 240.

24. An early but still useful account of Austen’s reading is found in Mary Lascelles, *Jane Austen and Her Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1939).

25. Lascelles, p. 52.

26. William Buchan, *Domestic Medicine; or, A Treatise on the Prevention and Cure of Diseases by Regimen and Simple Medicines*, 11th ed. (London: A. Strahan and T. Cadell, 1790), pp. 119–20. For Buchan’s importance see David Allan, *A Nation of Readers: The Lending Library in Georgian England* (London: The British Library, 2008), p. 2; for Elizabeth’s use of “inclination,” see *Pride and Prejudice*, pp. 123, 232. See also Amanda Vickery, *The Gentleman’s Daughter: Women’s Lives in Georgian England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), p. 55; John Habakkuk, *Marriage, Debt and the Estates System: English Landownership 1650–1950* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), p. 163; Lawrence Stone and Jean C. Fawtier Stone, *An Open Elite? England 1540–1880* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), p. 73. Harriet Byron’s country relatives repeatedly insist that she must “judge for [her]self” in

with infatuation. In an age without easy divorce, trusting one's emotions without any other assurance that the marriage could be happy could have disastrous consequences. The ideal courtship involved the head as well as the heart, in a balance succinctly described by the Countess in Charlotte Lennox's *The Female Quixote* (1752):

And when I tell you . . . that I was born and christen'd, had a useful and proper Education, receiv'd the Addresses of my Lord – through the Recommendation of my Parents, and marry'd him with their Consents and my own Inclination, and that since we have liv'd in great Harmony together, I have told you all the material Passages of my life, which upon Enquiry you will find differ very little from those of other Women of the same Rank, who have a moderate Share of Sense, Prudence, and Virtue.²⁷

The Countess, a relatively minor character in the novel, is introduced to criticise the desire of the work's protagonist to see life as a romance, and no doubt Lennox deliberately presented the noblewoman's life as one without "Adventures"²⁸ – but this does not mean that we should doubt the importance for women in Regency England (as well as for fictional Countesses half a century before) of the three touchstones named: virtue, sense, and prudence.

Vivien Jones has noted how the conduct book genre "constructs female identity in imagined contention with anti-social, deviant or extreme, forms which its powerful example then exorcises: the irresponsible, the overrefined, the ungoverned, the under- or over-educated."²⁹ Lennox's Countess is an example of this construction within a work of fiction and, as I hope to show, the virtues she relies on – found again and again in the conduct books of the age – were what legitimated a woman's acting on her inclination. Austen's female characters are to be judged by their standards.

choosing a husband (Samuel Richardson, *The History of Sir Charles Grandison* [1753–54], ed. Jocelyn Harris, 3 vols. [London: Oxford University Press, 1972], vol. 1, p. 64); Clarissa Harlowe's troubles begin when she is not allowed this freedom of choice, but is pressured to marry Mr Solmes.

27. Charlotte Lennox, *The Female Quixote; or, The Adventures of Arabella*, ed. Margaret Dalziel (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 327; Lascelles, p. 55 notes Austen's enjoyment of the work.

28. Scott Paul Gordon, "The Space of Romance in Lennox's *Female Quixote*," *SEL: Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* 38 (1998) 499–516, p. 510.

29. Vivien Jones, ed., *Women and Literature in Britain, 1700–1800* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 26.

2.1 Virtue

“By the early nineteenth century,” John R. Gillis has noted, “even the slightest degree of independence in sexual matters could render a middle class woman unfit for marriage and society,”³⁰ and the significance of this for *Pride and Prejudice* should be obvious. Lydia’s conduct could have had disastrous consequences, and when Elizabeth learns of what her sister has done she presumes the worst. “I have just had a letter with such dreadful news,” she tells Darcy. And she goes on: “It cannot be concealed from any one. My youngest sister has left all her friends – has eloped; – has thrown herself into the power of – of Mr. Wickham. They are gone off together from Brighton. You know him too well to doubt the rest. She has no money, no connections, nothing that can tempt him to – she is lost for ever.”³¹

Elizabeth’s horror at Lydia’s leaving Brighton with Wickham, and then – arriving at Clapham – willingly taking a hackney-coach for London rather than continuing to Gretna Green and a Scottish wedding,³² would have been understandable for the novel’s first readers, especially if they remembered the 1804 trial of the Rev. Lockhard Gordon and his brother Loudoun Gordon for the abduction of Rachel Lee. The Judge had stopped the Gordons’ trial once the court had learned how, “in the chaise on the road to Uxbridge,”

[Lee] had said to Loudoun Gordon, that she found it useless to make further resistance, and tearing from her breast a gold locket and a camphire bag, she exclaimed, “the charm that has preserved my virtue hitherto is dissolved,” (adding, as she threw it away) “now welcome pleasure.”³³

The incident was the subject of prints and caricatures, as well as self-exculpatory pamphlets by the parties involved.

A real-world Lydia, no less determined on pleasure than Miss Lee,³⁴ would have received little pity when Wickham eventually abandoned her. Had Darcy not intervened to broker a marriage, her conduct would have irreparably damaged the Ben-

30. John R. Gillis, *For Better, For Worse: British Marriages, 1600 to the Present* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 130.

31. *Pride and Prejudice*, p. 323.

32. *Pride and Prejudice*, pp. 178, 183 (“it is most shocking indeed . . . that a sister’s sense of decency and virtue . . . should admit of doubt”). This is not to say that elopements were approved of, but a wedding certificate would go a long way towards repairing the damage done by running away.

33. *The Times*, 7 March 1804, quoted in A. D. Harvey, *Sex in Georgian England: Attitudes and Prejudices from the 1720s to the 1820s* (London: George Duckworth, 1994), p. 53.

34. Wickham had not asked Lydia to leave Brighton with him, and presumably justly lays the blame for her loss of reputation to “her own folly alone” (*Pride and Prejudice*, p. 210).

net family name. Indeed, even with Lydia married, Jane and Elizabeth might well have remained single if Bingley and Darcy had not already been in love with them.³⁵ The world never forgives in women what it overlooks in men, Fordyce had unhappily explained; “one young lady going astray shall subject her relations to such discredit and distress, as the united good conduct of all her brothers and sisters, supposing them numerous, shall scarce ever be able to repair.”³⁶ Feminists insisted that the men and women should be judged equally: “Has vice then a sex?” Mary Robinson would ask, specifically with respect to gambling, but intending the point to have more general application.³⁷ Authors like Fordyce would have agreed that it did not, but though they recognized the injustice of the double standard they were more concerned to help young women navigate the dangers of a less than perfect world than to promote reform. Austen fully appreciated those dangers, and though she had nothing but contempt for men like Wickham, could still see Lydia’s narrow escape from disaster as a cautionary tale.

2.2 Sense

No less important than virtue was sense, the “strength of understanding, and coolness of judgment” that in *Sense and Sensibility* (1811) qualified Elinor Dashwood to be a counsellor to her mother. Although “her disposition was affectionate, and her feelings were strong,” we read, Elinor “knew how to govern them.”³⁸ In Austen’s next novel Elizabeth’s unwillingness to question first impressions and govern strong feelings nearly leads to disaster.

At first Elizabeth’s likes and dislikes seem justified; indeed, when she and Jane discuss their new acquaintance, Mr Bingley, the younger seems more honest.

35. *Pride and Prejudice*, p. 210. When Jane’s engagement is learnt of, “The Bennets were speedily pronounced to be the luckiest family in the world, though only a few weeks before, when Lydia had first run away, they had been generally proved to be marked out for misfortune” (p. 228; cf. pp. 180–81).

36. Fordyce, vol. 1, pp. 8–9.

37. Mary Robinson, *A Letter to the Women of England on the Injustice of Mental Subordination with Anecdotes* (London: T. N. Longman and O. Rees, 1799), p. 10.

38. Jane Austen, *Sense and Sensibility*, ed. Claudia L. Johnson (New York: Norton, 2002), p. 8. The *OED* has “practical soundness of judgement” (def. 11a), and notes the use in Burney, *Cecilia*, p. 446 (“You speak, ma’am, like a lady of sense”); see also Everett Zimmerman, “Admiring Pope No More than is Proper: *Sense and Sensibility*,” in *Jane Austen: Bicentenary Essays*, ed. John Halperin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 112–22, p. 113. For Elizabeth’s use of “sense,” note her surprise that her elder sister would be blind to the follies of others, given her “good sense” (*Pride and Prejudice*, p. 11), and her description of Darcy as “a man of sense and education . . . who has lived in the world” (p. 116).

“He is just what a young man ought to be,” said [Jane], “sensible, good humoured, lively; and I never saw such happy manner! – so much ease, with such perfect good breeding!”

“He is also handsome,” replied Elizabeth, “which a young man ought likewise to be, if he possibly can. His character is thereby complete.”³⁹

However, though Elizabeth is of course right to point out (no doubt with a smile) that good looks are not to be ignored, she is wrong to think they could be trusted.⁴⁰ It is better to let other, more reliable indicators of character be one’s guide. “True Love is grounded on Virtue, not on . . . low, mean, sordid Outsides: Shadows, Vanities, Fooleries all!” wrote the author of *Reflections upon Matrimony* (1755).⁴¹ “The chief point to be regarded in the choice of a *companion for life*,” advised Lady Sarah Pennington six years later, “is a really virtuous principle, an unaffected goodness of heart.”⁴² Or as John Gregory would insist in *A Father’s Legacy to his Daughters* (1797), “True love is founded on esteem, in a correspondence of tastes and sentiments.”⁴³

Such counsel was not meant to be taken in isolation and, as noted above, sensibility had its part to play alongside sense. “No rules of duty can oblige you to involve yourselves in misery and temptation, by entering into engagements to love and to honour, where your hearts withhold their consent,” Fordyce had cautioned.⁴⁴ But even when this was acknowledged, the need for judgement could not be forgotten. The thought of a lifetime with a companion that one could not respect or whose company one could not enjoy was hardly pleasant and care needed to be taken not to accept a partner for whom one only felt contempt.⁴⁵ Compromise over one’s ideal was no doubt necessary. Frances Burney might protest that she had “determined not to marry without having the highest value & esteem for the man who should be my Lord,” but she knew that finding such a man would be far from easy. As Austen explained to Fanny Knight, a perfect companion in whom “Grace & Spirit are united to Worth, where the Manners are equal to the Heart and Understanding” was “one

39. *Pride and Prejudice*, p. 10.

40. Wickham “had all the best part of beauty, a fine countenance, a good figure, and very pleasing address” (*Pride and Prejudice*, p. 49).

41. *Reflections upon Matrimony, and the Women of this Country, in a Letter to a Young Gentleman* (London: R. Baldwin, 1755), p. 30.

42. Pennington, p. 96.

43. Gregory, pp. 32–33; 36.

44. Fordyce, vol. 2, p. 95; cf. Austen’s letters to Fanny Knight, 18 and 30 November 1814 (Letters 103 and 106), *Letters*, pp. 410, 418.

45. Gisborne, p. 225. Austen knew that marrying without esteem could lead to disaster: see her letter to Cassandra Austen, 20 June 1808 (Letter 52), *Letters*, p. 197; cf. *Mansfield Park*, p. 139; *Sense and Sensibility*, p. 146.

in a Thousand.”⁴⁶ Yet even though realism suggested that one might have to settle for less than perfection, it did not deny that a young woman should take care to marry someone she might have *some* respect for.

Hence the need for sense and prudence. Recognizing who *was* worthy of respect was far from easy;⁴⁷ indeed it called for detective work on the part of the young lady, her family and friends. As Gregory explained to his daughters:

If a gentleman makes his address to you, or gives you reason to believe he will do so, before you allow your affections to be engaged, endeavour, in the most prudent and secret matter, to procure from your friends every necessary piece of information concerning him; such as his character for sense, his morals, his temper, fortune, and family; whether it is distinguished for parts and worth, or for folly, knavery, and loathsome diseases.⁴⁸

Such questions needed to be asked, as Austen’s readers would have quickly recognized, for not all men were what or who they claimed to be.⁴⁹ Elinor Dashwood, distrustful of first impressions, was perfectly right to enquire about Willoughby “Who is he? Where does he come from?” – and her questions, if followed up on, would have spared her sister a lot of pain.⁵⁰ As Gisborne soberly reflected: “A woman who receives for her husband a person of whose moral character she knows no more than that it is outwardly decent, stakes her welfare upon a very hazardous experiment.”⁵¹ Elizabeth was taking a tremendous risk in not being sensible about Wickham, and not even seeking to discover the truth about his past.

46. Frances Burney, Letters to Samuel Crisp, 15 and c. 22–25 May 1775, Lars E. Troide, ed., *The Early Journals and Letters of Fanny Burney, Volume II: 1774–1777* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1990), pp. 126, 129; Austen, Letter to Fanny Knight, 18 November 1814 (Letter 103), *Letters*, pp. 409–10.

47. See Johnson’s introduction to *Sense and Sensibility* (p. xii).

48. Gregory, p. 34; Richardson, *Grandison*, vol. 1, p. 67. For syphilis (“loathsome diseases”), see Mary Margaret Stewart, “‘And blights with plagues the Marriage hearse’: Syphilis and Wives,” in *The Secret Malady: Venereal Disease in Eighteenth-Century Britain and France*, ed. Linda E. Merians (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1996), 103–13.

49. Ben Wilson begins his study of Victorian values with a story from 1819 in which a Captain Phipps, supposedly the nephew of a peer, arrives in Taunton, establishes credit and is engaged to marry before he is exposed as a penniless vagrant. Cf. Ben Wilson, *The Making of Victorian Values: Decency and Dissent in Britain 1789–1837* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2007), p. 17, citing the *Examiner*, 12 December 1819.

50. *Sense and Sensibility*, p. 34; cf. Elinor’s later approval of Colonel Brandon on the report of those who had “long and intimately” known him, as well as her own knowledge of his character (p. 239).

51. Gisborne, p. 237.

2.3 Prudence

Since sound judgement was only possible when sufficient evidence was to hand, the use of the third touchstone, prudence, was essential.⁵² Unfortunately, the word has been given too narrow a focus by those writing on *Pride and Prejudice*. Wendy Jones, for example, summarising the different kinds of love in the novel, has suggested that “Darcy’s sentimental love for Elizabeth Bennet contrasts with the companionate feelings she is eventually able to return, and both are sharply distinct from Charlotte Lucas’s prudent interest in Mr Collins and Lydia’s romantic passion for Wickham.”⁵³

Although the contrasts she describes are important, nevertheless, prudence is poorly represented by Charlotte. It is not that her concern for financial security was inappropriate. After all, Elizabeth herself marries wealth, and as she tells Jane, her first sight of Pemberley helped focus her attention remarkably.⁵⁴ Nevertheless, Charlotte was taking a dangerously narrow view of prudence, and it is hardly surprising that when she bitterly suggests that it is “better to know as little as possible of the defects of the person with whom you are to pass your life,” Elizabeth immediately objects that her friend’s thinking is unsound.⁵⁵ Though Elizabeth hardly practised what she preached (she flirts with Wickham and sets out to secure his attention before she knows anything about him other than what he had told her),⁵⁶ she was right to protest: the more one knew the better. As we have seen, Gregory thought the enquiries he recommended only prudent – and no less prudent was the advice that Marchmont gave to Edgar in Burney’s *Camilla* (1796): “Whatever she does [*she* being Camilla herself] you must ask yourself this question: ‘should I like such behaviour in my wife?’ Whatever she says, you must

52. The *OED* has “Ability to discern the most suitable, politic, or profitable course of action” (def. 1); cf. *Pride and Prejudice*, pp. 91, 102, and note the way prudence is linked to discretion (148, 187), and Lady Catherine prioritizes “honour, decorum, prudence . . . [and] interest” (232) – an important listing even though we might question the moral authority of its source. Claudia Johnson sees the “venturesomeness” of *Persuasion* (1818) as Austen’s rejection of prudence (*Sense and Sensibility*, p. xiv), but to do so is to limit the word to considerations of finance and status (in Johnson’s own phrase, “the world of status-seeking and manor houses”) which is a reduced meaning of the word. Besides, Anne Eliot’s decision to accept Captain Wentworth is hardly imprudent, given his wealth.

53. Wendy Jones, “The Dialectic of Love in Sir Charles Grandison,” *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 8 (1995) 15–34, p. 34.

54. *Pride and Prejudice*, p. 244; see also p. 159 (where her not being “the declared mistress” of Pemberley fills Elizabeth with regret) and cf. Richardson, *Grandison*, vol. 3, p. 269.

55. *Pride and Prejudice*, p. 16.

56. *Pride and Prejudice*, p. 96.

make yourself the same demand.”⁵⁷ This was good advice for both potential partners to an engagement, and if the answer was in the negative, if the behaviour was not what one would welcome in a wife – or a husband – then all thought of marriage to that person should be dismissed. “[I]f his deficiencies of Manner &c &c strike you more than all his good qualities,” Austen wrote to Fanny Knight of a young man the latter was hesitating over, “if you continue to think strongly of them, give him up at once.”⁵⁸

But this was not all. Not only did a woman need to set out to learn what she could about a man who interested her; she needed, as Fordyce advised, to rely “upon the enquiries of virtuous relatives” to fill in any gaps in her knowledge.⁵⁹ In other words, as Austen’s title suggested, Elizabeth needed to exercise “prejudice” and arrive at what the *OED* calls “a preliminary or anticipatory judgement” before setting her cap at Wickham, or Colonel Fitzwilliam, or even Darcy. The novel’s title has, of course, been read as a unnuanced criticism of Elizabeth: she was prejudiced and Darcy was proud, and prejudice and pride are failings that needed to be overcome. But a more careful reading shows that Elizabeth’s failing was not in being prejudiced, but in arriving at her “anticipatory judgement” of Darcy (and Wickham) on inadequate grounds. She needed to be prudent – and fortunately, learning from her mistakes, she eventually is. She asks questions about Darcy, and takes note when unsolicited testimony is given. “What praise is more valuable than the praise of an intelligent servant?” she reflects after her visit to Pemberley, continuing: “Every idea that had been brought forward by the housekeeper was favourable to his character.”⁶⁰ After all, as Lady Pennington had written:

if a man is equally respected, esteemed and beloved by his tenants, by his dependants and his domestics . . . you may justly conclude he has that true

57. Frances Burney, *Camilla; or, A Picture of Youth*, ed. Edward Allan Bloom and Lillian D. Bloom (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), pp. 153–54.

58. Letter to Fanny Knight, 18 November 1814 (Letter 103), *Letters*, p. 410.

59. “Virtuous relatives,” because, as Burney had demonstrated at length in *Cecilia*, advice could only be trusted when not motivated by self-interest (Burney, *Cecilia*, p. 24), and for the rest of the novel wherever Mr Monckton is the actor; *Gisborne*, p. 241; Fordyce, vol. 2, pp. 95–97. Note in Jane Austen, *Persuasion*, ed. Patricia Meyer Spacks (New York: Norton, 1995), p. 140, Mrs Smith’s reluctance to advise Anne Elliot because she thought that she might herself benefit from her school friend’s marriage to Mr William Elliot. As we have seen, Lennox’s Countess would take the advice of her parents (*Female Quixote*, p. 327), but whether that could be wisely done depended on the quality of their advice: see *Pride and Prejudice*, p. 76.

60. *Pride and Prejudice*, p. 162; Richardson, *Grandison*, vol. 3, p. 285.

good-nature, that real benevolence, which delights in communicating felicity, and enjoys the satisfaction it diffuses.⁶¹

After her visit to Derbyshire, with such information available to her, Elizabeth can legitimately, prudently conclude that the master of Pemberley really has the qualities she could admire.⁶²

3 Elizabeth and the Culture Wars

Despite – indeed, because of – Elizabeth’s conduct-book morality some readers criticised her. “[I]t is impossible not to feel in every line of ‘Pride and Prejudice,’ in every word of Elizabeth,” Mary Russell Mitford noted, “the entire want of taste which could produce so pert, so worldly a heroine” – a comment which Austen had no doubt anticipated. It was, after all, prefigured in Caroline Bingley’s dismissal of Elizabeth for “self-sufficiency without fashion, which is intolerable.”⁶³ The charge is the same in both cases (a want of taste, an insensitivity to what was fashionable), and in both cases it was seriously intended. Indifference to the demands of fashion was an indifference to the currents of fashionable life – and that, for those who thought society important, was troubling. The elite of Georgian and Regency London expected to be observed and imitated,⁶⁴ and those who refused to judge themselves by society’s image were faulted

61. Pennington, p. 101.

62. Similar points could be made about the other half of the title. “Pride relates more to our opinion of ourselves, vanity to what we would have others think of us,” Mary sententiously remarks, echoing Hugh Blair (“Pride makes us esteem ourselves; Vanity makes us desire the esteem of others”: *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*, 3 vols., 3rd ed. [London: A. Strahan, T. Cadell and W. Creech, 1787], vol. 1, pp. 249–50; cf. *Pride and Prejudice*, p. 14), and a just appreciation of oneself could be thought a virtue. “Ignorance and Superstition are well known to be eternal Enemies of Nobility,” Richard Smyth had argued; “Education discards the former; Pride dissipates the latter. . .” (*A Letter to a Gentleman, on the Subject of Religious Controversy* [London: J. Robinson, 1752], p. 21; Smyth’s italics) – and if that were granted Darcy’s pride could be seen as a strength as well as a weakness. Note how Austen would echo Darcy’s initial objections to Elizabeth in a letter to Fanny Knight: cf. *Pride and Prejudice*, pp. 125, 130–31, and the letter of 20 February 1817 (Letter 140), *Letters*, p. 450.

63. Letter to Sir William Elford, 20 December 1814, in B. C. Southam, ed., *Jane Austen: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1968), p. 54; *Pride and Prejudice*, p. 176. Morse exaggerates when he writes that the novel “cannot be viewed as anything but a sustained attack on the selfishness and arrogance of the aristocracy” (p. 166), but the criticism of society is there and was recognized.

64. As Hannah More explained, “those . . . filling the higher stations in life, are naturally regarded as patterns, by which the manners of all the rest of the world are to be judged”; cf. *Thoughts on the Importance of the Manners of the Great to General Society*, new ed. (Lon-

for failing to conform. The “performing society” that had flourished in the capitol’s theatres, amusement parks and pleasure gardens; the society “in which appearance itself . . . began to count as much as standing, longevity, and tradition,”⁶⁵ could not admit that other values were important or even existed. And yet they did (even shaping British politics in the two-and-half years when Spencer Perceval was Prime Minister),⁶⁶ and had done so for many years before the Regency began. Reflecting on the story he had told in *Clarissa* (1747–1748), Samuel Richardson had been quick to question whether “the constant Frequenters of Ranelagh and Vauxhall” could live a moral life,⁶⁷ and even before then conduct book authors, sharing these doubts, had offered an alternative, bourgeois morality of restraint which challenged that of fashionable excess.⁶⁸ To follow metropolitan fashion, one author explained, showed “that delicacy, the chief grace of the female character; and oeconomy, the support not merely of honesty alone, but of generosity, are deemed objects only of secondary importance”⁶⁹ – and that was not acceptable. It was hardly right, another reflected (taking pains to distinguish good-nature or benevolence from good-humour or “cheerful deportment”), that “gaiety, good humour, and a thoughtless profusion of expence, [could]

don: T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1809), pp. 1–2. For fashion as a source of identity, see Leonore Davidoff, *The Best Circles: “Society,” Etiquette, and the Season* (London: Croom Helm, 1973); for those who were not themselves fashionable being “measured against the perfection of [an] image,” see Rebecca Arnold, *Fashion, Desire and Anxiety: Image and Morality in the 20th Century* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2002), p. 13.

65. Fred Inglis, *A Short History of Celebrity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), p. 46; cf. Neil McKendrick, John Brewer, and J. H. Plumb, *The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialization of Eighteenth-Century England* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), p. 11; Wilson, pp. 17–18.

66. October 1809 to May 1812. Perceval’s distrust of the hypocrisy of the “professedly modest . . . in high life” would even lead him to take Princess Caroline’s side against the Prince Regent (whom he dismissed as a liar and a bankrupt); cf. Denis Gray, *Spencer Perceval: The Evangelical Prime Minister, 1762–1812* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1963), pp. 82–83.

67. Samuel Richardson, “Postscript” (1751), *Clarissa; or, The History of a Young Lady* (New York: AMS Press, 1990), vol. 8, p. 329.

68. Morris Golden, *Richardson’s Characters* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1963), p. 107. See also Terry Eagleton, *The Function of Criticism: From the “Spectator” to Post-Structuralism* (London: Verso, 1984), pp. 9–30; Christopher Breward, *The Culture of Fashion: A New History of Fashionable Dress* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), p. 134; Styles, p. 181. Burney, *Cecilia*, opposes the values of country and city from first (p. 17) to last (p. 938). In what is now a classic account, Armstrong sees conduct books generating a belief in middle class values even before they were instantiated in social life.

69. Gisborne, pp. 119–21; John Styles, *The Dress of the People: Everyday Fashion in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), pp. 192–93.

throw a lustre around the faultiest characters.”⁷⁰ Or as More would warn, the fact that a “fair reputation” could be obtained “by a complaisant conformity to the prevailing practice, and by a mere decorum of manners” invited hypocrisy and worse,⁷¹ and put middle-class values at risk. “The habits of life which prevail in the metropolis, and particularly in fashionable families,” Gisborne wrote, “are . . . totally repugnant to the cultivation of affection and connubial happiness.”⁷²

Since each party in these culture wars viewed the other with distaste we should not be surprised at the way that Caroline Bingley and her sister seize upon the slightest evidence that Elizabeth did not belong. Her manners, her conversation, even her walking to Netherfield – everything was scrutinized and found wanting. The last was perhaps a small failing, but it was chalked up against her nevertheless. For the Bingley women, walking was a matter of social display – hence their concern with Elizabeth’s disturbed dress;⁷³ for Elizabeth, it was a practical alternative to taking a carriage, and a pleasurable source of exercise. Walking, Gregory had explained, “will give vigour to your constitutions and a bloom to your complexions,” and Darcy famously agrees. His friend’s sisters can only see a failure in decorum.⁷⁴

This is not to suggest that Austen was indifferent to fashion. She (like Elizabeth) was certainly interested in what people were wearing in London.⁷⁵ However,

70. Pennington, pp. 98–99; More, p. 15.

71. More, p. 3; Morse, p. 168. There is some irony here, as imitation did not in itself ensure social mobility. L. B. Namier suggested some fifty years ago that access to the highest levels of society came from the possession “uncontending ease, the unbought grace of life” (*England in the Age of the American Revolution*, 2nd ed. [New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1961], pp. 13–14); cf. the way in which it was “ease, with . . . breeding” that set Bingley apart and made him Darcy’s intimate (*Pride and Prejudice*, p. 10). However, this did not stop people trying to achieve greatness by imitating the great.

72. Gisborne, p. 329. Middle class values were not always those of the gentry and the two groups were often uncomfortable with each other (see e.g. *Sense and Sensibility*, p. 119), but both groups could be equally uncomfortable with the dictates of society.

73. *Pride and Prejudice*, p. 25; cf. Burney’s comments on the Duchess of Devonshire, seen in Hyde Park and observed to be “young & handsome,” yet “undressed & slatternly” (Troide, pp. 203–4).

74. Gregory, p. 14; *Pride and Prejudice*, p. 25; and cf. Austen’s half-humorous complaint about the weather (letter to Cassandra Austen, 30 November 1800 [Letter 28], *Letters*, p. 97): “it is too dirty even for such desperate Walkers as Martha & I to get out of doors, & we are therefore confined to each other’s society from morning until night, with very little variety of Books and Gowns.” I read the reference to gowns as irony.

75. Letter to Cassandra Austen, 8 January 1799 (Letter 17), *Letters*, p. 49; cf. *Pride and Prejudice*, p. 93: “The first part of Mrs. Gardiner’s business on her arrival, was to distribute her presents and describe the newest fashions.”

interest did not imply a desire to follow fashion's dictates; she was unconcerned to imitate the clothes or manners of London, except when not doing so would be thought singular⁷⁶ and it should not surprise that the conduct books had advised just such an avoidance of singularity. Instructing her daughters to be "always perfectly clean and neat, both in . . . person and clothes," Pennington had cautioned:

Look upon all beyond this as immaterial in itself, any further than the different ranks have made some distinction in habit generally esteemed necessary; and remember that it is never the dress, however sumptuous, which reflects dignity and honour on the person; it is the rank and merit of the person that gives consequence to the dress.⁷⁷

Austen would have agreed, but to the disinterest that authors like Pennington recommended she could add contempt. On 8 January 1801 she wrote to her sister Cassandra of a Mrs Powlett that she "was at once expensively and nakedly dress'd; we have had the satisfaction of estimating her Lace and Muslin. . ." Two weeks earlier she had described Powlett as "silly, and cross, as well as extravagant."⁷⁸ To borrow a phrase of Rebecca Arnold's, Austen "[took] part in fashionable consumption while laughing at those who [were] taken in by its excesses."⁷⁹

Given this disinterest in the extravagantly fashionable, and her lack of sympathy for the values or the habits of those who thought themselves her superior,⁸⁰ it is no wonder that Austen not only enjoyed taking down the insufferable Lady Catherine de Bourgh in what is perhaps the most famous scene in *Pride and Prejudice*,⁸¹ but did so by reworking the one in *Pamela* (1740–41) where Lady Davers rebukes Pamela for her presumption in thinking she could marry Mr B.

Well, Child, said she, sneeringly, how dost find thyself? Thou'rt mightily come on, of late! – I hear strange Reports about thee! – Thou'rt almost got into Fool's Paradise, I doubt! – And wilt find thyself terribly mistaken in a

76. In this usage, "not complying with what is customary, usual, or general" (*OED*); cf. *Pride and Prejudice*, p. 26; Gisborne, pp. 119–21, 123; Burney, *Cecilia*, p. 792.

77. Pennington, pp. 83.

78. Letters to Cassandra Austen, 8 January 1799 and 18 December 1798 (Letters 17 and 14), *Letters*, pp. 49, 39. Alison Adburgham suggests that Mrs Powlett's extravagance was her having her dresses made in London rather than by the village dressmaker or the visiting sewing woman (*Shops and Shopping, 1800–1914: Where, and in What Manner the Well-Dressed Englishwoman Bought Her Clothes*, 2nd ed. [London: Allen and Unwin, 1981], p. 2).

79. Arnold, p. 2.

80. *Pride and Prejudice*, p. 232; Vickery, p. 36.

81. John Sutherland, *Who Betrays Elizabeth Bennet? Further Puzzles in Classic Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 17.

little while, if thou thinkest my Brother will disgrace his Family, to humour thy Baby-face!⁸²

There are differences between the scenes, of course.⁸³ But the similarities are more important. Austen, like Richardson, insists that a woman's "depths" should be more valued than her "surface"⁸⁴ – and Lady Catherine, like Lady Davers, appears ridiculous when she cannot agree.⁸⁵ Urging Elizabeth to abandon hope of her nephew on grounds of "honour, decorum, prudence, [and] interest," she makes it clear that Darcy's feelings and Elizabeth's merits are by the way,⁸⁶ just as Lady Davers, arguing that marriage to a social inferior was as degrading for a man as a woman, refused to allow for more than blood line in her calculations, or to consider her brother's argument that a partner could bring moral capital to a marriage.⁸⁷ Readers of *Pride and Prejudice* would have known better,⁸⁸ and delighted in the way that, in Elizabeth's trouncing of Lady Catherine, Pamela (who had been humili-

82. Richardson, *Pamela*, 383. The scene in *Pride and Prejudice* is, as Michael Giffin points out, "the only direct confrontation in an Austen novel . . . between a commoner and a member of the nobility" (*Jane Austen and Religion: Salvation and Society in Georgian England* [New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002], p. 123; note that Lady Catherine's status as a member of the aristocracy is important to her, and she regrets that Darcy's paternal line, though "respectable, honourable, and ancient" was "untitled" [*Pride and Prejudice*, p. 232]).

83. In a comic yet suspenseful scene Pamela escapes out of a window while Lady Davers is at the other end of the room they are in (Richardson, *Pamela*, p. 422). Although, like Pamela, Elizabeth refuses to be dictated to, she does not take to flight.

84. Armstrong, p. 120.

85. Strangely, it has not been noticed how very much alike the two women are. Ignoring the echoes of Richardson, critics have pointed to a scene in Burney's *Cecilia*, where the titular character defers to Mrs Delvile; however, the situation there is different. Mrs Delvile approves of Cecilia Beverly and would welcome her as a daughter-in-law, but is horrified by the thought that by the terms of Cecilia's estate her son would have to take his wife's name (p. 677).

86. *Pride and Prejudice*, p. 232; Austen had always found such behaviour ridiculous: see *Catherine and Other Writings*, ed. Margaret Doody and Douglas Murray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 33.

87. Richardson, *Pamela*, p. 424. Lady Davers reveals, as Morris Golden has observed, in *Richardson's Characters* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1963), p. 98, an "excess of the ego"; cf. Smith, 34; Frances Burney, *Evelina; or, A Young Lady's Entrance Into the World* [1799], ed. Stewart J. Cooke (New York: Norton, 1998), p. 315.

88. For Austen's readers see Lee Erickson, "The Economy of Novel Reading: Jane Austen and the Circulating Library," *SEL: Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* 30 (1990) 573–90. Thomas Lowndes could think it worth informing Frances Burney that all the polite world (including a "Lady of Fashion") was sending for her novel (Margaret Willes, *Reading Matters: Five Centuries of Discovering Books* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008], p. 150); her readers were usually less distinguished.

ated by Lady Davers) had her revenge. They would also have appreciated Darcy's recognition of Elizabeth's intelligence as well as her looks, so reminiscent of the way Mr B fell in love with Pamela because of her physical attractions, but was persuaded to marry her by "the Beauties of her Mind."⁸⁹

Jocelyn Harris has suggested a different parallel: that just as Pamela's country clothes had attracted Mr B's attention, so Elizabeth's "country-town indifference to decorum does her no harm with Darcy"; but this will not do. Elizabeth *has* decorum; she just does not imitate the manners of society or aspire to be presented at St. James.⁹⁰ Schooled in conduct-book morality, following the example of Harriet Byron and avoiding the mistakes of Clarissa Harlowe, she makes a marriage that exemplifies the ideals of Fordyce and his peers. It is no wonder that those presuming to speak for society were shocked.

89. Richardson, *Pamela*, p. 406. A similar point is made by Grandison when he praises his wife: "When charms of mind and person meet, / How rich our raptures rise!" (Richardson, *Grandison*, vol. 2, p. 275; cf. the words of an earlier admirer: "Lovely as Miss Byron's person is, I defy the greatest Sensualist on earth not to admire her mind more than her person" – vol. 1, p. 9). Elizabeth herself attributes these motives to Darcy, although she self-depreciatingly discounts the idea that her beauty had played any part in winning him (*Pride and Prejudice*, p. 248). For Grandison – "the best of brothers, friends, landlords, masters, and the bravest and best of men" (*Grandison*, vol. 1, p. 303) – as a model for Darcy, and Grandison Hall as a model for Pemberley House, see Darryl Jones, *Jane Austen, Critical Issues* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p. 99.

90. Jocelyn Harris, *Jane Austen's Art of Memory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 109, referencing Richardson, *Pamela*, p. 56.

Pride and Prejudice is an 1813 romantic novel of manners written by Jane Austen. The novel follows the character development of Elizabeth Bennet, the dynamic protagonist of the book, who learns about the repercussions of hasty judgments and eventually comes to appreciate the difference between superficial goodness and actual goodness. A classic piece filled with comedy, its humour lies in its honest depiction of manners, education, marriage and money during the Regency era in Great Britain.