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Author(s): JOSEPH WIESENFARTH

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THE CASE OF *PRIDE AND PREJUDICE*

JOSEPH WIESENFARTH

Hee's prudent, valient, just, and temperate;
In him all vertue is beheld in State:
And he is built like some imperiall roome
For that to dwell in, and be still at home.
Ben Jonson*

This is a frequent complaint against Jane Austen: that while Napoleon was doing his best to worsen life for the English she was blithely writing about three or four families in a country village. We know from her letters advising Anna Austen how to write a novel of manners and refusing James Stanier Clarke's request to write a historical romance that Jane Austen knew precisely the kind of fiction she could and could not write.¹ Such letters have a larger historical significance too. They demonstrate that at the very moment that hostile forces outside and within England threatened its destruction—Napoleon's wars gave a name to an era that overlapped the corrupt manners of the Prince Regent's court²—Jane Austen's novels showed the English how, ideally, they could live. Her novels are classics because they give “an insight into what the conduct of . . . [her] own people at . . . [her] own time might be, at its best.”³ Her own people at her own time had a developed myth of concern⁴ that insisted on a coherence of values within the family and a continuity of values from one generation to another; concern for marriage and advice about marrying therefore dominate her novels with a civic urgency. Sir Reginald de Courcy epitomizes such a concern for coherence and continuity in a letter to his son in *Lady Susan*. He urges him not to marry the lady named in the title of the novel. “In the very important concern of Marriage especially,” he insists, “there is everything at stake; your own happiness, that of your Parents, and the credit of your name.” Although “Lady Susan's age is itself a material objection,” Sir Reginald is more worried by “her want of character”: “Her neglect of her husband, her encouragement of other Men, her extravagance & dissipation were so gross

& notorious, that no one could be ignorant of them at the time, nor can now have forgotten them." Whereas his own fortune makes him indifferent to Lady Susan's lack of money, de Courcy is not indifferent to her impoverished reputation. Father tells son, therefore, that "it is my Duty to oppose a Match, which deep Art only could render probable, and must in the end make wretched." Nevertheless, he writes, "I do not wish to work on your Fears, but on your Sense & Affection. It would destroy every comfort of my Life to know that you were married to Lady Susan Vernon. It would be the death of that honest Pride with which I have hitherto considered my son, I should blush to see him, to hear of him, to think of him."⁵

Sir Reginald sets out in his comprehensive letter the things that must be taken into consideration before a marriage is made in Jane Austen's world: one's self, one's family, and one's society. The effect of any marriage on these must be judged with an intelligent heart.⁶ Only the machinations of a very clever woman—only her "deep Art"—can overthrow sense united to affection and lead a man to fail to consider his own good, his family's good name, and his position in society when choosing a wife. This basic paradigm assimilates to itself all further considerations relative to age, money, opinion, and intimidation that Sir Reginald de Courcy mentions in the rest of his letter.

When Lady Catherine de Bourgh insists in *Pride and Prejudice* that Elizabeth not marry Darcy, she voices the same concern as de Courcy and sees marriage in the same context as he does (pp. 353-59).⁷ But she is less intelligent as an interpreter of the age's ethos. Where Sir Reginald raises a moral issue, Lady Catherine raises an issue of class; therefore, she antagonizes rather than enlightens Elizabeth. Every argument that Lady Catherine brings forward in the guise of duty, honor, gratitude, prudence, decorum, and interest is shown to misconstrue the paradigm set out by Sir Reginald. Her case against the marriage expresses a concern for herself alone; none of her arguments has anything substantive to do with society's good. Elizabeth is therefore unmoved by Lady Catherine's attempts to intimidate her.

"I do not pretend to possess equal frankness with your ladyship. You may ask questions, which I shall not choose to answer."

"This is not to be borne. Miss Bennet, I insist on being satisfied. Has he, has my nephew, made you an offer of marriage?"

"Your ladyship has declared it to be impossible."

"It ought to be so; it must be so, while he retains the use of his reason. But your arts and allurements may, in a moment of infatuation, have made him forget what he owes to himself and to all his family. You may have drawn him in."

"If I have, I shall be the last person to confess it." (p. 354)

The argument finally pits ego against ego—I against *you*. Elizabeth stands her ground and gives Lady Catherine her dismissal:

“Allow me to say, Lady Catherine, that the arguments with which you have supported this extraordinary application, have been as frivolous as the application was ill-judged. You have widely mistaken my character, if you think I can be worked on by such persuasions as these.” (p. 357)

Lady Catherine, who tries to intimidate Elizabeth by telling her that “my character has ever been celebrated for its sincerity and frankness,” learns that Elizabeth has a stronger character altogether, even if it is less celebrated. The woman who is totally unrelated to Elizabeth and who has no right to interrogate her about marriage leaves Longbourn dissatisfied. She finds that even her brashness is wanting in the face of Elizabeth’s fortitude.⁸

This scene with Lady Catherine making a case against Elizabeth’s marrying Darcy is the climax of a principal action in *Pride and Prejudice* that has to do with one person’s trying to persuade another *not* to marry.⁹ Mrs. Gardiner, for instance, cautions Elizabeth against encouraging Wickham’s affections because a marriage between them would be decidedly imprudent. She discusses this with her niece and puts forward considerations of family and fortune for particular attention (p. 144). Elizabeth is not to encourage Wickham because it would be foolish for her to marry a man with even less money than she herself has. Such a marriage would require unreasonable sacrifices on the part of her family. This advice proves sound once Lydia marries Wickham: Darcy and Elizabeth must help the imprudent couple in a way that the Bennets themselves cannot afford to help. Nevertheless, when Mrs. Gardiner warns Elizabeth against getting herself into such a fix, her niece becomes petulant and sees no reason why she should be better than her neighbors. But Wickham’s subsequent neglect of Elizabeth in favor of Miss King allows Mrs. Gardiner to raise the subject again:

“But, my dear Elizabeth, . . . what sort of girl is Miss King? I should be sorry to think our friend mercenary.”

“Pray, my dear aunt, what is the difference in matrimonial affairs, between the mercenary and the prudent motive? Where does discretion end, and avarice begin? Last Christmas you were afraid of his marrying me, because it would be imprudent; and now, because he is trying to get a girl with only ten thousand pounds, you want to find out that he is mercenary.”

“If you will only tell me what sort of girl Miss King is, I shall know what to think.” (p. 153)

The discussion continues with Mrs. Gardiner insisting on nice distinctions that Elizabeth is too petulant to consider.

In both the conversations that aunt and niece have about Wickham,

then, we see a logical, intelligent opponent confronting an illogical, cynical one. The difference between these chapters and the confrontation between Elizabeth and Lady Catherine is that Elizabeth is disappointingly dull with her own aunt but strikingly sharp with Darcy's aunt. "Mrs. Gardiner abused her stupidity," we are told later in the novel (p. 240). And in their conversations about Wickham, Mrs. Gardiner forces Elizabeth to accept distinctions that she wants to ignore—distinctions that Elizabeth herself soon uses to make Lady Catherine look foolish. In fact, the distinction between a prudent and a mercenary marriage that Mrs. Gardiner insists upon is essential to the case that Jane Austen makes in *Pride and Prejudice*.

The first time that Darcy proposes to Elizabeth, she has a chance to make a mercenary marriage and refuses to take it: "You could not have made me the offer of your hand in any possible way that would have tempted me to accept it," she tells him (pp. 192-93). The second time he proposes to her (p. 366) Elizabeth has a chance to make a prudent marriage and takes it because

She began now to comprehend that he was exactly the man, who, in disposition and talents, would most suit her. His understanding and temper, though unlike her own, would have answered all her wishes. It was a union that must have been to the advantage of both; by her ease and liveliness, his mind might have been softened, his manners improved, and from his judgment, information, and knowledge of the world, she must have received benefit of greater importance. (p. 312)

This thorough understanding of their love as complementary and strengthening dictates the wisdom of their marrying. It has a firm hold on Elizabeth's mind when Lady Catherine comes to demand that she not marry. Elizabeth's fortitude is grounded on the certainty that her union with Darcy would be a very prudent marriage indeed. What Lady Catherine wants, for her part, is a mercenary marriage between Darcy and her daughter: "Their fortune on both sides is splendid" (p. 356). But she does not get it. Her visit backfires and precipitates Darcy's second proposal to Elizabeth.

When Elizabeth refused his first proposal to her, she told Darcy that he was not a gentleman: "You are mistaken, Mr. Darcy, if you suppose that the mode of your declaration affected me in any other way, than as it spared me the concern which I might have felt in refusing you, had you behaved in a more gentleman-like manner" (p. 192). After Elizabeth accepts his second proposal of marriage, Darcy tells her that those very words had led to his reformation:

"Your reproof, so well applied, I shall never forget: 'had you behaved in a more gentleman-like manner.' Those were your words. You know not, you can scarcely conceive, how they have tortured me;—though it was

some time, I confess, before I was reasonable enough to allow their justice." (pp. 367-68)

The word *justice* is carefully chosen here. Darcy has done Elizabeth justice. He fixes on the same word he used when he demanded that Elizabeth read his long letter to her attentively: "I demand it of your justice" (p. 196). After she reads the letter repeatedly, Elizabeth submits her own conduct to judgment. Without "any wish of doing him justice," she comes to believe him: "the justice of . . . [Darcy's words] struck her too forcibly for denial" (p. 209). Drawing evidence from her conversation with others, she correlates it with Darcy's explanation of his own conduct and finds herself at fault: "she had been blind, partial, prejudiced, absurd" (p. 208). Elizabeth has done Darcy the justice he asked of her. The word *justice*, then, ties his first proposal to his second, just as the word *tempt* ties his refusal to dance with Elizabeth—"She is tolerable; but not handsome enough to tempt me" (p. 12)—to her first refusal of his proposal: "[D]o you think that any consideration would tempt me to accept the man, who has been the means of ruining. . . the happiness of a most beloved sister?" (p. 190). By the repetition of two words—*tempt* and *justice*—Austen draws the introduction, climax, and conclusion of her novel together: the scene in which Darcy rejects Elizabeth at Meryton, the scene in which Elizabeth rejects Darcy at Hunsford, and the scene in which Darcy and Elizabeth accept each other at Longbourn. But these are not just two words that are ingeniously manipulated. *Tempt* and *justice* are words taken from a moral vocabulary that, along with others like them, have a "hard, clear, definable" meaning for Austen's characters.¹⁰

The first proposal of Darcy to Elizabeth, for instance, is made in the heat of passion: "In vain have I struggled. It will not do. My feelings will not be repressed. You must allow me to tell you how ardently I admire and love you." Darcy has clearly lost control of himself: he has a "sense of her inferiority" and of marriage to her as "a degradation," but he cannot help himself; "inclination" overpowers "judgment," and he proposes to Elizabeth. She immediately reprimands his intemperance: with an evident "design of offending and insulting me," Elizabeth says, "you chose to tell me that you liked me against your will, against your reason, and even against your character" (pp. 189-90). Her refusal to marry him brings about Darcy's reformation; consequently, his second proposal to Elizabeth is marked by temperance: "he expressed himself on the occasion as sensibly and as warmly as a man violently in love can be supposed to do" (p. 366). Darcy is finally quite different from Wickham, who gave way to passion and took Lydia as a mistress, just as Elizabeth is quite different from Lydia, who took Wickham as a lover and husband after Elizabeth, warned off by Mrs. Gardiner, let him go.¹¹

When Elizabeth withstands Lady Catherine's assault on her love, therefore,

she is only completing the definition of the cardinal virtues in herself.¹² she learns prudence with Mrs. Gardiner, temperance with Wickham, justice with Darcy, and fortitude with Lady Catherine. She finally refuses to succumb to what Darcy calls his aunt's "ill breeding" (p. 173) and what Elizabeth calls her "dignified impertinence" (p. 166).

These natural, moral, or cardinal virtues make a rudimentary appearance in the first proposal scene. Elizabeth defends the prudence of Jane's marrying Bingley and the justice of Wickham's claims against Darcy; she also answers Darcy's intemperate proposal courageously. This scene has the advantage of clearing the air and giving Darcy and Elizabeth accurate perceptions of each other. Once they see their situation as it really is, the cardinal virtues develop more substantively in them. The structure of the novel, consequently, supports a literal development of moral character. And the center of the structure is Darcy's first proposal to Elizabeth.

That offer ends all confusion between Darcy and Elizabeth by defining the four problems that stand between them: she does not like him because he separated Bingley from Jane, because he treated Wickham unjustly, and because he now acts and has previously acted in an ungentlemanlike way. Darcy tells Elizabeth that her family has shown itself wanting in common sense and civility. Up to this point Jane Austen had developed these problems dramatically, but she had never reduced them to a set of simple, unambiguous statements. Now, however, Darcy and Elizabeth come to understand each other perfectly. His letter to her treats the problems of Jane and Wickham so minutely that Elizabeth can no longer reasonably doubt that her indictment of Darcy was a mistake. She also admits that her family has always made a poor show of itself and calls the Netherfield dance to witness: there the Bennets seemed to have agreed "to expose themselves as much as they could" (p. 101). Along with her family's bad behavior, Darcy's "proud and repulsive manners remain a problem for Elizabeth (p. 207). In short, Darcy's letter solves two problems (those of Jane's separation from Bingley and of Wickham's accusation against Darcy) and leaves two unsolved (those of the Bennet family's behavior and of Darcy's manners). The visit to Pemberley brings these last two problems to a resolution too. Darcy accepts Elizabeth's family in the person of the Gardiners and acts consistently like a gentleman. When Lydia's elopement calls both into question again, Darcy acts more the gentleman than ever. He sees to it that Wickham marries Lydia and then he asks Elizabeth to marry him. "Brother-in-law of Wickham!" exclaims Elizabeth. "Every kind of pride must revolt from the connection" (p. 326). But not Darcy's. Having made the Bennet family worse than it was before, he marries into it. The reason for Darcy's change is evident at Pemberley, where the Gardiners see that he loves Elizabeth but are not sure that she loves him: "Of the lady's sensations they remained a little in doubt" (p. 262); but "it was evident that he was very much in love with her" (p. 264). This situation

duplicates Bingley's earlier on, just as Lydia's elopement with Wickham closely resembles Georgiana Darcy's near elopement with him. In these dramatic sequences Austen resolves by empathy the problems detailed in the first proposal scene. She makes Elizabeth feel Darcy's antipathy to Wickham and she makes Darcy feel Elizabeth's objections to his interference between Jane and Bingley. By the time, therefore, that Bingley and Darcy reenact the beginning of the novel by settling at Netherfield Park a second time (p. 333), Darcy and Elizabeth have come to know themselves and love each other by virtue of what Sir Reginald de Courcy called "sense" and "affection." When Lady Catherine tries to prevent the happy ending to this inevitable union, she not only duplicates Darcy's earlier interference between Jane and Bingley but also demonstrates that Darcy's aunt can easily be as troublesome as Elizabeth's mother. His place in society as well as hers is affected by the conduct of their respective families. Sir Reginald's paradigm for marriage is here once again in view, just as it is at the end of the novel when both families are integrated into life at Pemberley.

The development of the cardinal virtues within a context of perception sharpened by intelligence and empathy suggests that Austen is making a case for the marriage of Darcy and Elizabeth. The *case* is a form that was given prominence in literary theory by André Jolles in his book *Einfache Formen* (1930).¹³ It is a form common to law, theology, and courtly love literature. A set of real or hypothetical circumstances is offered to support a particular judgment of an action with arguments for other interpretative judgments being made and set in opposition to it. According to Jolles, the case shows a disposition of mind that takes the world as an object which can be evaluated according to norms. *Pride and Prejudice* is by and large composed of a series of cases. "And so, you like this man's sisters too, do you? Their manners are not equal to his" (p. 15). Thus it is that Elizabeth opens the case of Charles Bingley's sisters with Jane. The debate between the Bennet sisters continues as evidence is gathered and interpreted, but Jane finally has to give up her position and admit that Caroline Bingley and Mrs. Hurst are rather shabby friends at best: "My dearest Lizzy will, I am sure, be incapable of triumphing in her better judgment, at my expence, when I confess myself to have been entirely deceived in Miss Bingley's regard for me" (p. 148). Mr. Bennet later has to say just about the same thing to Elizabeth after Lydia elopes with Wickham. Elizabeth had earlier told her father that Lydia is too compacted of "wild volatility, the assurance and disdain of all restraint" to be allowed to go to Brighton. Mr. Bennet argued that "Colonel Forster is a sensible man, and will keep her out of any real mischief" (pp. 231-32). Both put their sides of the case well, but he is dead wrong and she is dead right, as Mr. Bennet himself later admits: "Lizzy, I bear you no ill-will for being justified in your advice to me last May, which, considering the event, shews some greatness of mind" (p. 299). Once Lydia

elopes, Jane and Elizabeth discuss her case: Jane argues the possibility of a marriage taking place; Elizabeth argues that it cannot be so because there is no money to tempt Wickham. Darcy supplies the money, Wickham is tempted, and Lydia is married.

The major cases in the novel quite naturally relate to the major problems that develop between Darcy and Elizabeth. The question of how a woman should act to secure a husband whom she loves is debated by Charlotte Lucas and Elizabeth in Chapter 6. Charlotte maintains that Jane's candor hides her love for Bingley. Elizabeth takes the opposite position: "[I]f a woman is partial to a man, and does not endeavour to conceal it, he must find it out" (p. 22). When Darcy writes his letter to Elizabeth, he proves the case Charlotte has made: "I shall not scruple to assert, that the serenity of your sister's countenance and air was such, as might have given the most acute observer, a conviction that, however amiable her temper, her heart was not likely to be touched" (p. 197).

The most difficult case, of course, is Darcy himself. "I hear such different accounts of you as puzzle me exceedingly," Elizabeth tells him as they dance at Netherfield (p. 93). Remembering Darcy's finding her tolerable but not tempting at the Meryton dance, she willingly believes Wickham's lies about him and makes a case against Darcy by indicting his ill manners to her and his injustice to Jane and Wickham. Elizabeth has been warned against taking this position by Charlotte and Jane and even by Caroline Bingley; but she refuses to respect their evidence, logic, and witness and prefers her own. Just how wrong she is she learns from Darcy's letter and from her visit to his estate. In Chapter 18 she tells Darcy that she is working toward "the illustration of . . . [his] character." He asks her "not to sketch . . . [his] character at the present moment." Elizabeth cannot wait, however; she draws for herself an ill-mannered, unjust Darcy. But at Pemberley she finds a portrait of Darcy that sets to rights her caricature. She finds, in short, the picture she tried but failed to draw:¹⁴

In the gallery there were many family portraits, but they could have little to fix the attention of a stranger. Elizabeth walked on in quest of the only face whose features would be known to her. 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. (p. 250)

Cases, then, abound in *Pride and Prejudice*. The novel itself is one great case containing many others. *Pride and Prejudice* makes the case for a prudent marriage and against a mercenary marriage. At Darcy's first proposal Elizabeth refuses to make a mercenary marriage; at Darcy's second proposal she willingly makes a prudent marriage. Between the two proposals Darcy and Elizabeth are purged of their pride and prejudice and can therefore meet as

reasonable and affectionate people when the novel begins with Mr. and Mrs. Bennet's discussion of Bingley's return to Netherfield. The moral and emotional revolutions that Darcy and Elizabeth experience by facing hard, unpleasant truths about themselves make them equal and complementary partners in marriage. The novel can dramatize no greater wisdom than having them marry. And *prudence*, as Dr. Johnson tells us in his *Dictionary*, is "Wisdom applied to practice."¹⁵

Elizabeth's sister and her father are quickly brought to see that what first appears to them as an imprudent and mercenary marriage is really a union of hearts and minds. Jane tells Elizabeth that she must "do anything rather than marry without affection"; Mr. Bennet fears that Elizabeth will be "unable to respect" her "partner in life" (pp. 373, 376). Elizabeth demonstrates to them both that Darcy deserves their esteem and love as well as her own.

What Mr. Bennet and Jane give voice to is a concern for Elizabeth's individual well-being. They worry that her chance freely to choose a husband may ruin her life. Lady Catherine gives voice to the other side by pretending to worry about the damage that Elizabeth's individual choice will do to society. "You refuse to obey the claims of duty, honour, and gratitude," Lady Catherine scolds Elizabeth. "You are determined to ruin him in the opinion of all his friends, and make him the contempt of the world." Both Darcy and Elizabeth know that this is not the case: "the world in general would have too much sense to join in the scorn," Elizabeth tells the dowager (p. 358). And Darcy offers Elizabeth his hand to prove the point after Lady Catherine attacks him with the same arguments she used against Elizabeth. Lady Catherine, like Mrs. Bennet, never does see the prudence of Elizabeth's engagement. As soon as Mrs. Bennet hears of it, she pronounces Elizabeth—the daughter whom she likes least—her favorite child:

"Good gracious! Lord bless me! only think! dear me! Mr. Darcy! Who would have thought it! And is it really true? Oh! my sweetest Lizzy! how rich and how great you will be! What pin-money, what jewels, what carriages you will have! Jane's is nothing to it—nothing at all. I am so pleased—so happy. Such a charming man!—so handsome! so tall! —Oh, my dear Lizzy! pray apologise for my having disliked him so much before. I hope he will overlook it. Dear, dear Lizzy. A house in town! Every thing that is charming! Three daughters married! Ten thousand a year! Oh, Lord! What will become of me. I shall go distracted." (p. 378)

Lady Catherine's reaction to a union between Darcy and Elizabeth is, in the end, very like Mrs. Bennet's. She finds it so hard to believe that Elizabeth will become a lady who has jewels, pin money, and carriages at her disposal that she very nearly goes distracted too. Lady Catherine believes simply that

“the upstart pretensions of a young woman without family, connections, or fortune” are too bizarre to satisfy. “You *are* a gentleman’s daughter,” she exclaims to Elizabeth. “But who,” she asks, “was your mother? Who are your uncles and aunts?” (p. 356). But it is clearly too late in this novel for Lady Catherine to object to raising oneself in society. Elizabeth is simply taking a step upward, as Sir William Lucas, Mr. Bingley, and the Gardiners have already done. Having made “a tolerable fortune and risen to the honour of knighthood by an address to the King,” Sir William quit his business in town, bought a country house, and settled down to “occupy himself solely in being civil to all the world” (p. 18). In short, he creates the novel’s prototype of what was later codified as the “bourgeois dream” and symbolized by the country house: “the middle-class businessman longed to escape from drudgery in hideous surroundings into a world of beauty and leisure, a life of dignity and peace, from which sordid anxieties were shut out.”¹⁶ Sir William succeeds in following the same path that Charles Bingley’s father wanted to follow but could not: Charles, we are told, “inherited property to the amount of nearly an hundred thousand pounds from his father, who had intended to purchase an estate, but did not live to do it” (p. 15). Mr. Gardiner is also likely to follow the same path: “A sensible, gentlemanlike man” such as he would not be expected to live out his life “within view of his own warehouses” (p. 139); indeed, by the end of the novel, he is on “intimate terms” with Darcy and is frequently at Pemberley. Lady Catherine, in objecting to Elizabeth’s marriage, is objecting to a historical pattern within English society itself. In approving that very pattern, Jane Austen shows herself a “Tory democrat”; in disapproving of it, her Lady Catherine shows herself the opposite.¹⁷ In boasting of her pedigree and wealth, Lady Catherine shows that she does not know that the basis of social progress has shifted, as Henry Sumner Maine demonstrated, “from Status to Contract.”¹⁸ For Lady Catherine a “gentleman” is someone born to a name and fortune. For Jane Austen a “gentleman” is someone who, as Elizabeth makes Darcy understand, agrees to act in a gentlemanlike manner. Such a person deserves power and influence.

Jane Austen dramatizes the growth of individuals to a freedom of action based on intelligence and affection in *Pride and Prejudice*; she suggests that their society has moved from static conventions as portrayed in a Lady Catherine to dynamic ones that allow a Mr. Gardiner and a Mr. Darcy, equally to be called “gentleman.” This society is both orderly and dynamic and strengthened spiritually in each case by assimilating virtuous and independent people into it. Lady Catherine does not understand this. She really makes the case against marriage from the point of view of a prospective mother-in-law who loses the fortune and alliance she had counted on. As Elizabeth carefully steps around the supposed obstacles that Lady Catherine drops in her path, it becomes clear that all Darcy’s aunt really wants is the fulfillment of a cradle-engagement she had made with Darcy’s mother. To support what she wants

she attempts to make society shape itself to her own narrow desires; in short, she argues from "custom." To counter Lady Catherine, Elizabeth argues from "nature." The distinction between the two was made by Dr. Johnson in an essay on tragedy. A man ought to endeavor "to distinguish nature from custom, or that which is established because it is right, from that which is right only because it is established."¹⁹ The structure of *Pride and Prejudice* makes the case that the marriage of Darcy to Elizabeth is as natural as it is prudent: it is established because it is right. We know that it is right because it cultivates perception, strengthens sense and affection, fosters the growth of the cardinal virtues, follows historical precedent, and promotes society's well-being by founding it on individual happiness. The marriage satisfies every requirement of individual, familial, and societal good that Sir Reginald de Courcy articulated in his remarkably comprehensive letter. The case that he made against his son's marriage in *Lady Susan* articulates the elements of the case that Darcy and Elizabeth make for their marriage in *Pride and Prejudice*.

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NOTES

* "An Epigram to My Muse, the Lady Digby, on her Husband. . . ." *Underwood*, LXXVIII, 4-7.

1 R. W. Chapman, ed., *Jane Austen's Letters to her sister Cassandra and others*, 2nd ed. (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1952), pp. 401; 452-53.

2 *The Times* wrote that "there was never an individual less regretted by his fellow-creatures than this deceased King. What eye has wept for him? What heart has heaved one sob of unmercenary sorrow?" Quoted in David Thomson, *England in the Nineteenth Century, 1815-1914* (1950; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), p. 170.

3 T. S. Eliot, *What Is a Classic?* (London: Faber & Faber, 1945), p. 20.

4 On the "myth of concern" see Northrop Frye, *The Critical Path: An Essay on the Social Context of Literary Criticism* (1971; Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1973), pp. 36-38. David Monaghan argues that in Austen's time the "health of society" depended on "an infinite number of tiny ritual gestures of concern, each one of which contributed to harmonious relationships between individuals and between ranks, and within families and communities" (*Jane Austen: Structure and Social Vision* [London: Macmillan, 1980], p. 4).

5 *The Works of Jane Austen*, ed. R. W. Chapman (1954; London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1958), VI, 260-62.

6 Richard Simpson singles out "intelligent love" and the union of "the heart and the head, intellect and passion" in his *North British Review* article of 1870 on Austen's novels; see Brian Southam, *Jane Austen: A Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1968), pp. 244, 256.

- 7 All quotations from *Pride and Prejudice* are taken from *The Novels of Jane Austen*, ed. R. W. Chapman, 3rd ed. (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1959), vol. II. Citations given in parentheses are by page.
- 8 On fortitude as a virtue peculiar to heroism in Jane Austen's novels, see Stuart M. Tave, *Some Words of Jane Austen* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1973), pp. 282-84.
- 9 Elizabeth objects to Charlotte Lucas's marrying Mr. Collins; Mrs. Gardiner interferes with Elizabeth's attachment to Wickham; Mrs. Bennet dissuades Mr. Collins from proposing to Jane; Mr. Bennet refuses to consider a marriage between Collins and Elizabeth; Darcy temporarily prevents Bingley from marrying Jane; and Mr. Bennet and Jane try, initially, to dissuade Elizabeth from marrying Darcy.
- 10 C. S. Lewis writes that "the great abstract nouns of classical English moralists are uncomplainingly used" by Austen. "These are the concepts by which Jane Austen grasps her world. . . . All is hard, clear, definable; by modern standards, even naively so" ("A Note on Jane Austen," in *Jane Austen: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Ian Watt, Twentieth Century Views [Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1963], p. 28). Marilyn Butler (*Jane Austen and the War of Ideas* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1975]), follows in the tradition of Lewis, adding a social context to the definition of words. Her conclusions about *Pride and Prejudice*, however, differ from my own: she finds in the novel "a moral limbo" because it lacks "clarity" by "confusing good and evil"; consequently, it is "untypical" of Austen (p. 217).
- 11 Alastair M. Duckworth, "Prospects and Retrospects," in *Jane Austen Today*, ed. Joel Weinsheimer (Athens: Univ. of Georgia Press, 1975), pp. 7-9, makes an extended comparison of Elizabeth's and Lydia's situations in the novel. Susan Morgan (*In the Meantime: Character and Perception in Jane Austen's Fiction* [Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1980], pp. 77-106) analyzes the Elizabeth-Wickham relationship. She attempts to show that Elizabeth is never emotionally engaged by Wickham: "Elizabeth's heart is not engaged by Mr. Wickham, her understanding is" (p. 83). Morgan never mentions Mrs. Gardiner's two conversations with Elizabeth about Wickham. They would too obviously sabotage her singular thesis.
- 12 Plato first listed the cardinal virtues (the Latin *cardo* means hinge) in *The Republic* where he declared them as necessary to the state and, since the state is the aggregate of its citizens, to each individual in it. Then in *The Laws* he examined them more particularly, having, in *The Republic*, treated only justice at length. The *cardinal* virtues are thought of as the hinge virtues because all others depend on them: "Every moral virtue fulfills the conditions of being well judged, subserving the common good, being restrained within measure, and having firmness; and these four conditions also yield four distinct virtues" (John Rickaby, "Cardinal Virtues," *Catholic Encyclopedia* [New York: Robert Appleton, 1908], III, 343). In *De Finibus* Cicero writes, "Each man should so conduct himself that fortitude appears in labours and dangers: temperance in foregoing pleasures: prudence in the choice between good and evil: justice in giving every man his own" (V.xxiii.67 in Rickaby, p. 343). Cicero amplified this formula in *De Officiis*, ostensibly a letter to his errant son. The cardinal virtues are sometimes given other names: wisdom, justice, courage, and discipline are nowadays thought to be better understood than prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance.
- 13 André Jolles, *Formes simples*, trans. Antoine Marie Buguet (Paris: Seuil, 1972), pp. 137-58.
- 14 Merike Tamm, "Inter-Art Relations in the Novels of Jane Austen," Diss. Univ. of Wisconsin-Madison 1976, pp. 69-70.
- 15 *A Dictionary of the English Language*, 7th ed. (London: 1783). Johnson defines *Wisdom* as "Sapience, the power of judging rightly."

- 16 On the "bourgeois dream" see Walter E. Houghton, *The Victorian Frame of Mind* (1957; New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1967), pp. 189-90.
- 17 Donald J. Greene, "Jane Austen and the Peerage," in *Jane Austen*, ed. Ian Watt, p. 165.
- 18 *Ancient Law* (1861) quoted in Tony Tanner, *Adultery in the Novel: Contract and Transgression* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1979), p. 5. Maine glosses the meaning of "Status" and "Contract" in another sentence: "Not many of us are so unobservant as not to perceive that in innumerable cases where old law fixed a man's position irreversibly at his birth, modern law allows him to create it for himself by convention; and indeed several of the few exceptions which remain to this rule are constantly denounced with passionate indignation" (Tanner, p. 3).
- 19 Samuel Johnson, *The Rambler*, ed. W. J. Bate and Albrecht B. Strauss, Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1968), V, 70.