



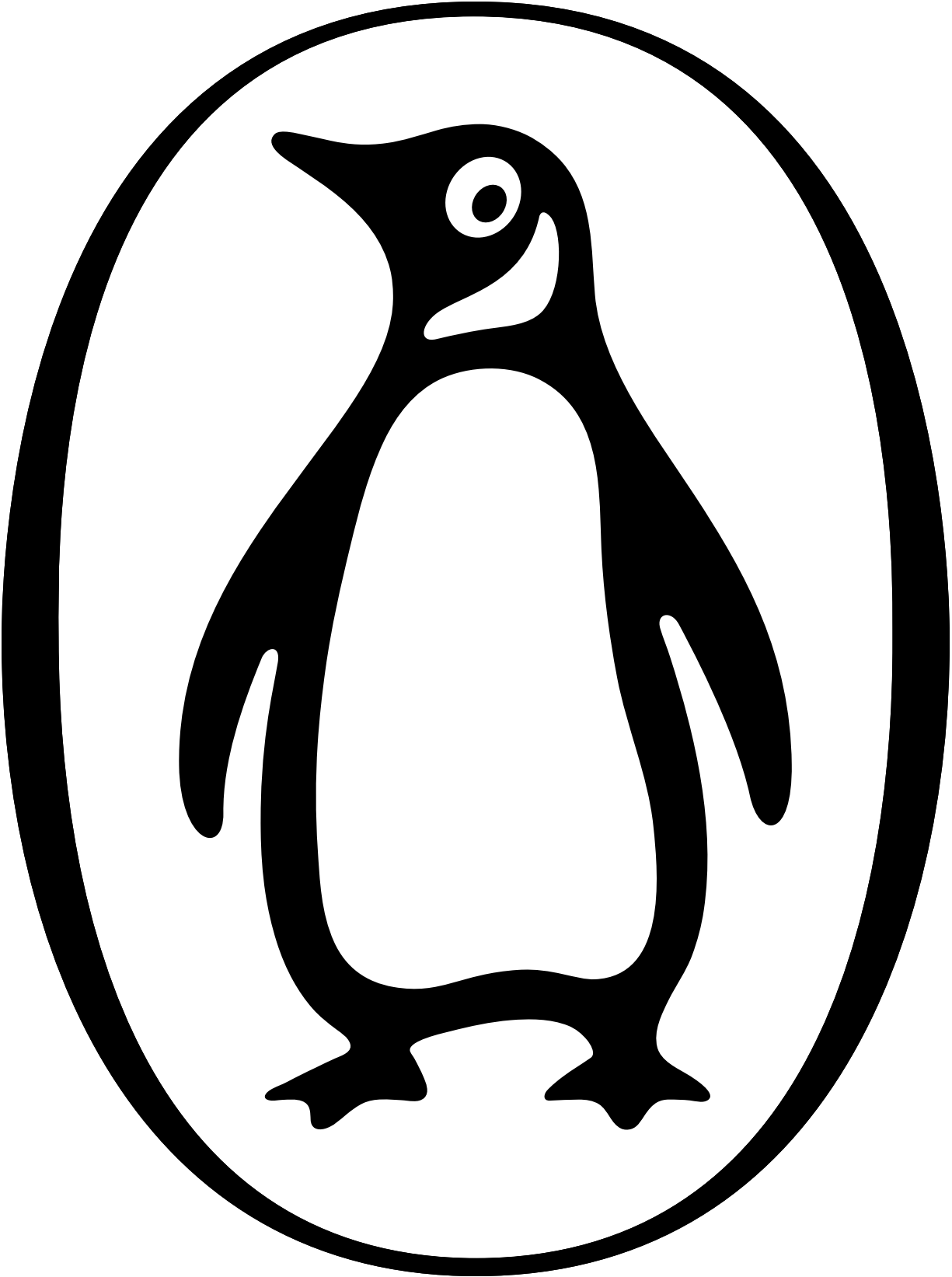
P E N G U I N



C L A S S I C S

JANE AUSTEN

PRIDE AND PREJUDICE



PRIDE AND PREJUDICE

JANE AUSTEN was born on 16 December 1775 at Steventon, near Basingstoke, the seventh child of the rector of the parish. She lived with her family at Steventon until they moved to Bath when her father retired in 1801. After his death in 1805, she moved around with her mother; in 1809, they settled in Chawton, near Alton, Hampshire. Here she remained, except for a few visits to London, until in May 1817 she moved to Winchester to be near her doctor. There she died on 18 July 1817.

Jane Austen was extremely modest about her own genius, describing her work to her nephew, Edward, as ‘the little bit (two Inches wide) of Ivory, on which I work with so fine a Brush, as produces little effect after much labour’. As a girl she wrote stories, including burlesques of popular romances. Her works were published only after much revision, four novels being published in her lifetime. These are *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), *Mansfield Park* (1814) and *Emma* (1815). Two other novels, *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion*, were published posthumously in 1817 with a biographical notice by her brother, Henry Austen, the first formal announcement of her authorship. *Persuasion* was written in a race against failing health in 1815–16. She also left two earlier compositions, a short epistolary novel, *Lady Susan*, and an unfinished novel, *The Watsons*. At the time of her death, she was working on a new novel, *Sanditon*, a fragmentary draft of which survives.

VIVIEN JONES is a Senior Lecturer in English at the University of Leeds. She has published books on Henry James and Jane Austen, and her publications on gender and writing in the eighteenth century include *Women in the Eighteenth Century: Constructions of Femininity* (1990) and *Women and Literature in Britain 1700–1800* (2000), as well as numerous articles. She has edited Frances Burney’s *Evelina* for Oxford World’s Classics.

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TONY TANNER was a Fellow of King's College, Cambridge, and Professor of English and American Literature at the University of Cambridge. He taught and travelled extensively in America and Europe. Among his many books are *The Reign of Wonder* (1965); *City of Words* (1970); *Contract and Transgression: Adultery and the Novel* (1980); *Jane Austen* (1986); *Scenes of Nature, Signs of Men* (1987); *Venice Desired* (1992); *Henry James and the Art of Non-Fiction* (1995); and *The American Mystery* (2000). Tony Tanner died in December 1998.

JANE AUSTEN

Pride and Prejudice

Edited with an Introduction and Notes by

VIVIEN JONES

With the original Penguin Classics Introduction by

TONY TANNER

PENGUIN BOOKS

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Published by the Penguin Group

Penguin Books Ltd, 80 Strand, London, WC2R 0RL, England

Penguin Putnam Inc., 375 Hudson Street, New York, New York 10014,
USA

Penguin Books Australia Ltd, 250 Camberwell Road, Camberwell, Victoria
3124, Australia

Penguin Books Canada Ltd, 10 Alcorn Avenue, Toronto, Ontario, Canada
M4V 3B2

Penguin Books India (P) Ltd, 11, Community Centre, Panchsheel Park,
New Delhi – 110 017, India

Penguin Books (NZ) Ltd, Cnr Rosedale and Airborne Roads, Albany,
Auckland, New Zealand

Penguin Books (South Africa) (Pty) Ltd, 24 Sturdee Avenue, Rosebank
2196, South Africa

Penguin Books Ltd, Registered Offices: 80 Strand, London, WC2R 0RL,
England

www.penguin.com

First published 1813

Published in Penguin Classics 1996

This edition reissued with new Chronology, updated Further Reading
and 1972 Penguin Classics Introduction by Tony Tanner 2003

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EISBN: 978-0-141-90721-5

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Acknowledgements

I want to thank John Barnard, Paul Hammond, Rick Jones, Angela Keane, David Lindley, Oliver Pickering, Susan Spearey, Andrew Wawn and John Whale for their help in preparing this edition. It was completed during study leave funded by the Humanities Research Board of the British Academy, and I am grateful for research time, both to them and to the School of English, University of Leeds.

Vivien Jones
June 1995

The Penguin Edition of the Novels of Jane Austen

The texts of Austen's novels in the Penguin Edition are based on the first editions and have been edited afresh. The texts of four of the novels are necessarily based on the first edition: in the case of *Pride and Prejudice* Austen sold the copyright to the publisher of the first edition and was not involved with the preparation of the two further editions in her lifetime; *Emma* did not reach a second edition in Britain in Austen's lifetime; and *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion* were published posthumously. *Sense and Sensibility* and *Mansfield Park*, however, both appeared in second editions in which Austen took some part. Hitherto all reprints of these novels have been based on the second editions. The Penguin Edition returns to the first-edition texts of both novels, and includes a list of the substantive variants between the two editions so that readers can see clearly for the first time the alterations made between the first and second editions.

The editors have worked from copies of the first editions kindly supplied by the Bodleian Library, Oxford. The editorial policy is one of minimum intervention: no attempt has been made to modernize spelling or punctuation, or to render spellings consistent so long as the variant spellings were acceptable in the period. Where any of these might cause difficulty to the modern reader the editor has offered help and explanation in a note.

The editors have emended the text in the following circumstances: errors in spelling and punctuation have been corrected. Where, after all allowance has been made for historical usage, the text seems faulty the editors have cautiously emended it. They have been assisted by the fact that there is a tradition of Austen scholarship. The first edition of Austen's novels to examine the texts thoroughly was *The Novels of Jane Austen*, edited by R. W. Chapman, 5 vols (Clarendon, 1923). This pioneering edition was itself revised in later reprints, and all recent editions have been either based on Chapman's text or acknowledge debts to it. The editors of the Penguin Edition have edited Austen's texts anew from the first editions, but in making decisions about obscurities and cruxes they have borne in mind the work of previous commentators on the Austen texts. The greatest of these is

R. W. Chapman, but there have been others, including critics and general readers who have from time to time queried passages in Austen's texts and suggested emendations. Where the Penguin editors are indebted to a previous scholar for a particular emendation they acknowledge it, and where a crux has provoked controversy they indicate it in a brief note. All corrections to the text other than any which are purely typographical are recorded in the 'Emendations to the Text'.

Austen's novels originally appeared in three volumes (with the exception of *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion*, which appeared together in four volumes). To make the original volume arrangements visible in a one-volume format the Penguin Edition has headlines at the top of each page so that in any opening the headline on the left will give the volume and chapter number in the first edition and the headline on the right will give the chapter number in a continuously numbered sequence.

The bibliographical basis of the Penguin Edition is David Gilson's *Bibliography of Jane Austen* (Clarendon, 1982), to which the edition is happy to acknowledge its debt.

Claire Lamont
Textual Adviser
University of Newcastle upon Tyne

Chronology

1775 Jane Austen born on 16 December, the second daughter and seventh child of the Revd George Austen and his wife, Cassandra Leigh. Her father was rector of the village of Steventon in Hampshire. The family was well-connected although not rich. Two of her brothers entered the navy and one of them rose to the rank of Admiral of the Fleet.

1776 American Declaration of Independence.

1778 Frances Burney published *Evelina*.

1785–6 Austen, with her sister Cassandra, attended the Abbey School, Reading.

1787 Austen started to write the short, parodic pieces of fiction known as her *Juvenilia*.

1789 French Revolution broke out.

1792 Mary Wollstonecraft published *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*.

1793 Britain at war with revolutionary France.

1794 Ann Radcliffe published *The Mysteries of Udolpho*.

1795 Austen wrote 'Elinor and Marianne', a first version of *Sense and Sensibility*.

1796 Rise of Napoleon Bonaparte in France.

1796–7 Austen wrote 'First Impressions', a first version of *Pride and Prejudice*.

1797 'First Impressions' offered to a publisher, who refused it.

1798–9 'Susan', an early version of *Northanger Abbey*, written.

1801 Austen's father retired and the family moved to Bath.

1802 Austen accepted a proposal of marriage from Harris Bigg-Wither, but changed her mind the following day.

In France Napoleon appointed Consul for life.

1803 'Susan' sold for £10 to the publisher Crosby, who did not publish it.

1804 Austen wrote unfinished novel, 'The Watsons'.

Napoleon crowned Emperor.

1805 Austen's father died. Battle of Trafalgar.

1806 Austen moved with her mother and sister to Southampton.

1809 Austen moved with her mother and sister to a house in the village of Chawton in Hampshire, owned by her brother Edward, which was her home for the rest of her life.

1811 *Sense and Sensibility* published.

Illness of King George III caused the Prince of Wales to be appointed Prince Regent.

1813 *Pride and Prejudice* published.

1814 *Mansfield Park* published.

1815 (December) *Emma* published (dated 1816) and dedicated at his request to the Prince Regent.

Wellington and Blücher defeat French at the Battle of Waterloo, bringing to an end the Napoleonic Wars.

1816 Austen's health started to deteriorate; she finished *Persuasion*. 'Susan' bought back from Crosby. Walter Scott reviewed *Emma* flatteringly in

the *Quarterly Review*.

1817 (January–March) Austen at work on ‘Sanditon’. She died on 18 July in Winchester, where she had gone for medical attention, and was buried in Winchester Cathedral. (December) Her brother Henry oversaw the publication of *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion* (dated 1818), with a biographical notice of the writer.

Introduction

New readers are advised that this Introduction makes the detail of the plot explicit.

In each of her six novels Austen provides her heroine with a good marriage, but that of Elizabeth Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice* is the most dazzling of all. Of all Austen's love stories, it is *Pride and Prejudice* which most comfortably fits the patterns of popular romantic fiction, which is perhaps one reason why Austen herself famously described the novel as 'rather too light & bright & sparkling'.¹ *Pride and Prejudice* is centrally concerned with personal happiness and the grounds on which it might be achieved, and Elizabeth's marriage to Darcy – tall, handsome, and rich – is the stuff of wish-fulfilment.

When Darcy is first seen by Meryton society, at the assembly in the third chapter, he 'soon drew the attention of the room by his fine, tall person, handsome features, noble mien'. Physically, at least, he epitomizes the romantic hero, the ideal object of desire in popular romance fantasy. What's more, he is reported as having 'ten thousand a year', which makes him the object of rather more mercenary desires among those for whom, in the novel's famous opening words, 'It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife' (I, i). But the fortune-hunters – and Elizabeth – are put off when Darcy is 'discovered to be proud, to be above his company, and above being pleased' (I, iii). The inhabitants of Meryton might lose interest, but for the experienced romance reader the story really gets under way with this early confrontation between Darcy's snobbish indifference and Elizabeth's angry pride. Darcy's arrogance only serves to enhance his desirability and confirm his status as hero: as every reader of romantic fiction knows, the heroine will learn to reinterpret the hero's bad manners, his 'shocking rudeness' (I, iii), as a seductive sign of his repressed passion for her. She has the power

to transform apparent hostility into lasting commitment and a happy-ever-after marriage.

In *Pride and Prejudice*, this process of transformation and seduction is very complex and very subtle. It involves Elizabeth and Darcy in far-reaching reassessments of themselves, and of their social pride and prejudices. Their prospects for happiness are rigorously tested by constant comparison with the situations and expectations of other characters. In this Introduction I shall be focusing primarily on Austen's immediate social, political and fictional context, and exploring the meanings that Austen's use of romance might have had for a contemporary audience. But to point out basic structural similarities between Austen's novel and a Mills and Boon or Harlequin romance is not to reduce Austen's achievement. Rather, it helps account for the continuing popularity of Austen's fiction and of *Pride and Prejudice* in particular. The romantic fantasy which so effectively shapes Austen's early-nineteenth-century novel is still a powerful cultural myth for readers in the late twentieth century. We still respond with pleasure to the rags-to-riches love story, to the happy ending which combines sexual and emotional attraction with ten thousand a year and the prospect of becoming mistress of Pemberley, a resolution which makes romantic love both the guarantee and the excuse for economic and social success. Romance makes connections across history: it helps us identify and understand the continuities – and the differences – between the novel's significance at the time it was written and published and the appeal it still has for modern readers.

The particular appeal of *Pride and Prejudice* is also due, of course, to its articulate and independent-minded heroine – 'as delightful a creature as ever appeared in print', as Austen herself described her.² An early reviewer noted approvingly that 'Elizabeth's sense and conduct are of a superior order to those of the common heroines of novels.'³ The qualities which distinguished Elizabeth from the 'common heroines' familiar to contemporary audiences continue to endear her to modern readers. Though she plays her part in a version of the familiar romantic plot, Elizabeth Bennet embodies a very different kind of femininity from that of the

typically passive, vulnerable and child-like romantic heroine; her wit and outspokenness make her the most immediately attractive of all Austen's female protagonists. Less naïve than Catherine Morland, livelier than Elinor Dashwood or Fanny Price, not such a snob as Emma Woodhouse and younger and more confident than Anne Elliot, Elizabeth Bennet seems to connect most directly with the active, visible, independent identity of modern femininity.

Importantly, it is the fatal attraction of Elizabeth's critical intelligence – 'the liveliness of [her] mind', and not just her 'fine eyes' (III, xviii; I, vi) – which proves even Darcy to be 'in want of a wife'. From that first meeting, Elizabeth's and Darcy's fraught fascination with each other generates a tantalizing sexual energy, an energy which, like Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre and Rochester later in the century, finds expression in a series of highly articulate confrontations. Elizabeth and Darcy engage in verbal struggles to assert their own definitions of people, principles – and each other. Elizabeth's satirical sense of humour and sharp intelligence are stimulated and matched by Darcy's judgemental reserve, his apparent refusal to compromise; his social and moral confidence are challenged by her uncompromising criticism. But by the time Elizabeth admits her love to herself, confrontation has been transformed into an ideal complementarity:

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 an 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. (III, viii)

As good readers of romantic fiction, we know long before Elizabeth does that union with Darcy would answer 'all her wishes'; as modern readers committed to Elizabeth's independence of mind, we may feel slightly disturbed by the inequality ('benefit of greater importance') at the heart of that imagined union. But the narrative momentum of romance demands a happy ending and, supported by the subtlety of Austen's characterization,

makes it very difficult to resist Elizabeth's longing description of 'connubial felicity' (III, viii). Her description stands as the novel's central definition of its ideal state of 'rational happiness' (III, vii): that is, marriage envisaged as a balance of moral and personal qualities, as a fulfilling process of mutual improvement. Austen's skilful use of romance to shape her detailed analyses of social manners is powerfully persuasive: their capacity for 'rational happiness' makes it seem both inevitable and desirable that her exceptional heroine should find fulfilment through a spectacular marriage to her most eligible hero.

I want to pursue this idea of *Pride and Prejudice* as a 'powerfully persuasive' text, and to develop my suggestion that it is Austen's deployment of the conventional, pleasurable romantic plot, and a rather less conventional heroine, which makes it so. At one level, we are simply being persuaded that two particular individuals are right for each other, that – against all the social odds – Fitzwilliam Darcy is '*exactly* the man', the only man, who could have satisfied Elizabeth Bennet's emotional needs. The breathtaking arrogance of Darcy's first proposal is, after all, gratifying evidence that individual desire transcends economic and social differences: "My feelings will not be repressed" (II, xi). But personal happiness is inseparable from the world in which it must find expression: precisely because they transgress normal expectations of who can marry whom, Darcy's private 'feelings' have an unavoidably public significance. Darcy's romantic attachment involves a very clear rejection of the dynastic ambitions of his aunt, Lady Catherine de Bourgh, for example, with her plan that he should 'unite the two estates' by marrying his cousin (I, xvi). On the other hand, Elizabeth's and Darcy's unorthodox relationship is very explicitly distinguished from the shocking impropriety of Lydia's irresponsible attachment to Wickham. Indeed, the moment at which Elizabeth finally recognizes Darcy as the answer to 'all her wishes' is also the moment at which fulfilment seems impossible, precisely because 'An union of a different tendency, and precluding the possibility of the other, was soon to be formed in their family' (III, viii). By this characteristic process of juxtaposition and contrast, Austen establishes Elizabeth's and Darcy's marriage as necessarily significant within the wider community. Our narrative and emotional commitment to their successful union

becomes, imperceptibly, also a commitment to the values that union embodies.

Again, at one level, those values are concerned primarily with the ostensibly private world of morals and manners: in the comparison between Elizabeth and Lydia, with the point at which the right to autonomy becomes irresponsible self-indulgence; in the opposition to Lady Catherine, with the rival claims of personal choice and family aggrandisement as legitimate motives for marriage. But, precisely through that focus on individuals and communities, Austen's novels intervene in wider political debate. Written in a period of political crisis and social mobility, they are strategic critical analyses of the moral values and modes of behaviour through which a section of the ruling class was redefining itself. Very few readers and critics would now endorse the myopic view represented by George Steiner's comment: 'At the height of political and industrial revolution, in a decade of formidable philosophic activity, Miss Austen composes novels almost extra-territorial to history.'⁴ It all depends, of course, on what you mean by 'history' and on where history is assumed to happen. Austen writes about '3 or 4 Families in a Country Village' – 'the very thing to work on', as she told her niece Anna⁵ – and about the fates and choices of their marriageable daughters. She writes, therefore, about femininity and about class: about forms of identity and about marriage as a political institution which reproduces – symbolically as well as literally – the social order. An important feminist insight from the late sixties reminds us that 'the personal is political'; and the reverse is also true. 'Political and industrial revolution' are enacted or resisted at the level of private consciousness as well as public event; historical change takes place through subtle shifts in social interaction, not just through wars and technology; much 'formidable philosophic activity' is concerned, like *Pride and Prejudice*, with the pursuit of happiness.

Access to the full political dimension of Austen's novels depends on an understanding of the ways in which apparently inconsequential or private details of behaviour or language evoke wider debates. So far, I have stressed the pleasures of recognition on which Austen's persuasive power

depends: in terms of its romance plot, and the moral choices which that plot addresses, *Pride and Prejudice* feels familiar. But though the moral issues themselves may be easily recognizable, the public forms – the manners, the social assumptions, even the language – through which they manifest themselves for our judgement are often strange to a modern readership. Strangeness is itself another source of enjoyment, of course. Austen's novels give us the difference of history, one of the important pleasures of which – beyond that of a purely aesthetic enjoyment – is the opportunity to make comparisons with our current moment. Austen works out her romance plots in terms of the everyday, material details of realist fiction, and her novels offer access to a particular, irretrievable lifestyle. But their economical attention to the lived texture of a social environment is never simply documentary or merely decorative. It would be a mistake to adopt a commodified view of that world as comfortingly stable, ordered and comprehensible. Austen's fictional technique depends crucially on the reader as an active interpreter, not just a passive consumer, of detail. Her texts work on the shared assumption that nuances of language, or dress, or behaviour can carry very particular implications: as comparatively straightforward signs of social status, for example; as clues to a character's moral attitude; or – more problematically for modern readers – as conscious references to the terms and issues which were being contested in contemporary cultural debates. Like its protagonists, *Pride and Prejudice* is vitally engaged in argument.

Mr Collins's speech and behaviour, for example, make his absurd conceit abundantly clear. We could hardly fail to sympathize with Elizabeth's acute sense of his awfulness as a prospective husband, nor to register the difference between his calculated and entirely impersonal criteria for a good wife and Darcy's irrepressible response to Elizabeth's individuality. It may be less obvious, however, that when Mr Collins obtusely insists on praising Elizabeth's 'modesty' and 'economy' (I, xix), his terminology aligns him with advocates of a middle-class ideal of submissive, domestic womanhood, an ideal which was at the time an influential aspect of reactionary political discourse. Elizabeth's very different mode of femininity, the 'liveliness' of mind which attracts Darcy, thus becomes politically charged – and the contrasting masculine identities

of Darcy and Mr Collins similarly take on political, as well as moral and social, resonances.

This contrast between Mr Collins's ideal woman and Elizabeth distances both Austen and her heroine from an extreme conservative view – as far as gender, at least, is concerned. Most commentators agree, however, that Austen's novels do advocate an essentially conservative position. Their focus on a section of the rural ruling class, their concern with harmony, decorum, marriage itself, speaks for the consolidation and renewal of an established social order rather than for revolution. But, as the example of Mr Collins suggests, having established this broadly conservative position, it's rather less easy to define Austen's precise identity within it. This is partly a function of form, of the difference between a straightforwardly polemical text and a work of fiction, in which dramatization produces multiple possibilities for interpretation. It's partly to do with the complex shifts within class hierarchies in the period – an issue I shall be returning to. And it's partly to do with Austen's status as a woman, which complicates the already difficult question of her class position. Women's class status is traditionally determined by their father or husband. They exist in a liminal state neither inside nor outside class hierarchies, and gender can cut across and conflict with class or party politics. The precise conjunction of gender and class in Austen has been a vexed question in Austen criticism for some years. Does she, as some critics have suggested, present a subversive, proto-feminist critique which conflicts with her class politics? Or is she demonstrably anti-feminist, an anti-revolutionary defender of traditional femininity and family values? It's probably most useful, I want to argue, to think of her as post-rather than simply anti-revolutionary, as strategically assimilating rather than blindly opposing ideas for change. Still using romance as an important focus, I want to go on now to explore in more detail *Pride and Prejudice*'s persuasive dramatization of this 'post-revolutionary' position.

Pride and Prejudice began life in the 1790s as *First Impressions*, completed between October 1796 and August 1797 and unsuccessfully submitted for publication in November 1797. It was first conceived, therefore, during the

immediate aftermath of the French Revolution, when Britain was at war with France and the repressive Pitt government was (with limited success) seeking to eradicate revolutionary ideas and activity on this side of the English Channel. This was a period of intense ideological debate, in which the personal was very definitely political. Edmund Burke's anti-revolutionary *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, published in 1790, had eloquently defended feudal traditions of paternalism, property and aristocracy in terms which put sexual mores and the family at the centre of the political agenda. Burke famously lamented the passing of 'the age of chivalry', of 'generous loyalty to rank and sex', and argued that 'we begin our public affections in our families': 'To be attached to the subdivision, to love the little platoon we belong to in society, is the first principle (the germ as it were) of public affections.'⁶

He was attacked by, among many others, Mary Wollstonecraft, professional writer and member of radical intellectual circles in London, and well known today as one of the first modern English feminists. In *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* (1790), Wollstonecraft defended revolutionary ideals, and argued that a 'libertine imagination', a predatory masculinity which reduced women to sexual objects, lay at the heart of Burkean traditionalism. For Wollstonecraft, Burke's idea of the family enshrined sexual inequality. Two years later, in *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, she developed that insight in a more sustained application of revolutionary principles to sexual politics. *Rights of Woman* claims liberty, equality and citizenship for women, and offers a devastating critique of the process by which women come to identify themselves as exclusively sexual beings, incapable of rational thought or independent action:

In short, women in general, as well as the rich of both sexes, have acquired all the follies and vices of civilization, and missed the useful fruit... [Women's] senses are inflamed, and their understandings neglected, consequently they become the prey of their senses, delicately termed sensibility, and are blown about by every momentary gust of feeling. Civilized women are...weakened by false refinement...All their thoughts

turn on things calculated to excite emotion and feeling, when they should reason...⁷

The kind of traditionalism represented by Burke was based on hierarchies of all kinds, including a sexual hierarchy within the family which took it for granted that the sexes are innately different. The egalitarian polemic of writers like Wollstonecraft did away with essential sexual difference by invoking a common human identity. Contemporary definitions of sexual difference tended to assign reason to men and feeling to women. In the passage just quoted, as throughout *Rights of Woman*, Wollstonecraft denies that opposition. She assumes that women's capacity for reason is equal to that of men, even if, through inadequate education, that capacity often remains undeveloped. For Wollstonecraft, it is culture, not nature, which dictates that women behave like merely passive creatures of feeling, just as it is culture, not nature, which has allowed a self-perpetuating ruling class to reach a similar state of decadent self-indulgence. The ideal which she offers as an alternative to both – and to Burke's defence of tradition – is that of the professional middle class, where education is a process of self- as well as public improvement:

In the middle rank of life...men, in their youth, are prepared for professions, and marriage is not considered as the grand feature of their lives; whilst women, on the contrary, have no other scheme to sharpen their faculties. It is not business, extensive plans, or any of the excursive flights of ambition, that engross their attention; no, their thoughts are not employed in rearing noble structures.⁸

Women have only one route to self-improvement: 'To rise in the world, and have the liberty of running from pleasure to pleasure, they must marry advantageously, and to this object their time is sacrificed, and their persons often legally prostituted'.⁹ Instead, Wollstonecraft envisages the possibility of women becoming more publicly active participants in a middle-class meritocracy.

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INDEPENDENT

With its 'light and bright and sparkling' dialogue, its romantic denouement and its lively heroine, *Pride and Prejudice* is Jane Austen's most perennially popular novel. The love story of Elizabeth Bennet and Fitzwilliam Darcy, who misjudge, then challenge and change each other, is also a novel about the search for happiness and self-knowledge in a world of strict social rules, where a woman must marry well to survive.

P E N G U I N



C L A S S I C S

Edited with an Introduction and Notes by Vivien Jones



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Baron Charles de Steuben
(1788-1856) © RMN-
Grand Palais/G rard Blot

ISBN 978-0-141-43951-8



FSC 9

7 8 0 1 4 1 4 3 9 5 1 8

U.S.A. \$9.00
CAN. \$12.00
U.K.  5.99



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