In Relation to Jane Austen:
Eighteenth Century Conduct Books and the Courtships in *Pride and Prejudice*

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Introduction

Books such as Helen Amy's *The Jane Austen Marriage Manual* and Josephine Ross's *Jane Austen's Guide to Good Manners: Compliments, Charades and Horrible Blunders* mention Jane Austen in the title, not because the works discuss the author or her work, but to refer to the regency era, as these books discuss the code of conduct of courtship and marriage from 1796 to 1816. Since Austen wrote novels that revolve around relationships in this era, it makes sense to mention her name to attract readers. However, is it fair to use Austen's name in the title of books that discuss the etiquette of courtship, as Austen is often mentioned to go against the set rules of her time?

One hears such different accounts of Jane Austen, that it could puzzle one greatly. Many claim her to be a radical author (Ascarelli, 2004; Ray, 2013; Kelly, 2017), but she is also often regarded as conservative (Butler, 1975), as all her books mainly concern marriage and all her heroines end up with the hero instead of being independent. Because of these different accounts, many works have been written about her and her either conservative or radical stance, and this thesis will add on to this discussion. Penelope Fritzer claims that ''[i]t is asserted by many critics as a given that courtesy book behavior and the behavior of Austen's characters is comparable'' (2), but this thesis will prove that, in fact, the opposite is true. By comparing four main courtships in Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* with the rules of courtship in the eighteenth century, written down in courtesy books, this thesis will show that Austen was a radical author, who cleverly and skilfully criticised the situation and education of females in the eighteenth century.

When Austen's books were published, the rules concerning courtship were commonly known throughout society, enabling her contemporaries to understand her novels in a way many readers nowadays can not. Amy claims that marriage was ''the only real ambition for the majority of women of the better-off classes'' (8) in Austen's time, as marriage was seen as the way for women to ''fulfil their God-given destiny'' (8). It was, moreover, also ''the most important investment a woman could make in her economic future'' (Coontz 7), as marriage was ''an educated woman's pleasantest preservative from want'' (Sullivan 28). Marrying meant that a woman was able to secure her financial situation, and it provided her with independence from her parents and the ability to run her own home. However, before women could be married, there would be the matter of finding the right man and entering into a courtship with him, and in her book, Amy describes how this period of courtship should look according to the set of rules of that time. These ''codes of acceptable behaviour'' (Amy 9) were described in conduct and advice literature, and young women were encouraged to read these courtesy books.

These courtesy books would however only discuss the ideal situations and manners, but in reality things hardly ever follow the 'ideal' path. Jennifer Georgia points out that ''the major advantage that novels have over conduct books (. . .) is that novels can simultaneously present

real and ideal manners'' (56). This is exactly what Austen does in *Pride and Prejudice*, but it is necessary for readers to be familiar with the idealized image of women and their behaviour in order to understand her subtle criticism. Austen was aware of the rules written down in the courtesy books, both as a woman and an authoress living in the eighteenth century, and in *Pride and Prejudice* she even starts her novel by commenting on the ''social context within which [her] stories are worked out'' (Littlewood VI-VII). When the famous opening line ''It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife'' (3) is read the other way around, it states that ''a single woman must be in want of a husband with a good fortune'' (Littlewood VI). This is of course the thought at the very heart of the novel, as ''the main business of *Pride and Prejudice* is the disposal of young women in marriage'' (Littlewood VI-VII), but also brings us to the heart of the discussion of this thesis.

This thesis will explore the rules concerning ideal manners and behaviour, the different steps towards and during courtship, the pressures put on young women to find suitable husbands, and the manner in which Austen addresses them. For this thesis, ten courtesy books, all written between 1715 and 1815 as that is the era of courtesy books that Austen was familiar with, were selected, and together they encompass the information that young ladies were provided with. Secondary sources were also consulted and will be used throughout this thesis to refer to statements made by or concerning the primary sources. Austen's letters contain her private conversations about topics such as romance, courtship and marriage, and thus provide some insight into her personal views on these topics, and a close-reading of *Pride and Prejudice* will provide examples of how Austen shaped the relationships in her novels. These relationships are all filled with references to the information given in courtesy books, and these references all need to be understood in order to fully understand what Austen is trying to convey with each relationship. As readers are no longer familiar with the etiquette of Austen's time, several relationships and moments during courtship in *Pride and Prejudice* might seem less radical to readers now, than they did to contemporary readers. Debra Teachman refers to this by stating that the personality traits, comments and opinions of Austen's characters ''relay significant information about the characters (. . .) for readers of her time, who would have understood her references to particular works of literature just as readers of today would understand references to Stephen King or Star Wars'' (35).

This thesis will show how the manner in which some of our favourite characters have started their relationships and marriage might have seemed very unorthodox to the first readers of *Pride and Prejudice*. The rules of courtship and marriage, and the many reasons there might have been to marry in Austen's time, will be compared to the courtship and reasons found in four couples at the heart of *Pride and Prejudice*: Charlotte Lucas and Mr Collins, Jane Bennet and Mr Bingley, Lydia Bennet and Mr Wickham, and Elizabeth Bennet and Mr Darcy.

The first chapter will discuss the genre of the courtesy books, their popularity, function, and contents. Revolving around the education of women, they mostly focus on explaining how a young woman could make herself as pleasing as possible to young men, in order to attract a good husband. They also focus on the roles and duties of wives and mothers, to prepare their readers for that stage of their lives.

In the second chapter of this thesis, the courtships of Jane Bennet and Mr Bingley, and Charlotte Lucas and Mr Collins will be discussed and compared to the findings in chapter one. This comparison will provide evidence for the claim that Austen was aware of the rules in the courtesy books, as these relationships follow the advice set out in these books, but also show the first glimpses of Austen's criticism towards female education.

Jane Bennet and Charles Bingley have a very public courtship, as they meet at an assembly and from that moment mostly meet in public settings. However, Jane is too reserved to give Bingley the needed encouragement, and his family and friends disapprove of Jane's station, resulting in her almost losing her chance of marrying the man she actually has very strong feelings for. He leaves Longbourn but returns, out of his love for her and his newfound confidence that she loves him as well, and the end of their courtship is as correct as the start of it. Jane's marriage and happiness is based mostly on luck, as ordinarily even the chance of her meeting Bingley was very slim. However, many women in the eighteenth century did not have this luck, and ended up like Charlotte Lucas did.

Charlotte Lucas presents the reader with the prime example of the situation many eighteenth-century women were in. She is twenty-seven years old, not particularly beautiful or rich, and, most worrying of all, unmarried. She is very much aware of her own situation, and thus very shrewdly focusses the attachment of Mr Collins upon herself. Though they do not marry out of love, Mr Collins offers her a comfortable situation for the rest of her life; her own house to run, independence from her parents, and financial stability. Their courting period is short, but it is marked by public conversations, and adheres to the rules of social convention. Moreover, it is an example of how some women in the eighteenth century had to throw away their chance at happiness in order to provide themselves with security, because a lack of education prevented them from taking any other path.

In the third chapter of this thesis, the focus will be on two courtships that do not follow the rules discussed in chapter one: Lydia Bennet and Mr Wickham, and Elizabeth Bennet and Mr Darcy. The discussion of these courtships will show that even though Austen was aware of the rules around her, she was radical in her opinions concerning female education, courtship, and love. She once wrote to her niece Fanny that she should neither ''expect perfection in a suitor nor to marry without affection'' (Tomalin 243), and the main couple of this novel, Elizabeth Bennet and Mr Darcy seem to follow these words exactly. They are however not the only ones whose

courtship does not abide to the conventional rules, as her youngest sister Lydia marries the man she scandalously ran away with.

Lydia Bennet and Mr Wickham's courtship is very short and mostly very secret. In a rush of passion Lydia runs away with him, ruining her own reputation and risking ruining her sisters'. She is too ignorant to realize the impropriety of the situation, and is perfectly content with herself and her eventual marriage to Wickham. Wickham's decision to marry Lydia is not based on his feelings for her, but mainly on the temptation of receiving a rather large sum of money if he marries her. Lydia followed her passion, and married a man with a very questionable financial situation, as a result of a lacking education.

Elizabeth Bennet and Mr Darcy are the most surprising couple to get married, as Elizabeth refused a marriage proposal from Darcy halfway through the novel. She does not want to marry for monetary reasons, but demands respect from her future husband. Elizabeth and Darcy spend a lot of time by themselves, and have the most intimate conversations, and he even writes her a letter. This is very contrary to the rules that were set, but leads to the happiest marriage in *Pride and Prejudice*, based on mutual understanding, equality and respect. Elizabeth is an example of what could happen if women were to receive a better education: Better and happier marriages, based neither solely on passion nor financial reasons.

Thus, this thesis will firstly provide a framework of the rules governing courtship in the eighteenth century, and it will also prove that Austen read the courtesy books and knew about these rules as well. Then it will discuss how Austen's characters and their respective courtships, compared to the information gathered in chapter one, portray Austen's opinions on the situation and education of women in the eighteens century. This close-reading of *Pride and Prejudice* and discussion of the set ideas and ideals of the eighteenth century will provide evidence for the claim that Austen was an author who displayed many radical ideas regarding courtship and marriage, that got lost to us over time.

Chapter 1
Concerning Courtesy Books

> [N]o one can be really esteemed accomplished, who does not greatly surpass what is usually met with. A woman must have a thorough knowledge of music, singing, drawing, dancing, and the modern languages, to deserve the word; and besides all this, she must possess a certain something in her air and manner of walking, the tone of her voice, her address and expressions, or the word will be but half deserved.
> (*Pride and Prejudice* 35)

The quote above is taken from a conversation between Elizabeth Bennet, Mr Darcy and Miss Bingley, with the latter speaking these sentences. The group is discussing what exactly makes an accomplished lady, and Miss Bingley's description of her expectations might seem excessive to present-day readers, but Mr Darcy agrees with her and even adds that a woman needs to sharpen her mind by reading often as well. Miss Bingley and Mr Darcy were, however, not the only persons to consider a woman only to be accomplished when she meets a certain list of requirements. In fact, there is a whole literary genre dedicated to this exact subject, and the desirable education for young women: The courtesy book.

In this first chapter the focus will be on these courtesy books. After a short introduction of the genre, there will be a discussion whether Austen was familiar with this literary genre and the contents of these books. After establishing that she was familiar with them, a more detailed discussion of the rules provided for young women within these conduct books will follow, with examples taken from several different conduct books written between 1715 and 1815. This discussion will focus on the general education given to young women in the eighteenth century, the expectations regarding their behaviour and temper, and how they were advised to spend their free time, and will end with an exposition of the rules regarding courtship. This will provide the foundation for the discussion of *Pride and Prejudice* in the second and third chapter of this thesis.

According to *Merriam Webster*, a courtesy book is ''a book designed to prepare a young gentleman for public duties and conduct**:** a book of advice about social conduct''. However, conduct books were not merely written for young gentlemen, but also for young women, as Joan Wildeblood and Peter Brinson show by claiming that these books often ''took the form of advice given by a parent to a son or daughter'' (42). Nancy Armstrong explains that while in the sixteenth and seventeenth century most of the conduct literature was written for young males, ''by the mid-eighteenth century the number of books specifying the qualities of a new kind of woman had well outstripped the number of those devoted to describing the aristocratic male'' (69). While Lord Chesterfield's *Letters to his Son* (1774) is one of the best known examples of a courtesy book for

males, books such as Rev. Fordyce's *Sermons to Young Women* (1766), Hester Chapone's *Letters of the Improvement of the Mind Addressed to a Young Lady* (1773), and John Essex's *The Young Ladies Conduct: or, Rules for Education, Under several Heads; with Instructions upon dress, both before and after marriage. And Advice to Young Wives* (1722) were all written especially for young ladies. These books were meant to ''educate females of the better-off classes about their subservient place in society, and their roles and duties in life. [They were] also intended to reinforce the female characteristics admired by men such as chastity, modesty, passivity and obedience'' (Amy 9). In the opening of *The Female Instructor* it is stated that the purpose of the work is ''to unite, in the female character, cultivation of talents, and habits of economy and usefulness; particularly domestic habits'' as these are ''essential to females'' (3). This opinion was obviously shared by many people in the eighteenth century, as ''[t]heir very number would seem to indicate that [courtesy books] were in great demand'' (Fritzer 3) and Armstrong adds that ''[s]o popular did these books become that by the second half of the eighteenth century virtually everyone knew the ideal of womanhood they proposed'' (68). In the introduction for *The Lady's Pocket Library*, which is a collection of several instructional literature pieces concerning female conduct published in 1797, it is mentioned that the book ''had a most rapid sale, having been purchased by almost every lady of taste'' (3). As the purpose of this thesis is to compare Austen's characters and their behaviours to the rules stated in these courtesy books, and, as Penelope Joan Fritzer claims, ''[m]ost of the courtesy books that would have been influential on [Jane Austen] were eighteenth-century products, many of which went through numerous editions as the century turned'' (4), this thesis will focus on courtesy books written between roughly 1715 and 1815.

Even though Austen experienced first-hand what it was like for a young woman to grow up and learn the correct behaviour in the eighteenth century, there are several pieces of evidence proving that she was familiar with these conduct books, and actually read several herself. The author of the small pocketbook *Jane Austen: Her Complete Novels in One Sitting*, Jennifer Kasius, claims that Austen ''had a pleasant childhood, brought up in a home in which she was surrounded by books'' (14) and in *Jane Austen: A Life*, Claire Tomalin mentions that Austen was ''allowed to read Richardson's *Sir Charles Grandison* as a child'' (66). This is a book ''full of discussions about the place and condition of women, and of love, marriage and eroticism'' discussing the fact that ''poor women do not have the same freedom of choice'' in husbands as rich women, and that ''young girls should not be too romantics in expecting love as well as a decent husband'' (Tomalin 71). Earlier in her book, Tomalin mentions several plays that the Austen children performed when they were younger, one of those being Sheridan's *The Rivals*. In this play there is a scene where ''the maid Lucy hides the library books for her mistress Lydia, nervous of being caught out reading unsuitable ones'', and these books were replaced with ''*Mrs Chapone'',* Fordyce's *Sermons* and Lord Chesterfield's *Letters* (Tomalin 40-41). Austen herself might have been in the play, or would

otherwise have enjoyed the play from the audience, and thus be familiar with these names and know what kind of literature they were; courtesy books. In 1805 Austen writes in a letter to her sister Cassandra: ''I am glad you recommended "Gisborne", for having begun, I am pleased with it, and I had quite determined not to read it'' (Le Faye 117). In this short mention in a much longer letter, Austen is probably referring to Thomas Gisborne's *An Inquiry Into the Duties of the Female Sex*, which was first published in 1787 and was published in its sixth edition in 1805. Austen does not explain why she was originally planning on not reading it, but it might be related to her ownership of Robert Bage's *Hermsprong, or Man as He is Not*. Tomalin refers to Bage as an ''enlightened author, [who] spoke up for democracy and women's rights, and expressed his admiration for Mary Wollstonecraft, who had already claimed for her sex the right to take up farming, the law and other male pursuits'' (123). She continues by claiming that ''[n]obody could live through the 1790s without being aware of Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Women*, which was published in 1792 and caused a furore'' (Tomalin 138) and that ''Wollstonecraft's central arguments for the better education and status of women must at the very least have caught [Jane Austen's] attention'' (Tomalin 139). Austen's initial aversion towards Gisborne's book might be founded in this interest in Wollstonecraft's claims. Wollstonecraft advocates for better and more education for young females, so that they could become intelligent equals to their husbands and gain more freedom within a marriage, whereas Gisborne in *An Inquiry Into the Duties of the Female Sex* claims that ''it seems an appointment both reasonable in its nature and most conducive to the happiness, not only of the man himself, but of his wife, of his children, and of all his connections, that he should be the person to whom the superiority should be committed'' (231). From Austen's initial attitude towards Gisborne's book, her ownership of Bage's *Hermsprong*, and her very probably knowledge of Wollstonecraft and her claims can be concluded that Austen was at the least *interested* in the education of women and the position they were given in society and marriage. This interest started with her reading *Sir Charles Grandison* at a young age, and the fact that she was familiar with Hester Chapone, Fordyce's *Sermons* and Lord Chesterfield's *Letters*, and her mention of reading Gisborne to her sister, as the final push, all prove that Austen was familiar with literature discussing the female education and position in society, including the courtesy books and their contents.

These contents of the courtesy books are mostly focussed on the manners ''concerned with morality and character improvement'' (Fritzer 4), which makes them different from etiquette books. According to Fritzer, the latter are focused on ''a limited and sometimes superficial range of manners and the face that one presents to the world through those manners. They are concerned with what is and is not socially acceptable in formulaic conduct like dinner table amenities'' (4). Thus, while the etiquette books only focus on the art of *seeming* accomplished, courtesy books focus on ''morality and inner development rather than on fashion and expedience''

(Fritzer 9). These books were used to educate women to be as pleasing to men as they could be, which was very important, because, as *The Female Instructor* states: ''It is a generally received opinion, founded in fact, that females may attain a superior degree of happiness in a married state to what they can possibly find in the other. What a forlorn and unprotected situation is that of an old maid!'' (181). This statement is linked to Mary Evans' claim that ''marriage, in the 18th and 19th century, was an economic necessity for women'' (314). Because of this economic necessity, ''women were often unable to act on their feelings when they did not lead to a financially secure husband'' (Campell 7). Miriam Ascarelli explains that ''[m]iddle- and upper-class women could not work, so marriage was truly a meal ticket for women'', adding that ''economic security is one reason why Mrs. Bennet was anxious to see her five daughters married''. Besides the economic necessity and happiness, in *The Jane Austen Marriage Manual,* Helen Amy also lists the view that ''[m]arriage was the only way for [women] to fulfil their God-given destiny'' (8) as a reason to get married. She goes on to explain that ''[m]en judged a woman's suitability as a potential wife on her appearance, behaviour, manners, accomplishments and wealth'' (14), and it thus comes as no surprise that in these courtesy books several of the facets of daily life of women are addressed, such as their education, dress, exercise and things to do for their amusement.

In Austen's novels, most of her female characters have received some type of education, her heroines can read and make music and sing, and in ''knowledge and accomplishments, they do generally fit the recommendations of the courtesy books that urge broad education for women'' (Fritzer 30). However, Austen's heroines are not always the most educated characters in the novel, as Miss Bingley for example has received a better education than Elizabeth, but as Fritzer says: ''For Austen, moderation seems the best path: accomplishment is desirable, but will not redeem graver flaws'' (30). Miss Bingley is portrayed as a proud woman, whose main focus is to appear as accomplished and attractive as possible, whereas Elizabeth is a plain, sweet and smart woman, and there is nothing that the level of education can fix for Miss Bingley's temperament. In *The Young Ladies Conduct,* John Essex seems to agree with Austen that education can only do so much for a woman's disposition, for ''a Woman of Plainness, if she have good Sense and Understanding, is a thousand times more to be esteemed than a Court Lady, who under a seeming Politeness hides an ungrateful Heart, which is capable of all manner of Dissimulation and Baseness'' (Essex xxxvii).

As said before, the education of women was focused mainly on attracting a husband, and thus there was a large focus on subjects such as vanity, comeliness, wit and other qualities that would help a young woman with building a good image for herself. It was very important that young women were instructed in these matters, as a woman's reputation and public image meant everything, and ''[a]s the time that is past is gone for ever; as the word that escapeth thy lips returneth not again; so is the good-name of a woman when it goeth from her'' (Kenrick 12). Because of this focus on a woman's reputation, it is not surprising that many of the conduct books

advice their readers to stay away from any frowned upon behaviour, and that ''particular care should be taken to point out those qualities which are most ornamental to their sex; such as cleanliness, neatness of dress, modesty, sweetness of temper, industry, sobriety, and frugality'' (*The Female Instructor* 28). In her *Letters of Improvement of the Mind Addressed to a Young Lady*, Hester Chapone lists ''piety, benevolence, meekness, humility, integrity, and purity'' (174) as some more of the desirable traits for a young lady. Earlier in her book she already claimed that ''[t]here are no virtues more insisted on, as necessary to our future happiness, than humility, and sincerity, or uprightness of heart; yet, none more difficult and rare. —Pride and vanity (. . .) are the sources of almost all the word faults, both of men and women'' (Chapone 62). She also adds that ''[h]uman nature is ever liable to corruption, and has in it the seeds of every vice, as well as of every virtue; and, the first will be continually shooting forth and growing up, if not carefully watched and rooted out as fast as they appear'' (Chapone 77). It is thus no surprise that William Kenrick turns to young women's guardians, parents and other adults in their lives when he tells them to ''[t]ake all Occasions to forewarn her against the Vanity of Presumption, and Pretences to Wit'' (131). Previously in his *The Whole Duty of Woman. By a Lady. Written at the Desire of a Noble Lord*, Kenrick has already explained why a young woman should be warned against this behaviour, as he says that she should ''[a]void (. . .) vain-glory and self-conceit; for her who lifteth herself up will others take a pride to pull down; and, if the day of calamity should come, her fall will be their triumph and their rejoicing'' (10). He contrasts this ominous image with the statement that ''the humble shall be honoured in prosperity'' (Kenrick 10), making it clear that this is the way a young woman should behave. Chapone adds to this that ''passive courage — patience, and fortitude under sufferings— presence of mind, and calm resignation in danger — are surely desirable'' (73), and Essex claims that parents were expected to ''[i]nsinuate into her the Principles of Politeness, true Modesty and Humility'' (131), ensuring that their daughter would maintain her good reputation.

There are thus many traits which a woman should possess, but there is also a large focus in the courtesy books on things a young woman should *not* do. Like Chapone and Kenrick, Essex warns his readers that ''[y]oung Ladies ought to be afraid of nothing so much as Vanity'' (xi), and dress was the first level on which to show how vain or proud a person might be. John Gregory explains that ''[t]he love of dress is natural to [women], and therefore it is proper and reasonable. Good sense will regulate your expense in it; and good taste will direct you to dress in such a way, as to (. . .) set off your beauties'', but he also adds that ''much delicacy and judgment are required in the application of this rule'' (*The Lady's Pocket Library* 101). Austen also uses dress to show differences between classes and people, as she has Mr Collins tell Elizabeth that wearing ''whatever of [her] clothes is superior to the rest'' is perfectly tolerable when they go and meet Lady Catherine for the first time, as ''Lady Catherine is far from requiring that elegance of dress in

us, which becomes herself and daughter. (. . .) Lady Catherine will not think the worse of you for being simple dressed. She likes to have the distinction of rank preserved'' (*Pride and Prejudice* 137). By encouraging her lower-class visitors to dress in somewhat simpler clothes, Lady Catherine is assured of herself and her daughter being the best and most lavishly dressed women in the assembly, which serves perfectly for showing off their higher status. One of the Austen's characters with the biggest focus on appearance and fashion, is Lydia Bennet, and it would seem that Essex is describing her in the following passage: ''the too great love of Dress, encourages Novelty, Curiosity and Levity, (. . .) And these Follies ruin all Distinction of Conditions or Rank, and break in upon the Rules of good Manners, which, by degrees, ruins Families, and make some Ladies commit things very low and mean, to the loss of their Honour and Virtue'' (Essex, xii).

Not only are there things a woman *should* do or possess, and things a woman should *not,* there were also greyer areas. Essex encourages his readers to ''[q]uit all Pretences (. . .) to Beauty before it leaves you, and place all your Thoughts upon the Endowments of the Mind, and the inward Satisfaction that arises from the Practice of Virtue'' (125), and thus to study as well as working on their tempers. However, he also claims that young women must also ''beware of the Reputation of being Witty, for fear of the Invitation it may give [them] of Intriguing and turning Critick, in things that are above [their] Capacity'' (xv), and Kenrick adds to this by telling his reader: ''Discover not the knowledge of things, it is not expected thou should understand'' (33). Young women are often recommended to study history, and Chapone explains that she knows ''nothing equally proper to entertain and improve at the same time, or that is so likely to form and strengthen your judgment'' and ''that more materials for conversation are supplied by this kind of knowledge, than by almost any other'' (Chapone 192-193). This indicates that even though their focus should not solely be on outward beauty, but also on reading and sharpening their minds, young women were not expected to really participate in conversations concerning things other than fashion, entertainment and other similar subjects. Or, as Hannah More puts it: A lady should ''read the best books, not so much to enable her to talk of them, as to bring the improvement which they furnish, to the rectification of her principles, and the formation of her habits. The great uses of study are to enable her to regulate her own mind, and to be useful to others'' (2).

Besides discussing the different subjects to be studied by ladies during their education, and the different virtues and manners that would recommend them to young men, the courtesy books also addressed exercise and entertainment, often advising moderation. For exercise, women were advised to practise dancing and walking, as these were seen as appropriate pastimes for ladies. In his *Legacy to his Daughters*, Gregory claims that exercises in the open air ''will give vigour to your constitutions, and a bloom to your complexions'' (*The Lady's Pocket Library* 99). As such, walking was often encouraged as it would create a slim figure and strong body and complexion. It was the norm for women to walk together, preferably chaperoned by a married

woman or a man, as to ensure their safety. Dancing was also often done by women together during practise, but also in public at dances with too few men attending or willing to dance. This was the case at a ball Austen attended in 1800, and she wrote to her sister Cassandra that she ''danced nine dances out of ten, five with Stephen Terry, T. Chaute & James Digweed & four with Catherine. – There was commonly a couple of ladies standing up together, but not often any so amiable as ourselves'' (Le Faye 55). According to Fitzer, dancing was ''highly recommended by most courtesy books as a required skill'' (55), as it was useful for ''forming and strengthening the body, and improving the carriage'' (Chapone 187), and Gisborne calls it ''an amusement in itself both innocent and salubrious, and therefore by no means improper, under suitable regulations, to constitute the occasional entertainment of youth'' (180–181). In the country, balls ''must fill the place of many other amusements which were available only in London'' (Georgia 297), and thus young people would often look forward to them for a long time. These balls could be ''internally focused'', but they often ''involved people outside the immediate family circle'' (Russel 180), creating the perfect opportunity to meet new acquaintances, and thus potential (dancing) partners. This made it both exciting, but also dangerous for young women, as in the ballroom ''a young woman has more temptations to encounter than she has experienced at the public or at the private concert'' (Gisborne 181). When it got to the dancing itself, however, moderation once again was key, as it was also viewed as ''harmful if pursued to excess'' (Fitzer 56). It was seen as something that should not be done too often or too much, as it might indicate either a close attachment when two people danced together very often, or it might depict a woman as a flirt when she danced with many different men. Kenrick warns his readers about this when he says ''[l]et not thy foot often leap at the sound of musick, lest in thy dancing-days thy reputation forsake thee'' (13). Thus, besides it being advised as a form of exercise, dancing was, if done in the proper manner, also seen as a pleasurable pastime, together with reading, card-playing and theatre-going (Fritzer 41) and would often be taught and studied. There is also some overlap between education and entertainment when it comes to reading, as Chapone recommends her reader to read ''the translations of Homer and Virgil'' (196) both for pleasure and to help develop a greater understanding of poetry and conversations. Oftentimes, the different types of literature come into play when considering whether reading was for entertainment, such as novels, or for education, such as the conduct books, described by Essex as ''useful and instructive Books, which will shew them many thing that Reason alone could never reach, and give them more Solidity of Thought, and more Sweetness in their Discourse'' (xl).

The education of young women was, however, not solely focused on her gaining and maintaining a good reputation and finding a husband, but it was also meant to prepare a young woman for the role of a wife, as she will be ''charged with the Education of her Children, of the Boys whilst Young, and the Daughters till they are Marry'd; as also with the Government of the

House, and the Management of her Maid-Servants'' (Essex xxxiii) after she successfully found a husband. Or, as *The Female Instructor*, phrases it:

> They should also be carefully instructed, when young, in all the branches of domestic economy, especially in the business of the kitchen, laundry, &c. To be mistress of those necessary accomplishments, will be considered as real advantages, will recommend them to the attention of the wise and good, and will compensate for the want of a fortune.
> (*The Female Instructor* 28)

It was expected that parents would take on this responsibility to inform their daughters of these tasks and prepare them for ''the Duties of a Single Life, and that of a Married State'' (Essex 132). By observing how their mother would run the household, young girls were expected to learn how they should fulfil these tasks, which would fall to them after marriage. Women were not expected to study anything other than the abovementioned subjects, or to know a great deal about anything other than the house, children or housework, as is shown by Kenrick telling his readers that ''[t]hy kingdom is thine own house, and thy government the care of thy family. Let the laws of thy condition be thy study, and learn only to govern thy self and thy dependants'' (12) and *The Female Chaperone* claiming ''[t]he care of [a woman's] family is her whole delight, to that alone she applies her study'' (29).

The conduct books were thus very important when it came to the education of young women, teaching them correct behaviour and temper, and how to properly perform their duties before and after marriage. As mentioned earlier there were several reasons why this information, meant to make a young woman seem as attractive as possible to the opposite sex, was so important. For most women, the pecuniary reason was the most important one, or as Austen herself worded it in a letter to her cousin Fanny: ''Single Women have a dreadful propensity for being poor – which is one very strong argument in favour of Matrimony'' (La Faye 347). A married woman was no longer financially dependent on her parents or other family members, but now looked to her husband, which is why many women tried to marry in their own class or even up. However, marrying up in society was a big feat, as ''one great fortune tends to look out for another great fortune'' (Sullivan 28), and the courtesy books were often used as a guide to help women enter a courtship with a gentleman. Essex explains that it was hard for lower class women to marry into the higher circles by claiming that the general thought of marriage was that ''there must be a suitable Agreement and Harmony in Age, Humour, Education and Religion; nay, even in Families and Fortunes; and when all these concur, we may expect an equal Satisfaction, as the natural result of an equal Match'' (97). This meant that for a match to be desirable the male and the female should be equally wealthy. This was not always the case of course, and marriage

between 'unequal' persons often took place, although it varied whether the man or the woman was marrying up, as there were also many single, rich, young women, and many lower class males trying to further themselves in society.

However, attempting to marry up or not, there were always certain rules that young people in search for a husband or wife had to abide to. Firstly, a young woman needed to be introduced to the public and ''the common habits of social intercourse'' (Gisborne 93), which was often referred to her 'being out'. In her *Domestic Duties,* Mrs. William Parkes provides reasons why a young girl should not be introduced into society at a too early age, as ''[t]he consequences of too early an initiation into the supposed delights of routs and balls are, often, an unfinished education, and from late hours, ruined health'' (242). Gisborne agrees with Parkes, explaining that ''[a]t the age when young women are introduced into general society, the character, even of those who have been the best instructed, is in a considerable degree unfixed. The full force of temptation, as yet knowing only by report, is now to be learned from hazardous experience'' (114). Parkes continues by claiming that when a young lady had been introduced into society, she should not appear too frequently in ''haunts of pleasure'' (Parkes 245), as this might ''lead to an unfavourable inference alike as to the inclination and power of a young lady to discharge the obligations of a wife or a mother, and thus obscure her prospects of engaging the notice and approbation of the sensible and reflecting part of the other sex'' (Parkes 245), undoing all the preparation for courting, marriage and the duties of wife that a young woman had undergone with her education thus far.

It was, however, mostly outside of her home that a young woman had the chance to meet potential suitors, as assemblies provided a ''contact zone between the elite and the middling orders, or between the dominance of men and the dependency of women'' (Russel 187-188). In his introduction for *Pride and Prejudice*, Ian Littlewood explains that ''the social manoeuvres by which people signal their preferences and respond to the signals of others become vital'' (ix), and thus it was important for young women to attend balls and other social gatherings, as it would otherwise be extremely difficult to offer suitors the chance for those social manoeuvres. These suitors, however, should be wisely chosen, and ''[m]en of loose morals or impertinent behaviour must always be avoided: —or if at any time you are obliged to be in their company, you must keep them at a distance by cold civility'' (Chapone 185-186). However, when a young woman had gained some interest in a certain gentleman, she ''could only respond to attention from a man, she could not make a move herself. When a man showed an interest in a woman, she had to behave as if she had not noticed'' (Amy 14) and John Mullan adds that ''[n]o woman can be the first to declare her feelings'' (279). Gregory mentions this in his *Legacy to his Daughters*, when he claims that ''[i]t is a maxim laid down among you, and a very prudent one it is, that love is not to begin on your part; but it is entirely to be the consequence of [men's] attachment to you'' (*The Lady's Pocket Library* 108). This makes it hard for a woman to indicate to a gentleman that she is interested, and

The Female Instructor implies that a young woman should not even have to explicitly show her interest, as ''[y]our receiving his addresses shews your preference'' (*The Female Instructor* 180). This meant that reading the behaviour of somebody of the opposite sex became very important, as indications of interest could be found in subtle hints, questions, or other behaviour in social gatherings. Littlewood explains this by commenting that ''[b]y dancing twice with Jane, Bingley has made at the very least a declaration of particular interest'' (IX).

Gregory explains the way two young people would enter a courtship in the following manner:

> Some agreeable qualities recommend a gentleman to your common good liking and friendship. In the course of his acquaintance, he contracts an attachment to you. When you perceive it, it excites your gratitude: this gratitude rises into a preference: and this preference, perhaps, at last advanced into some degree of attachment.
> (*The Lady's Pocket Library* 108-109)

During a courtship, both parties would try to get to know the other and decide whether they would make an acceptable marriage partner. During this period, a certain distance was to be maintained, not only physically, but also conversationally. Even though the feelings might be strong, they had to be refrained, and the behaviour towards each other should be proper. Mullan explains that ''[e]ven being in love does not let you use a man's Christian name'' (52), as it was seen as ''wholly improper for a lady and gentleman, unless they [were] engaged or related, to use one another's Christian names'' (Ross 26), and this privilege would only be gained once engaged, but only in private. Only after marriage one could use their spouse's Christian name in conversations with others, and Austen herself writes to her sister Cassandra that while reading a letter from recently married Richard Buller she ''was afraid he would oppress [her] by his felicity & his love for his Wife, but this is not the case; he calls her simply Anna without any angelic embellishments'' (Le Faye 58-59). To ensure that the young couple would get to know each other in a decent manner, and to ''protect a woman's reputation and (. . .) a man from being ensnared against his will'' (Amy 15), the woman would have to be chaperoned, and the couple was not allowed to ''be left alone together in a room, to travel alone together or to converse privately'' (Amy 15), and thus everything that passed between a young couple happened ''under the superintendence of parents or near relations, and of friends of proved sobriety and discretion'' (Gisborne 96 – 97).

In *An Unfortunate Mother's Advice to Her Absent Daughters,* Lady Sarah Pennington claims that ''[her daughter's] father was the first man whom I ever made any private assignation with, or even met in a room alone'' (11), only emphasizing the importance of chaperones and avoiding being alone with any man, as it could ruin reputations. Parkes claims that the mother is the

preferred chaperone of her daughter, but ‘‘if circumstances prevent her from accompanying her daughter, a near relation or an intimate friend should supply her place’’ (246). This chaperone should, however, preferably be married, as two unmarried, young women might only encourage each other and make the same foolish mistakes. This is briefly touched upon in *Pride and Prejudice*, when Mrs Bennet states that after Jane will marry Mr Bingley, she will ‘‘be able to consign her single daughters to the care of their sister’’ (86). As a young woman was supposed to always be with a chaperone, the only time two young persons of the opposite sex could converse somewhat privately was when there was a larger assembly to keep an eye on them, or while they were dancing. In every screen adaptation of Austen’s novels there is a closing kiss, but ‘‘it is well known her heroes and heroines scarcely ever make even the slightest physical contact’’ in the novels (Clery 163), and Amy adds that ‘‘[k]issing was forbidden, as was touching, except briefly with gloved hands while dancing and walking to and from a dance’’ (15).

Often the first time that a couple would be alone and unsupervised together was during a proposal, which Mullan describes as ‘‘the first moment of explicitness in a relationship’’ (287). This is why Elizabeth and Mrs Bennet both realise Mr Collins intentions when he asks for a private audience with Elizabeth, and why Elizabeth claims that ‘‘[Mr Collins] can have nothing to say to me that anybody need not hear’’ (*Pride and Prejudice* 90). This remark already indicates that Elizabeth will not accept Mr Collins proposal, as she clearly states that she does not want to be alone with him, thus not wanting to give him the opportunity to propose. Amy points out that ‘‘[a]lthough a woman was not allowed to show interest in a man or make any moves to initiate a courtship, she had one important prerogative: the choice to accept or refuse a proposal’’ (18), which Gregory refers to as ‘‘the undoubted privilege of her sex’’ (*The Lady’s Pocket Library* 111). Before a woman would accept or refuse a proposal, there were a great number of factors she had to take in to consideration, such as the chance of happiness, social classes, the financial situation of the suitor, and whether her parents would approve of the match (Amy 18). Gisborne warns women to really think about who she would accept to be her husband by warning that ‘‘[i]f a woman marries a person without having sufficient reason to be satisfied, from actual knowledge of his character, that the commands of the Scriptures will decide his conduct, the fault is surely her own’’ (232). *The Female Instructor* warns its readers to ‘‘not give way to a sudden sally of passion, and then dignify it with the name of love. Genuine love is not founded in caprice; it is founded in nature, on honourable views, on virtue, on similarity of tastes, and sympathy of souls’’ (188). When a woman wanted to use her ‘privilege’, and thus not accept the proposal, ‘‘the correct response was to decline it with civility and sensitivity’’ (Amy 18), but decidedly, as Mullan claims that ‘‘[a]nything other than a rejection is encouragement’’ (284). However, ‘‘[t]he convention of maidenly reticence has been subverted to such an extent as to make it almost impossible for a lady to say “no” ’’ (Georgia 315), and Gregory advices his readers to ‘‘treat [their lover] honourably and

humanely. Do not let him linger in a miserable suspense; but be anxious to let him know your sentiments with regards to him'' (*The Lady's Pocket Library* 110). Often, however, a proposal would be accepted, as courtships were unlikely to continue when one half of the couple was not planning on marriage to the other half, and it would be demeaning for a woman's reputation if she declined a man after encouraging him. Mullan explains that ''[a]pplying to a lady's parents is conventional'' (281), and this could happen either before the proposal, such as with Mr Collins informing Mrs Bennet of his intentions, or after the lady had accepted, as both Mr Bingley and Mr Darcy do in *Pride and Prejudice*. After both the woman and her father or guardian accepted the proposal, the rules concerning the couple would ease a bit. During the engagement, the couple was allowed to ''use each other's Christian names in private and they could correspond, but in a restrained manner, without expression of excessive feelings'' (Amy 22).

Thus, the road to marriage was governed by rules, and these were a big part of the education of young females during the seventeenth and eighteenth century. The courtesy books would describe the appropriate way to educate young women, and prepare them for their future roles as wives and mothers, while also indicating what would be seen as appropriate exercise and entertainment. They would also provide the young women with the rules concerning courtship and marriage, and provide tips concerning running a household. All of these subjects have been discussed in this chapter, providing an overview of the information courtesy books offered to their readers, while also linking Jane Austen to this form of literature. As shown in the beginning of the chapter, Austen was familiar with the manner in which young women were educated to become the most attractive single ladies, and after a period of courtship, also the best wives they could possibly be. In a letter about Anne Austen's writing, Austen advices Anne to only write about things she was actually familiar with: ''Let the Portmans go to Ireland, but as you know nothing of the Manners there, you had better not go with them. You will be in danger of giving false representations'' (Le Faye 280). Austen thus valued the correct representation of real life in novels, and as her own novels describe the lives of young women growing up, and contain many ''social and domestic emphases'' (Georgia 12), this means that the manners, rules and processes discussed in this chapter can be found in her novels. Austen fills her novels by ''playing off realistic scenes against their stock counterparts in idealized etiquette'' (Georgia 56) and the two following chapters will discuss when and how she does this. The next chapter of this thesis will explore the courtships of Jane Bennet and Mr Bingley, and Charlotte Lucas and Mr Collins, and compare them to the abovementioned rules of courtship to show that Jane Austen was aware of the general expectations regarding this subject, showing the subtle manner in which Austen criticised females' education and situation.

Chapter 2
Following the Rules: The Courtships of Charlotte Lucas & Mr Collins and Jane Bennet & Mr Bingley

In the previous chapter, the advice and rules given in the courtesy books of the eighteenth century were discussed, providing the information needed for a discussion about any similarities, deviations and discords between this recommended behaviour and the behaviour of Austen's characters in *Pride and Prejudice*. In this chapter, the courtships of Jane Bennet and Mr Bingley, and Charlotte Lucas and Mr Collins will be discussed and compared to the information provided in the previous chapter. Both of these courtships match the rules explained in the previous chapter, but their courses differ greatly. While Jane's happiness is based mostly on luck, Charlotte actually works to gain her moderate happiness. Their courtships provide an insight in the reality that young women with no great fortune were faced with: The threat of becoming a poor and discarded spinster who has to rely on friends and family to help support her. They also show that by following the rules women might be able to escape this threat, but it does not necessarily end in happiness. With these courtships, Austen provides examples of how female education might be enough for the situation as it is, but it is not enough to provide women with the opportunities to take control of their own lives, and thus the situation as it should be.

Jane Bennet is the oldest of five girls, who all live in a house that is entailed to Mr Collins. In her *Student Companion to Jane Austen,* Debra Teachman explains that an entailment meant that ''[t]he person who owned the property outright could devise by his will or a settlement drawn up separately that his property would be inherited, intact, through the generations living at the time of his death, plus one'' (Teachman 67). Although ''[l]egally there was no barrier to leaving an estate to women (. . .) such inheritance was extremely rare'' (Teachman 86) and the property would usually go to the eldest son and his following generations. Whenever a property owner passed away without leaving a will and ''an entailment was not in force, an estate was to be inherited automatically by the eldest son of a family. If there were no sons, it would be inherited, in equal portions, by all the daughters of the family'' (Teachman 68). However, there *is* an entailment in force for Longbourn, and ''one of the stipulations included in most legal entailments was that, if there were no son to inherit the property, it would descend to the eldest nephew or male cousin in the next generation of the family'' (Teachman 68) and this is what will happen to Longbourn after Mr Bennet passes. When Mr Collins would inherit the house, ''[Mrs Bennet] and her daughters will be turned out of their home immediately'' (Teachman 69), and this is a gloomy prospect for the Bennet girls. This is the reason that Mrs Bennet is so anxious to see her daughters married, because that is the only way for her daughters to gain security. A married daughter might also gain a financial situation in which she would be able to support her sisters. The Bennet girls

‘‘are not from the low class, but rather situated on the bottom tier of the gentry. Any form of social mobility for these women is garnered through marriage, and their only hope of not sinking into deep poverty is by making monetarily sound matches’’ (Campbell 119). Therefore it is not surprising that Mrs Bennet is so thrilled over Mr Bingley coming to Netherfield, as she hopes that one of her daughters may marry this man and secure the future of herself and her sisters, as a ‘‘single man of large fortune; four or five thousand a year’’ would be ‘‘a fine thing for our girls!’’ (*Pride and Prejudice* 3).

Mrs Bennet’s hopes are not in vain, as after their initial meeting and proper, public introduction at the assembly a fortnight after his arrival at Netherfield Park, it is clear that Bingley admires Jane. During the ball Bingley ‘‘danced with [Jane] twice; and she was the only creature in the room that he asked a second time’’ (*Pride and Prejudice* 13). As pointed out in the previous chapter, a woman could not initiate any romantic relationship, and by dancing with Jane twice, Bingley show a ‘‘particular interest’’ (Littlewood IX) for her. That Jane realizes the possibly intended meaning is proven in her following conversation with Elizabeth, in which she says that she ‘‘did not expect such a compliment’’ (*Pride and Prejudice* 14).

In the following weeks, Bingley and Jane are often seen together at assemblies, dinners and balls, and Charlotte comments to Elizabeth on Jane’s careful behaviour. As explained in the first chapter of this thesis, women are not supposed to initiate contact, but they can encourage a man when he shows an interest, and Charlotte believes that Jane is responding to Bingley too coolly, risking discouraging him. Amy claims that ‘‘[w]hen a man showed an interest in a woman, she had to behave as if she had not noticed’’ (14), indicating that the public should not be aware of her response to his attentions. Charlotte, however, points out that if ‘‘a woman conceals her affection with the same skill from the object of it, she may lose the opportunity of fixing him’’ (*Pride and Prejudice* 20). As Jane and Bingley always meet in large parties, as was to be expected as ‘‘[c]ourtships were conducted in public’’ (Amy 15), they would not always be able to talk only to each other, and Charlotte accurately judges that Jane should ‘‘make the most of every half-hour in which she can command his attention’’ (*Pride and Prejudice* 20). Even though ‘‘Elizabeth recoils from the idea of Jane acting by design’’ (Harris 43), Charlotte is shrewd enough to realize that Bingley is a very desired single gentleman, and that Jane’s poor connections and little fortune diminish her chances of marrying him. If she wants to marry him, Jane should act fast in order to secure him, and afterwards, Charlotte proclaims, ‘‘there will be leisure for falling in love as much as she chooses’’ (*Pride and Prejudice* 20).

Bingley’s regard for her oldest daughter and the possible consequences of it are a favourite subject of Mrs Bennet, and she ‘‘seemed incapable of fatigue while enumerating the advantages of the match’’ (*Pride and Prejudice* 86). Mr Bingley is a charming, rich young man, living close-by, and if Jane were to marry him it would put her in a position to provide for her younger sisters when

Longbourn goes to Mr Collins. Jane marrying Bingley could also ‘‘throw [her younger sisters] in the way of other rich men’’ (*Pride and Prejudice* 86) and another added bonus would be that Mrs Bennet would ‘‘be able to consign her single daughters to the care of their sister’’ (*Pride and Prejudice* 86). As a married woman, Jane could very well be the chaperone to the younger, unmarried girls. But however pleased Mrs Bennet and the other Bennets might be with the match, Jane’s possible in-laws do not share their sentiments. Elizabeth is not wrong when she states that they, the Bennets, ‘‘are not rich enough, or grand enough for [the Bingleys]’’ (*Pride and Prejudice* 103). Mentioned in chapter one of this thesis is Essex’s statement that the general thought of marriage was that ‘‘there must be a suitable Agreement and Harmony in Age, Humour, Education and Religion; nay, even in Families and Fortunes; and when all these concur, we may expect an equal Satisfaction, as the natural result of an equal Match’’ (97). Though Jane and Bingley meet the first four requirements, their families and fortunes differ greatly.

Towards Jane, neither Darcy nor Bingley’s sisters have any objections, and Mrs Hurst even states: ‘‘I have an excessive regard for Jane Bennet, she is really a very sweet girl, and I wish with all my heart she were well settled. But with such a father and mother, and such low connections, I am afraid there is no change of it’’ (33). Darcy later on explains to Elizabeth his main reason for separating Bingley and Jane: ‘‘The situation of your mother's family, though objectionable, was nothing in comparison to that total want of propriety so frequently, so almost uniformly betrayed by herself, by your three younger sisters, and occasionally even by your father’’ (*Pride and Prejudice* 169). He also sides with Charlotte by arguing that ‘‘the serenity of [Jane]'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 easily touched’’ (*Pride and Prejudice* 169). However, he also says that Bingley had ‘‘believed her to return his affection with sincere, if not with equal regard’’ (*Pride and Prejudice* 170), so although Darcy sides with Charlotte in that a woman should reassure and encourage a man if she wants a fruitful courtship, Bingley understood Jane’s manner of encouraging him, and it would have been enough had Darcy not intervened. But Darcy does step in, and Bingley and the rest of his company go to London, greatly distressing Jane, and Mrs Bennet. Both ladies are upset because they believed that the relationship between Jane and Bingley was heading to a proposal. Jane is upset because her heart is broken, and Mrs Bennet is upset because it appears like the chance of possible financial safety for at least one, and quite possibly all of her daughters, is gone.

Bingley does return to Netherfield, however, and visits the Bennets. During his first visit Elizabeth is pleased to see ‘‘how much the beauty of her sister re-kindled the admiration of her former lover’’ (*Pride and Prejudice* 280), and although Jane tries to deny her own feelings and hopes, Elizabeth tells her: ‘‘I think you are in very great danger of making him as much in love with you as ever’’ (*Pride and Prejudice* 281). And she is proven right, as Bingley uses the first longer

moment in which he is alone with Jane to propose. During their courtship, Jane and Bingley spent the majority of their time together in large assemblies and parties, and thus chaperoned, in line with the prescribes rules discussed in chapter one. Knowing it was the custom that a young couple was only ever alone during the proposal, Mrs Bennet actively tries to create the perfect opportunity for Mr Bingley by calling her other daughters out of the room. It is clear that a proposal is his objective, and he wastes no time when the opportunity is provided. Afterwards, he leaves Jane with Elizabeth in order to ask Mr Bennet for his blessing, as the custom was that the man should ''seek the consent of [a woman's] father, or male guardian, before an engagement could be announced'' (Amy 19). After the acceptance of both Jane and Mr Bennet, Bingley spends most of his time at Longbourn, ''coming frequently before breakfast, and always remaining till after supper'' (*Pride and Prejudice* 291), with Jane having ''no attention to bestow on anyone else'' (*Pride and Prejudice* 291). This is a significant change from the prudent and somewhat distant behaviour of the couple before their engagement, and they are now allowed to spend time conversing by themselves. Now, and the coming years of their marriage, is the time to 'leisurely fall in love', as Charlotte put it, as Jane and Bingley can finally spend time together, discussing several subjects in private without peeking eyes and alert ears nearby to keep them in check.

Even though it took almost the entire course of the novel for Jane and Bingley to come together, they do not know each other very well, as they barely had time to speak to each other somewhat privately. They did, however, follow the rules that are laid out in chapter one of this thesis. Their courtship was public and very decent, the proposal was done in person during their first moment alone together, and after Jane accepted him, Bingley went to ask her father for his blessing. But although the course of their courtship might be according to the rules, the fact that it even started is quite peculiar. Jane was extremely lucky in meeting Bingley, as ''[n]umerous circumstances conspired to make their finding and committing to each other quite unlikely'' (Teachman 66). Firstly, it is very fortunate for Jane that Bingley even decided to rent Netherfield, a home close to Longbourn, and not something much further away. And even leaving this distance out of the equation, Teachman points out that even if Jane and Bingley would have hypothetically been in ''London or one of the resort towns of England at the same time, the difference in their social status would most likely have kept them from attending the same social function'' (66). Jane is even luckier that she is a very beautiful and charming young lady and that Bingley falls in love with her, and that he has no real regard for the consequence of marrying Jane and thus connecting himself to her family, in the way that Darcy does. Elizabeth also plays a vital role in Jane's eventual happiness, as she is the one to point out to Darcy that Jane in fact does have feelings for Bingley, thereby convincing Darcy to tell this to Bingley and to return to Netherfield.

Jane Bennet thus owes her happiness partly to her sister, partly to her own beauty and charming personality, but mostly to luck. She was lucky in meeting Bingley, she was lucky in

Elizabeth meeting Darcy again and telling him about Jane's feelings, and she was lucky in finding a gentleman who loved her enough to not care about her low connections. She followed the rules and gained both great happiness and financial security, which makes following the rules seem very favourable. However, being this lucky was not the reality for many women in the eighteenth century, and many ''had to make sacrifices to avoid spinsterhood and poverty'' (Amy 21). In *Pride and Prejudice*, Charlotte Lucas is one of these women.

Charlotte Lucas is a twenty-seven-year-old single woman who simply ''does not have the advantage of being rich, beautiful, or the heroine of a novel'' (Littlewood VII). She has no charming prospects before her if she does not marry, as she is financially dependent on a family with a small fortune, and unlike Jane she has neither luck nor beauty on her side to win over the heart of a young, charming, and, most importantly, rich gentleman. So, when Charlotte is introduced to Mr Collins, a single man with a comfortable income and living, at the Netherfield Ball, it is not strange that she would conceive a plan that would end with her becoming Mrs Collins. As Ian Littlewood phrased it: ''If the appalling Mr Collins is the only suitable male on offer, she will take him and be grateful'' (VII).

However, Charlotte cannot be certain that Mr Collins will want to take her as well. She is a shrewd woman, well versed in reading men, behaviour, and courting, as seen by her abovementioned advice to Jane. And, as Mr Collins later on reads some of Fordyce's Sermons to the Bennet sisters from a book from the Longbourn library, it can be assumed that Charlotte was familiar with this type of literature and their contents. Well aware of the rules around courtships, Charlotte also knows perfectly well how far she can stretch the few liberties women have in these rules without crossing the line. Her acquaintance with Mr Collins begins at the Netherfield Ball with Elizabeth discussing ''the oddities of her cousin, and (. . .) point[ing] him out to [Charlotte's] particular notice'' (*Pride and Prejudice* 78). An official introduction is not specifically discussed in the novel, but shortly after this conversation, Charlotte is shown as a lightning rod for Mr Collins's attentions towards Elizabeth, as she ''good-naturedly engaged Mr Collins's conversation to herself'' (*Pride and Prejudice* 88). As discussed in the previous chapter, a young woman ''could only respond to attention from a man, [and] she could not make a move herself'' (Amy 14). Charlotte, aware of this rule, cleverly participates in Mr Collins's conversations with Elizabeth and slowly focusses his attention on herself. In this manner, it seems like she is not actively making a move, while she can respond to Mr Collins conversations and attention. In doing so, she quickly forms an acquaintance with him which would allow her to visit Longbourn while he is staying there and participate in conversations with him.

However hard Charlotte might have tried to discretely focus Mr Collins's attention on herself, he proposes to Elizabeth, stating his several reasons for deciding to marry. He starts by saying that he thinks ''it a right thing for every clergyman in easy circumstances (. . .) to set the

example of matrimony in his parish'', also adding that it ''will add very greatly to [his] happiness'' (*Pride and Prejudice* 90). After these seemingly acceptable reasons, Mr Collins also adds that ''it is the particular advice and recommendation of the very noble lady whom [he has] the honour of calling patroness'' (*Pride and Prejudice* 90-91). From the rest of his speech it becomes clear that Lady Catherine has told him that he should ''choose a gentlewoman for *my* sake; and for your *own*, let her be an active, useful sort of person, not brought up high, but able to make a small income go a good way'' (*Pride and Prejudice* 91). None of these reasons are directly linked to specifically Elizabeth, and show that Mr Collins could have proposed to anybody by this point, as his attachment to her was ''quite imaginary'' (*Pride and Prejudice* 97). Elizabeth refuses his offer, and after this very chaotic morning, ''Charlotte Lucas came to spend the day with them'' (*Pride and Prejudice* 97). During this day most of Mr Collins's ''assiduous attentions'' were focussed on Charlotte, who listened to him and conversed with him as ''a seasonable relief to them all, and especially to her friend'' (*Pride and Prejudice* 99). The following day is the same, with Charlotte entertaining Mr Collins and Elizabeth being grateful to her for this. However, as Austen herself points out: ''Charlotte's kindness extended farther than Elizabeth had any conception of; – its object was nothing less, than to secure her from any return of Mr Collins's addresses, by engaging them towards herself'' (*Pride and Prejudice* 104). Charlotte is now assured that Mr Collins has the intention to marry, and she realizes that Elizabeth's situation is not very different from her own, and that she thus might also have a shot, even though she has no real love for Mr Collins either. Miriam Ascarelli explains this further in "A Feminist Connection: Jane Austen and Mary Wollstonecraft" when she says that ''Charlotte, who had neither Elizabeth's good looks nor her charm to trade on, knew an economic life raft when she saw one''.

Charlotte is of course right in assuming that there might be a possibility of her receiving a proposal of Mr Collins herself, as to him ''one woman is virtually indistinguishable from another when it comes to choosing a wife'' (Tomalin 163). He is not looking for passion or love, as ''[h]is is to be a marriage of suitability and of appropriateness, not of love and affection. He is looking for a woman who will match his social status, who will function well as the wife of a rector, and who will fit comfortably into a life at Longbourne after Mr. Bennet dies'' (Teachman 66). Charlotte conforms to both Mr Collins and Lady Catherine's lists of requirements. As her father is now Sir William Lucas, she could be seen as a gentlewoman, though not from a very high bred family, and she would be able to handle the financial situation of Mr Collins. She is a smart woman, educated and with a good character, who will very much fit at Longbourn, as her family is from that area. As Mr Collins's attachment to Elizabeth was purely imagined, he is quite capable of transferring his 'feelings' to a new subject in a short time, and Charlotte succeeds in her mission. She encourages him enough to make him propose to her before he leaves for Hunsford, even creating a perfect opportunity for him to do so, by meeting him outside and thus making sure they will be

by themselves, and thus creating the ‘‘private setting’’ (17) that Amy refers to. The reader does not know it then, but ‘‘[Charlotte’s] contrivance of that accident will be a fair epitome of their relationship, with Mr Collins imagining that he is shaping events when in fact he is being manipulated’’ (Mullan 276). Charlotte is the active one in making sure that they will be alone together, thus encouraging him even more to propose on that very morning, before he goes and she might lose her chance of securing her future. Even though Charlotte is actively shaping her relationship with Mr Collins, she still stays within the boundaries set for her. She is smart enough to comply to the rules and simultaneously stretch them in such a way that she can achieve her goals of marriage and financial security through them.

Charlotte’s interest in Mr Collins was never founded on love or passion, but can be linked back to Evans’ claim, stated in the previous chapter, that marriage was often an ‘‘economic necessity’’ (314). It is repeatedly stated in the novel that Charlotte encouraged and accepted Mr Collins ‘‘solely from the pure and disinterested desire of an establishment’’ (*Pride and Prejudice* 105), and it is clear that ‘‘her age spurs her to waste no time when [a husband] hoves into view’’ (Mullan 18). Charlotte even explains this to Elizabeth by stating that ‘‘I ask only a comfortable home; and considering Mr Collins’s character, connections and situation in life, I am convinced that my change of happiness with him is as fair, as most people can boast on entering the marriage state’’ (*Pride and Prejudice* 108). Austen herself also refers to Evans’ claim, and Mullan’s comment about Charlotte’s age, when she explains to her readers that:

> [M]arriage had always been [Charlotte’s] object; it was the only honourable provision for well-educated young women of small fortune, and however uncertain of giving happiness, must be their pleasantest preservative from want. This preservative she had now obtained; and at the age of twenty-seven, without having ever been handsome, she felt all the good luck of it.
> (*Pride and Prejudice* 105)

Even though Austen might justify Charlotte’s behaviour in the novel, she once wrote to her cousin Fanny that ‘‘[a]nything is to be preferred or endured rather than marrying without Affection’’ (Le Faye 292). However, Austen was also perfectly aware that not every woman had that choice, illustrated by her remark about single women and their tendency to be poor mentioned in chapter one. So even though her personal views might not match with Charlotte’s, Austen seems to be able to understand her choice. Similarly, Austen has her main character respond to the whole affair by proclaiming to Jane that ‘‘Mr Collins is a conceited, pompous, narrow-minded, silly man, (. . .) and you must feel, as well as I do, that the woman who marries him, cannot have a proper way of thinking’’ (*Pride and Prejudice* 116). Thus, Elizabeth’s disapproval is not with Charlotte’s attempt

at providing herself with a comfortable living situation, and it could never be, as that is what all the women in the novel want to achieve. Elizabeth knows that it is not ''the desire for worldly advantage that motivates Charlotte but the stark need for what Austen mordantly refers to as a 'preservative from want'. And in a society that left unmarried women at the mercy of their relations' charity, this was a powerful consideration'' (Littlewood VIII). Elizabeth, facing a somewhat similar future with the entailment of Longbourn, must be aware of Charlotte's precarious situation and cannot blame her friend for wanting to avoid this sad potential ending. Elizabeth is disappointed in her friend for stooping as low as accepting *Mr Collins* for a husband to escape her lot. But, as Ian Littlewood puts it: ''However much the romantic heroine may deplore it, this is the kind of compromise out of which the texture of ordinary life is woven'' (VIII).

Because of her longing for financial security and no longer being a burden on the budget of her parents, Charlotte marries Mr Collins, while fully realizing that he does not really love her, and she does not really love him either, following the ''widespread belief that even a bad marriage was better than no marriage at all'' (Amy 8). Mr Collins wants a wife because it fits his station and occupation, but also very much to please his patron, and Charlotte is in no position to be picky. There is no love between them, there is hardly a real acquaintance, but their marriage ''reveals Austen's clear-eyed assessment of the economic underpinnings of marriage'' (Ascarelli).

Austen ''was very aware of marriage as an economic institution'' (Ascarelli), as her own aunt Philadelphia ''had been obliged to travel out to India alone as a girl and marry a man she did not care for, making the basic bargain, her body and companionship for his money'' (Tomalin 79-80), and thus is it not surprising that she would write about a relationship built upon a wish for financial security in *Pride and Prejudice*. Elizabeth deplores Charlotte's choice of husband, but does not critiques her friend's reasons for accepting him. Jane reminds her younger sister of ''Mr Collins's respectability, and Charlotte's prudent, steady character'' and mentions that Charlotte is ''one of a large family'' (*Pride and Prejudice* 116), and thus refers, again, to the fact that Charlotte's family would not be able to provide a large fortune for her, and that marriage was Charlotte's only way of securing a stable and secure life for herself.

Although Austen voices her opinion on this subject through Elizabeth, Jane and the narrator, she is also ''careful to balance her revulsion with a very fair account of Charlotte Collin's management of her situation as a married woman. She takes pleasure in being in charge of her own small domain (. . .) and being able to receive her guests; and she is shown developing strategies for minimizing her husband's awfulness'' (Tomalin 161). Charlotte and Mr Collins may both be moderately pleased with the outcome of their marriage, but Charlotte would never proclaim herself to be the happiest creature alive. This is, however, the price she needs to pay in order to provide financial security, a house, and a satisfactory life for herself.

As to the manner in which their courtship develops, Charlotte and Mr Collins do adhere to the rules laid out in the previous chapter. There is not much detailed information given about their acquaintance, but they never speak to each other by themselves, until he proposes to her, and only meet up in larger groups. There is even fewer information given in the novel about the period in which Mr Collins returns to Hertfordshire for their wedding, but we know that Mr Collins often writes letters and Amy explains that after an accepted marriage proposal, a couple could ''correspond, but in a restrained manner, without expression of excessive feelings'' (22), so it is possible that Mr Collins and Charlotte kept up their courtship in this manner while he was away. This is not known with certainty however, but knowing the characters as Austen wrote them, one can only assume that they were very prudent and correct in their behaviour, never behaving in a way that would be frowned upon.

Charlotte's marriage shows that even after following the rules, the outcome of good behaviour might, and most likely would, not be equal to the marriages other women would secure for themselves. The courtships of Jane Bennet and Charlotte Lucas show that Austen was aware of the rules and how they work. By having both Charlotte and Mr Darcy comment on Jane's behaviour towards Bingley, it becomes clear that it was common for courting to happen in public, and for bystanders to study the behaviour of young couples. Mrs Bennet's hopes that Jane, once married, could watch over and accompany her younger sisters in public confirm the claim made in chapter one concerning chaperones. The facts that both Mr Collins and Mr Bingley propose to the woman of their choice the first moment they are alone with her, and that they both speak with the fathers of these women afterwards in order to receive his blessing, also correspond with the claims in chapter one with the help of the courtesy books. Austen also shows that with a clear knowledge of the rules concerning courtships, women who were smart enough could figure out how to stretch these rules, like Charlotte did by subtly encouraging Mr Collins and making sure they met up alone to provide an opportunity for a proposal.

Besides showing that Austen was familiar with the rules of courtship, the discussion of these two courtships also shows that Austen did not agree with these rules and the fact that female education mainly focussed on these rules. Austen explains Charlotte's situation, and thus why she made the choice to marry Mr Collins, by stating that it comes from her family not having enough money to support her. Their relationship and the explanation given for it by the author show that Austen was well aware that some women were prepared to sacrifice a lot in order to gain financial stability and security. Through Jane and other characters in the novel she shows her understanding of the women who traded their happiness for security, but through Elizabeth, Austen shows her own disapproval of this current situation. Like her heroine, Austen does not blame Charlotte for making this choice, but she is blaming society for forcing Charlotte to make this choice. With Charlotte, Austen writes about and comments on ''the reality of women's lives,

which, for women in the eighteenth century, meant living in a straightjacket of propriety'' (Ascarelli). Because of the dominant view in society that women should be subordinate to and dependent on men, Charlotte's education was mainly focussed on achieving the ultimate goal of marriage. Charlotte is, however, shown as a very shrewd young lady, and were she educated in the manner a young man was, a wide variety of other options to create financial security for herself would have been open to her. But as it is now, Charlotte uses her cleverness to achieve the highest possible for herself: Moderate happiness in a secure situation.

In *Pride and Prejudice*, Austen also writes about couples that the break the rules of the courtesy books in order to achieve their hopes. In doing so, she creates a stark contrast between the socially accepted and correct courtships discussed in this chapter, which are made possible by luck and beauty, and acceptance and cleverness. The courtships of Lydia Bennet and Mr Wickham, and Elizabeth Bennet and Mr Darcy are based on entirely different motives, such as passion and respect. Both courtships do not quite follow the conventional steps and obligatory rules discussed in chapter one of this thesis, but both end in the desired outcome. The next chapter will discuss when and how Jane Austen deviated from the advice discussed in chapter one, and how these deviations can be seen as radical writing of the author, as they are examples of critique on the current education for young women.

Chapter 3
Breaking the Rules: The Courtships of Lydia Bennet & Mr Wickham and Elizabeth Bennet & Mr Darcy

In the previous chapter, the courtships of Charlotte Lucas and Mr Collins, and Jane Bennet and Mr Bingley were discussed and compared to the rules concerning courtship discussed in the first chapter of this thesis. The following chapter will discuss the courtships of Lydia Bennet and Mr Wickham, and Elizabeth Bennet and Mr Darcy, and compare them to the couples discussed in the previous chapter, and the rules discussed in chapter one. Austen knowingly had some of her main characters break these rules and still end up in their desired situation. This indicates that Austen, aware of the female situation of her time and society's opinions and expectations, used her novels to comment on those.

The most striking couple in *Pride and Prejudice* is without a doubt Lydia Bennet and Mr Wickham, and their courtship is also the most remarkable. Their initial meeting happens publicly, in the company of Lydia's sister, Mr Collins and Mr Denny, who introduces Mr Wickham to the ladies. The first impression Wickham leaves is a good one: ''[H]e had all the best part of beauty, a fine countenance, a good figure, and very pleasing address'' (*Pride and Prejudice* 63). Wickham joins them again during a visit to Mrs Philips' house, and there he relates his version of his history with Mr Darcy to Elizabeth. Initially Wickham seems to be interested in Elizabeth, and he spends quite some time in the company of the Bennet sisters, and during this time Mr and Mrs Bennet are also introduced to him: ''Wickham and another officer walked back with them to Longbourn (. . .). His accompanying them was (. . .) was most acceptable as an occasion of introducing him to her father and mother'' (*Pride and Prejudice* 99-100). Meanwhile, Lydia seems content enough with the other officers in Meryton, and ''from the attentions of these beaux garçons, [she] becomes a most decided flirt'' (Southam 44). Soon, however, Wickham's interest in Elizabeth subdues and she claims that it might have continued ''had fortune permitted it'' (*Pride and Prejudice* 127), hinting at the fact that both Wickham and the Bennets have a small income, and that it would not be in their pecuniary interest to marry.

The reason Wickham gives for his poor financial situation is Mr Darcy, who supposedly denied Wickham his chance at a career as a clergyman. Later on in the novel Darcy refutes this claim by stating that Wickham never wanted to become a clergyman, and the reader is told that ''[Wickham's] life was a life of idleness and dissipation'' (*Pride and Prejudice* 171). Wickham attempted, and succeeded, to seduce Darcy's younger sister Georgiana, in an effort to get to her fortune. Georgiana however told Darcy about their planned elopement, and Wickham was forced to join the military to make some kind of living. This is, however, not known to the characters in the novel, and the reader only finds out when Elizabeth does, and by then it seems that there is no

threat for any of the Bennet girls, as they do not have the money to be of interest to Wickham. After being told about Wickham's behaviour, Elizabeth comments on ''the indelicacy of putting himself forward as he had done, and the inconsistency of his professions with his conduct'' (*Pride and Prejudice* 176), and concludes that ''[h]is behaviour to herself could now have had no tolerable motive; he had either been deceived with regard to her fortune, or had been gratifying his vanity by encouraging the preference which she believed she had most incautiously shown'' (*Pride and Prejudice* 176-177).

It is, however, not solely Wickham's behaviour that is reproached in the novel; Lydia's behaviour and character are often discussed both in the novel and in scholarly literature. In the novel she is described as a ''stout, well-grown girl of fifteen, with a fine complexion and good-humoured countenance; a favourite with her mother, whose affection had brought her into public at an early age. She had high animal spirits, and a sort of natural self-consequence'' (41); Elizabeth calls her ''[v]ain, ignorant, idle, and absolutely uncontrolled'' (*Pride and Prejudice* 196); she has tendencies towards ''flippancy and flirtatiousness'' (Veisz 238); and she is known to act upon ''emotion rather than reason'' (Ray 30). Claire Tomalin summarizes this as: ''Lydia, presented as a bad girl, and spoilt by her mother, who sees her as a surrogate self, is selfish and stupid'' (165). Lydia has a great love for balls, socializing and fashion, and seems the embodiment of John Essex's claim that the ''too great love of Dress, encourages Novelty, Curiosity and Levity'' (xii) which was discussed in chapter one of this thesis. He claims that these tendencies can lead to a loss of reputation, and thus Lydia's behaviour and choices in the novel can already be expected when Austen shows her love for fashion and focus on balls and new bonnets in the earlier parts of the novel. Mrs. William Parkes states that behaviour such as Lydia's would ''lead to an unfavourable inference alike as to the inclination and power of a young lady to discharge the obligations of a wife or a mother, and thus obscure her prospects of engaging the notice and approbation of the sensible and reflecting part of the other sex'' (Parkes 245). However, present-day readers of Austen's novels who are no longer familiar with the courtesy books written by Essex, Mrs Parkes, and many others, will also no longer be able to recognize this information given about Lydia as foreshadowing of her later behaviour.

Elizabeth, who *is* familiar with the courtesy books and the claims made in those, is worried about her younger sister's behaviour. She warns her father that the family's, and very importantly thus the sister's, ''importance (. . .) [and] respectability in the world must be affected by the wild volatility, the assurance and disdain of all restraint which mark Lydia's character'' (*Pride and Prejudice* 196). However, Lydia is allowed to go to Brighton with the Forsters, and soon the news follows that she and Wickham have run away. Jennifer Kasius summarizes the situation in her *Jane Austen: Her Complete Novels in One Sitting* by stating that the Bennet's ''initial hope is that [Wickham] intends to make an honourable woman of Lydia and secure a quick marriage in

Scotland, but this hope is dashed when the couple is reported to be hiding in London'' (82). This comes as a surprise to everybody who hears of it, except for Kitty. Lydia had written to her and ''prepared her for such a step. She had known (. . .) of their being in love with each other, many weeks'' (*Pride and Prejudice* 241). Jane and Elizabeth both know Wickham's history with Georgiana Darcy, and fully realize that ''Wickham will never marry a woman without some money'' (*Pride and Prejudice* 234) and that Lydia has ''no money, no connections, nothing that can tempt him'' (*Pride and Prejudice* 231). Lydia's behaviour and choice ''to break social and moral codes around female sexuality could significantly influence not only her own future'' (Veisz 238), but all her sisters share in this misery as well, as Amy explains: ''If her reputation was lost a woman would be punished by social ostracism and her family's reputation could also be tainted'' (15). In the novel this is touched upon by Mary Bennet and Mr Collins.

Mary states that ''loss of virtue in a female is irretrievable; that one false step involves her in endless ruin; that her reputation is no less brittle than it is beautiful; and that she cannot be too much guarded in her behaviour towards the undeserving of the other sex'' (240). Mr Collins writes a letter to Mr Bennet in which he states, amongst other things, that ''[t]he death of your daughter would have been a blessing in comparison of this'' (245). He also writes that Lady Catherine ''[agrees] with [him] in apprehending that this false step in one daughter will be injurious to the fortunes of all the others; for who, as Lady Catherine herself condescendingly says, will connect themselves with such a family?'' (245). Confirming Amy's claim about social ostracism, Mr Collins' final advice to Mr Bennet is ''to console yourself as much as possible, to throw off your unworthy child from your affection for ever, and leave her to reap the fruits of her own heinous offense'' (*Pride and Prejudice* 247). These statements made by Mary and Mr Collins are very similar to the notion of the courtesy books discussed in chapter one of this thesis. A young woman's entire education is based upon the notion that a good marriage is all a woman needs, and thus her reputation is everything. Without a good reputation a lady would ''obscure her prospects of engaging the notice and approbation of the sensible and reflecting part of the other sex'' (Parkes 245) and thus dramatically damage her chance at a good marriage. And a good reputation is hard to maintain, but very easily ruined, as William Kenrick points out: ''[A]s the word that escapeth thy lips returneth not again; so is the good-name of a woman when it goeth from her'' (12).

In his letter, Mr Collins also states that based on what Charlotte has told him, he concludes that ''this licentiousness of behaviour in your daughter, has proceeded from a faulty degree of indulgence'' (*Pride and Prejudice* 245). Elizabeth also mentions this, claiming that her younger sister ''has never been taught to think on serious subjects; and (. . .) she has been given up to nothing but amusement and vanity'' (*Pride and Prejudice* 235). Thomas Gisborne points out that it is the responsibility of the parents to ensure that their daughter leans what is ''proper or improper in the conduct of the persons of her own age'' (Gisborne 97) and as ''Elizabeth

recognizes the folly and damaging repercussions of Lydia's social conditioning and lack of sober education'' (Ray 33), a logical conclusion seems to be that Mr and Mrs Bennet are to blame for their daughter's misbehaviour. Elizabeth explains the education the Bennet girls received to Lady Catherine by stating that ''such of us as wished to learn never wanted the means. We were always encouraged to read, and had all the masters that were necessary. Those who chose to be idle, certainly might'' (*Pride and Prejudice* 140). Mr and Mrs Bennet never put a conscious effort into the education of their daughters, and Lydia is certainly the type of girl to be 'idle' in her education and rather fill her hours with more amusing things. In *An Inquiry Into the Duties of the Female Sex* Gisborne warns parents to avoid this, ''not only because time spent amiss can never be recalled, but particularly because, by the nature of the engagements in which the hours of leisure and relaxation are employed, the manners, the dispositions, and the whole character, are materially affected'' (114). Thus, Lydia is the victim of two negligent parents when it came to the education of their daughters. When Lydia came out into the public she was ''thrown into life with her original wishes and opinions (. . .) uncorrected'' (Gisborne 85) and this explains why she behaves the way she does in the novel, which very clearly ''shows the folly of letting young girls have their own way'' (Southam 46).

Because of her lack in education, Lydia is never taught the importance of good manners and reputation, and instead focusses on what is visible on the outside. In *The Female Instructor*, the reader is warned that when choosing a husband, they should make the choice with ''the utmost circumspection'' (188) and that they should not ''give way to a sudden sally of passion, and then dignify it with the name of love. Genuine love is not founded in caprice; it is founded in nature, on honourable views, on virtue, on similarity of tastes, and sympathy of souls'' (188). However, Lydia does not heed these warnings and follows her heart, reacts to her passions and acts solely on her feelings, and thus leaves Brighton with Wickham. During their elopement, Lydia and Wickham ''become the stuff of local gossip'' (Mullan 165). And though their marriage might be a relief for the Bennets, ''[l]ocal *schadenfreude* (. . .) would have been best satisfied by Lydia becoming a prostitute'' (Mullan 165), or, ''as the happiest alternative, been secluded from the world, in some distant farmhouse'' (*Pride and Prejudice* 257). But luckily, ''the spiteful old ladies in Meryton, lost but a little of their spirit in this change of circumstances, because with such an husband, [Lydia's] misery was considered certain'' (*Pride and Prejudice* 257). However, Lydia is ''exceedingly fond'' (*Pride and Prejudice* 265) of her husband, and seemingly ignorant of all the outrage her actions sparked as she returns home with an ''easy assurance'' (*Pride and Prejudice* 262). Seemingly unaware of the controversy around her marriage she shamelessly tells Jane ''I take your place now, and you must go lower, because I am a married woman'' (*Pride and Prejudice* 263), as a ''new wife was given precedence (. . .) at social functions, including over those who would normally have precedence over her'' (Amy 172). Elizabeth Veisz attempts to explain this behaviour by the

vacancy of mind both Kitty and Lydia possess, as this ''vacuity (. . .) provides a liberating obliviousness to the pressures brought about by the (. . .) family's precarious position in the marriage market. Kitty and Lydia seem to have little inkling of the potential stakes involved in even the smallest units of social interaction'' (238). Lydia is seemingly not aware of the consequences she and her sisters face with the entailment of Longbourn, and thus cares little whether a potential husband is rich enough to ensure financial stability. For her, the focus of life is not on finding a wealthy husband, but on entertaining and flattering herself by flirting with as many men as possible, and enjoying their attentions. As Lydia is the more assertive younger sister, her behaviour affects Kitty, prompting her to take on Lydia's reasoning and enjoyments. And as they both see the world around them in this oblivious manner, it is no great surprise that these sisters have grown close, and thus that Kitty was the only family-member prepared for the shocking move Lydia would make.

The secrecy of the courtship of Lydia and Wickham goes against the manner described in the courtesy books, as it has been mentioned several times in chapter one and two of this thesis that courtships should happen in public, or at the very least under the watchful eye of a chaperone. Mrs Gardiner asks Elizabeth whether any kind of fondness between Lydia and Wickham was known before they left for Brighton, and Elizabeth answers that she ''can remember no symptom of affection on either side'' (*Pride and Prejudice* 236). But it turns out that in Brighton, Colonel Forster had ''often suspected some partiality, especially on Lydia's side, but nothing to give him any alarm'' (*Pride and Prejudice* 240). Proof for this partiality and fondness is found in the letter Lydia left behind in Brighton, where she describes Wickham as the ''one man in the world I love, and he is an angel'' (*Pride and Prejudice* 241-242), continuing that she ''should never be happy without him, so think it no harm to be off'' (*Pride and Prejudice* 242). What Veisz referred to as Lydia's 'vacancy of mind' also shows in this letter, as she describes the whole happening as ''a good joke'' (242). Her obliviousness is also apparent when she tells Darcy that ''[s]he was sure they should be married some time or other, and it did not much signify when'' (268), and she seems blissfully unaware of the impropriety of her situation.

Lydia's situation was not wholly unprecedented, as it was well known that in Scotland ''marriage laws were not as strict as in England'' (Amy 23), and many young couple who did not receive parental consent for their marriage would attempt to flee to towns like Gretna Green in Scotland to get married. Eloping and marrying without parental consent was very much discouraged and frowned upon, but young couples were often married after their behaviour had been indecent, such as the behaviour of Lydia and Wickham. There is no certainty as to whether Lydia and Wickham slept together while in London, and as there is no mention of a baby in the novel she is evidently not pregnant, but that does not take away from the scandal of the situation. Austen was very much aware of the possibility of young couples being forced to marry after

indecent behaviour, as in a letter to her sister Cassandra, ''she seems to be referring to the known fact that her distant cousin Fanny Austen is getting married after a sexual indiscretion with her husband-to-be'' (Mullan 173). In this letter, Austen writes that ''Fanny Austen's Match is quite news, & I am sorry she has behaved so ill. There is some comfort to us in her misconduct, that we have not a congratulatory Letter to write'' (Le Faye 143). Fanny Austen's marriage to Captain Holcroft in 1808 is referred to as a possible ''shotgun wedding'' (Le Faye 402) in the notes of *Jane Austen's Letters*, which means that the wedding was ''forced or required because of pregnancy'' (*Mirriam Webster*). There might be no way of knowing what Lydia and Wickham had actually done and what was assumed, but as they became the 'stuff of local gossip' as Mullan put it, the rumours were out there and not be stopped. An unmarried couple living together is extremely scandalous, and in such situation a marriage would function as a sort of damage control.

So luckily for Lydia and all her sisters, Darcy convinces Wickham to marry Lydia, for a large sum of money, and the relief that is felt in the family is great. Elizabeth reflects on the situation and states that ''[p]oor Lydia's situation must, at best, be bad enough; but that it was no worse, she had need to be thankful. She felt it so; (. . .) in looking back to what they had feared, only two hours ago, she felt all the advantages of what they had gained'' (*Pride and Prejudice* 255). Before the wedding itself takes place, Lydia is moved to Mr and Mrs Gardiners house in London, a stay which she describes as ''horridly unpleasant'' (*Pride and Prejudice* 265) because her aunt attempts to explain Lydia's follies to herself.

Austen shows the disapproval for Lydia's behaviour through characters such as Jane, Elizabeth, and Mrs Gardiner, but ''[h]er punishment of being sent to live in Newcastle is mild by the standard of other novels'' (Mullan 165). However, within *Pride and Prejudice*, Lydia's ending is perhaps the saddest one. Even Charlotte and Mr Collins are moderately content with each other, and have a financial security which Lydia and Wickham never gain. The final chapter of the novel states that ''such an income as theirs, under the direction of two persons so extravagant in their wants, and heedless of the future, must be very insufficient to their support'' (324), and Jane and Elizabeth are often ''applied to for some little assistance towards discharging their bills'' (*Pride and Prejudice* 324). Besides the Wickhams' financially feeble situation, their marriage is also partly loveless: ''His affection for her soon sunk into indifference'' (*Pride and Prejudice* 324). Lydia is once again too ignorant to notice this, and repeatedly invites Kitty to ''come and stay with her, with the promise of balls and young men'' (323), indicating that even after some time, ''Lydia was Lydia still'' (*Pride and Prejudice* 262). Mrs Gardiner's reproaches, her sisters' responses to her marriage and behaviour, and her punishment of moving away from everybody did not leave any impression on Lydia. Her husband's depts, character and behaviour were of no consequence to her attachment, and she, ''who never hear or saw anything of which she chose to be insensible'' (*Pride and Prejudice* 262), gets to live her life exactly as she wanted. But, to any young woman who

was not as ignorant as Lydia, Austen sends a clear message: Marry not just for love, but also consider your lover's situation and his wants, needs and income. Austen stands by the point she made to her nice Fanny: ''I must (. . .) entreat you (. . .) not to think of accepting him unless you really do like him'' (Le Faye 292). But in the same letter, she lists the lover's ''situation in life, family, friends & above all his Character'' (Le Faye 292) as important factors in the decision her niece has to make. Thus, young women should consider their own feelings towards a young man, but they should also use their minds to rationalize their feelings and choose wisely.

Elizabeth Bennet is one of the women in *Pride and Prejudice* who is perfectly able to use reason to come to her ow conclusions. Her and Darcy's courtship certainly does not follow the rules set by the courtesy books, but it ends up as the happiest. Over the course of the novel Elizabeth Bennet and Mr Darcy grow closer to each other with nobody noticing, moreover, Elizabeth and Darcy are never even formally introduced to each other. The first time there is a possibility for an introduction is at the Meryton assembly just days after Bingley and his company have arrived at Netherfield Hall. Darcy does not dance with any of the women other than the Bingley sisters, although Bingley tries to encourage him to dance more, even offering to ask Jane to introduce Darcy to Elizabeth. Darcy refuses by stating that Elizabeth ''is tolerable; but not handsome enough to tempt *me*'' (*Pride and Prejudice* 13). A fortnight at an assembly at the Lucas Lodge, Sir Lucas is talking with Darcy and attempts to introduce them: ''Mr Darcy, you must allow me to present this young lady to you as a very desirable partner'' (*Pride and Prejudice* 24). Elizabeth refuses this, however, claiming that she has no intention of dancing, which leads to Darcy himself ''[requesting] to be allowed the honour of her hand; but in vain. Elizabeth was determined'' (*Pride and Prejudice* 24). Helena Kelly explains Elizabeth's reaction by stating that ''[i]t isn't simply that Elizabeth doesn't want to dance with Darcy; she doesn't want to be formally acquainted with him'' (158), attempting to keep a distance.

Formally acquainted or not, Elizabeth and Darcy often meet throughout the novel, and although it is stated that he ''began to wish to know more of her'' (*Pride and Prejudice* 21), Elizabeth has quickly formed her opinion about Darcy and dislikes him greatly. She notices that he looks at her often, but ''[s]he liked him too little to care for his approbation'' (*Pride and Prejudice* 45) and her opinion of him is not helped by Wickham's story. In his turn, ''Darcy had never been so bewitched by any woman as he was by [Elizabeth]. He really believed, that were it not for the inferiority of her connections, he should be in some danger'' (*Pride and Prejudice* 47). Thus, as with Jane, Elizabeth herself is not the problem, but her ''social status, an objective fact related to the dignity of his own family, and (. . .) the vulgarity of some of Elizabeth's connections'' (Butler 205) are. Nevertheless, Darcy asks her to dance with him at the ball at Netherfield, and they have their first relatively private conversation, which leaves Darcy with ''a tolerable powerful feeling towards her'' (82). However, at the same dance he is reminded of the inferiority of Elizabeth's

family by the behaviour of Mrs Bennet and the younger Bennet sisters, and ‘‘[t]o Elizabeth it appeared, that had her family made an agreement to expose themselves as much as they could during the evening, it would have been impossible for them to play their parts with more spirit, or finer success’’ (88). Elizabeth is smart enough to notice all of this, and is ‘‘forced to admit to herself that their conduct would make some suitors reluctant to be connected to such a foolish family’’ (Kasius 77). Mr Bingley, his sisters, and Mr Darcy leave Netherfield park soon after, and it is later explained that this was, amongst other things, caused by this behaviour of the Bennets and a wish to detach Bingley from Jane. Elizabeth and Darcy meet again soon, however, as they are both in Kent at the same time. During their respective visits to Lady Catherine and Mr and Mrs Collins, ‘‘Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy meet several times (. . .), and the two resume their verbal sparring’’ (Kasius 73).

Darcy and his cousin Colonel Fitzwilliam regularly visit the parsonage together, although on one morning Elizabeth is surprised by Darcy entering the room by himself. Soon they find themselves discussing the distance between Kent and Hertfordshire, with him referring to it as an easy distance and Elizabeth disagreeing. Darcy states that this ‘‘is a proof of your own attachment to Hertfordshire. Anything beyond the very neighbourhood of Longbourn, I suppose, would appear far’’ (*Pride and Prejudice* 153). Elizabeth links this remark to Jane, Bingley, and Netherfield, and quickly answers that ‘‘[she does] not mean to say that a woman may not be settled too near her family. The far and the near must be relative, and depend on many varying circumstances. Where there is fortune to make the expenses of travelling unimportant, distance becomes no evil’’ (153). In what seems a moment of overwhelming passion, ‘‘Darcy drew his chair a little towards her, and said, ‘*You* cannot have a right to such very strong local attachment. *You* cannot have been always at Longbourn’’ (*Pride and Prejudice* 153), but he quickly turns colder again, drawing back his chair and picking up a newspaper. Charlotte and Maria return from the village, and soon after Darcy leaves again, after which Charlotte states that ‘‘he must be in love with [Elizabeth], or he would never have called us in this familiar way’’ (*Pride and Prejudice* 153). Charlotte draws this conclusion from her knowledge of social conventions. As Ian Littlewood points out, there are several ‘‘social manoeuvres by which people signal their preferences’’ (ix), and by visiting Elizabeth Darcy sends out a signal of interest. However, his behaviour during his visit cancels this out, and after hearing how the visit went, ‘‘it did not seem very likely, even to Charlotte's wishes, to be the case; and after various conjectures, they could at last only suppose his visit to proceed from the difficulty of finding anything to do’’ (*Pride and Prejudice* 153).

Darcy and Fitzwilliam still frequent the parsonage, but Elizabeth also meets Darcy during ‘‘her ramble within the park’’ (*Pride and Prejudice* 156). They are by themselves during these moments, breaking the rule mentioned by Helen Amy that a young couple was never to be left alone. However, Elizabeth and Darcy are not seen as a young couple, but as two people who have

a great dislike for each other. This makes a very big difference, because it is highly unlikely that these two would ever do anything that would ruin their reputations. However, Elizabeth realizes that during these meetings, Darcy ''was asking some odd unconnected questions—about her pleasure in being at Hunsford, her love of solitary walks, and her opinion of Mr. and Mrs. Collins's happiness; and that in speaking of Rosings and her not perfectly understanding the house, he seemed to expect that whenever she came into Kent again she would be staying *there* too'' (156). Elizabeth thinks he is implying that she and Colonel Fitzwilliam might visit Rosings together the next time, still not aware of Darcy's own interest in her. A little later, Colonel Fitzwilliam tells Elizabeth of Darcy's interference in a blossoming romance of his best friend as ''there were some very strong objections against the lady'' (*Pride and Prejudice* 159), and she immediately links this to Mr Bingley and Jane. Feeling unable to face Darcy after hearing this, she claims to be feeling too unwell to visit Rosings, and stays behind while the rest leaves.

However, ''to her utter amazement'' (*Pride and Prejudice* 161), Elizabeth receives a visit from Darcy who is once again by himself. Elizabeth's amazement is not unfounded. Darcy knew she was by herself at the parsonage, as she was the only one excused from the visit to Rosings. Thus, Darcy purposefully seeks her out while she is alone, purposefully creating a possibility for that ''first moment of explicitness in a relationship'' (Mullan 287). By having Darcy visit Elizabeth while she is alone, Austen provided the readers of her time, familiar with the rules concerning the publicity of a courtship, with a clue that he will propose, and he does:

> [T]he avowal of all that [Darcy] felt, and had long felt for her, immediately followed. He spoke well; but there were feelings besides those of the heart to be detailed; and he was not more eloquent on the subject of tenderness than of pride. His sense of her inferiority – of its being a degradation – of the family obstacles which had always opposed to inclination, were dwelt on with a warmth which seemed due to the consequence he was wounding, but was very unlikely to recommend his suit. (. . .) He concluded with representing to her the strength of that attachment which, in spite of all his endeavours, he had found impossible to conquer; and with expressing his hope that it would now be rewarded by her acceptance of his hand.
> (*Pride and Prejudice* 163)

Astonished as she is, and ''[i]n spite of her deeply-rooted dislike, [Elizabeth] could not be insensible to the compliment of such a man's affection'' (*Pride and Prejudice* 163). However, for the second time in the novel, she rejects a proposal, utilizing what John Gregory refers to as ''the undoubted privilege of her sex'' (*The Lady's Pocket Library* 111) twice. In refusing Darcy, Elizabeth refuses ''the most lucrative offer of marriage she is ever likely to receive'' (Ray 38), showing that

she will not ‘‘marry for pecuniary reasons or out of familial obligation’’ (Ray 38). During his proposal, Elizabeth notices that Darcy seems to have ‘‘no doubt of a favourable answer’’ (*Pride and Prejudice* 163), and this is not strange. In fact, Mr Collins made the same mistake when he decided to propose to Elizabeth, as they both ask for the hand of ‘‘a young woman with no fortune and no outstanding beauty’’ (Littlewood VIII-IX) and thus essentially are offering her the very security she should wish for. However, ‘‘Elizabeth refuses to enter matrimony out of compulsion or need’’ (Ray 39) and thus rebuffs both men.

The manner in which she refuses Darcy is in line with his proposal; his speech was ungentlemanly, and she responds quite harshly and with ‘‘very little ceremony’’ (Southam 45). Most notable is the manner in which she begins her refusal: ‘‘In such cases as this, it is, I believe, the established mode to express a sense of obligation for the sentiments avowed, however unequally they may be returned’’ (*Pride and Prejudice* 163). In chapter one of this thesis the refusal of a proposal has been discussed, and the consensus was to treat the lover honourably and humanely, and with civility and sensitivity (Amy 13, *The Lady’s Pocket Library* 110). Because she opens her refusal with these words, it is evident that Elizabeth, and thus Austen, was perfectly aware of these rules. Although admitting to feeling flattered to herself mere moments ago, Elizabeth tells Darcy that ‘‘[i]t is natural that obligation should be felt, and if I could *feel* gratitude, I would now thank you. But I cannot – I have never desired your good opinion, and you have certainly bestowed it most unwillingly’’ (*Pride and Prejudice* 163). Elizabeth tells Darcy that she knows what part he has played in separating Bingley and Jane, and also mentions Wickham and what he told her concerning his history with Darcy, before telling Darcy that he ‘‘could not have made the offer of [his] hand in any possible way that would have tempted [her] to accept it’’ (*Pride and Prejudice* 166). He quits the house soon after, leaving a distressed Elizabeth. But however distressing and shocking the situation might be for both Elizabeth and Darcy, eventually ‘‘[t]he confrontation between these two central characters naturally brings about mutual illumination, (. . .) because each discovers the other to be worthy of respect’’ (Butler 208). Melissa A. Ray explains that the fact that Elizabeth refuses to marry from a need or because of monetary reasons ‘‘places her on level with Darcy and helps her obtain equality’’ (39).

This obtained equality introduces what Brian Charles Southam refers to as ‘‘the Platonic model’’ (171): The ‘‘idea that the giving and receiving of knowledge, the active formation of another’s character, or the more passive growth under another’s guidance, is the truest and strongest foundation of love’’ (Southam 246). This involves ‘‘a shedding of the limited perspective, defined by gender among other features, for the broader view, the higher reality, that embraces the perspective of the other’’ (Clery 171), and Elizabeth and Darcy both experience this change. Elizabeth’s declaration that she would not even have accepted him if he had ‘‘behaved in a more gentleman-like manner’’ (*Pride and Prejudice* 166) leads to Darcy being, in his own words,

''properly humbled'' (*Pride and Prejudice* 308). He later tells Elizabeth that the lesson she taught him was ''hard indeed at first, but most advantageous'' (308) and that ''though [her] accusations were ill-founded, formed on mistaken premises, [his] behaviour to [her] at the time had merited the severest reproof'' (*Pride and Prejudice* 307). The effect of her words can easily be seen during their next meeting at Pemberley. Elizabeth is ''[a]mazed at the alteration of his manner since they last parted. (. . .) Never in her life had she seen his manners so little dignified, never had he spoken with such gentleness as on this unexpected meeting'' (211). Underestimating herself, she thinks to herself that ''it cannot be for *my* sake that his manners are thus softened. My reproofs at Hunsford could not work such a change as this. It is impossible that he should still love me'' (213).

The accusations that Elizabeth lays at his feet during her reproof concerning Jane, Bingley, and Wickham prompt Darcy to write her a letter, explaining his actions in the separation of his friend and her sister, and revealing the truth about Wickham and their shared past. Amy has explained that after an accepted proposal a couple could write each other letters, but before an official engagement was announced, writing letter was not according to the set rules. Letters are of course an example of private conversations, and that is exactly what young couples were not allowed to have. Darcy still writes one, and hands it over to Elizabeth personally, so nobody knows of the existence of this letter, or the contents. With regards to Jane and Bingley Darcy explains in his letter that he believed Jane to be indifferent when it came to his friend, and that her mother's connection and the behaviour of Mrs Bennet and the younger Miss Bennets made the match very undesirable in his eyes. This hurts Elizabeth, but, well aware of their behaviour and manners, ''[t]he justice of the charge struck her too forcibly for denial'' (*Pride and Prejudice* 177). Darcy also relates his entire history with Wickham, including the elopement with his sister, trusting upon Elizabeth's secrecy (172). Elizabeth is forced to admit ''that proud and repulsive as were [Darcy's] manners, she had never, in the whole course of their acquaintance – an acquaintance which had latterly brought them much together, and given her a sort of intimacy with his ways – seen anything that betrayed him to be unprincipled or unjust'' (*Pride and Prejudice* 177). During her visit to Pemberley with her aunt and uncle, the housekeeper's very favourable ''tributes to a kind master, [and] a beloved landlord'' (Johnson 74) leave Elizabeth somewhat confused, as this praise does not correspond to her opinion of him. After listening to all of it, ''she thought of his regard with a deeper sentiment of gratitude than it had ever raised before; she remembered its warmth, and softened its impropriety of expression'' (*Pride and Prejudice* 210). Elizabeth had previously only judged Darcy's character from her own prejudices and experiences, and hearing such a different take makes her rethink and discard her own ideas. The new image she forms of Darcy places him in a much better light, and makes him seems like a much better man, of whose affection a young woman should be grateful.

In chapter one of this thesis, a quote from Gregory's *The Lady's Pocket Library* describes how a courtship might begin, explaining to his young readers that ''[w]hen you perceive [his attachment to you], it excites your gratitude: this gratitude rises into a preference: and this preference, perhaps, at last advanced into some degree of attachment'' (108-109). In *Pride and Prejudice*, Elizabeth attempts to place her feelings for Darcy, and follows this reasoning closely. She starts by stating that her ''hatred had vanished long ago'' and now there is a respect, ''created by the conviction of his valuable qualities'' (*Pride and Prejudice* 222). Now, after seeing his improved behaviour, this respect was ''heightened into somewhat of a friendlier nature'' (*Pride and Prejudice* 222). Elizabeth feels gratitude towards Darcy ''not merely for having once loved her, but for loving her still well enough to forgive all the petulance and acrimony of her manner in rejecting him, and all the unjust accusations accompanying her rejection'' (*Pride and Prejudice* 222). In the end, her conclusion is that ''she respected, she esteemed, she was grateful to him, she felt a real interest in his welfare'' (*Pride and Prejudice* 222). However, she is unsure about her 'degree of attachment' towards Darcy, but this is quickly answered when she receives the news about Lydia and Wickham. After telling Darcy what has occurred, she feels that ''[h]er power was sinking; everything *must* sink under such a proof of family weakness, such an assurance of the deepest disgrace'' (231) and simultaneously she realizes that ''she [had never] so honestly felt that she could have loved him, as now, when all love must be vain'' (*Pride and Prejudice* 231).

After Lydia and Wickham's marriage, Elizabeth realizes that ''it was not to be supposed that Mr. Darcy would connect himself with a family where, to every other objection, would now be added an alliance and relationship of the nearest kind with a man whom he so justly scorned'' (*Pride and Prejudice* 259), and she has lost all hope. Thinking it over again, Elizabeth is now sure of her own feelings regarding Darcy:

> 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 judgement, information, and knowledge of the world, she must have received benefit of greater importance.
> (*Pride and Prejudice* 259-260)

Already lamenting her lost chance with the man she has now come to realize she loves, she is surprised when she discovers the role has played in Lydia and Wickham's marriage. She first hears of it from Lydia, and quickly writes to Mrs Gardiner to ask for a fuller explanation, and discovers that Darcy was the one who tracked down her sister and Wickham and convinced them to marry.

Mrs Gardiner writes that he claimed to feel responsible for the whole affair, as he never revealed Wickham's true character, but she suspects there might also be another reason. She hints at a possible connection between Elizabeth and Darcy, founded on her observations in Pemberley and London, and claims that ''he wants nothing but a little more liveliness, and *that*, if he marry *prudently*, his wife may teach him'' (270). This was exactly what Elizabeth herself also said only a short while before: 'by her ease and liveliness, his mind might have been softened, his manners improved'. After reading the letter she feels ''proud of [Darcy]. Proud that in a cause of compassion and honour, he had been able to get the better of himself'' (271).

The shift in Elizabeth feelings, and the reasons behind it, are all only known to the reader and Elizabeth herself. Most of the conversations between Darcy and Elizabeth took place between just the two of them. They spent time by themselves in Pembroke, both in the parsonage and while walking in the park, and the letter was handed and read in secrecy. Besides Mr and Mrs Gardiner, no other character in *Pride and Prejudice* knows about Darcy's feelings for Elizabeth, and even they are unaware of the many têtê-à- têtês their niece and Darcy have had. As mentioned before, the general assumption that Elizabeth and Darcy still have great dislike for each other ensured that their relationship could evolve in such secrecy. Because there was no reason to think anything inappropriate would happen, they were allowed to have their time alone. Helen Kelly accurately describes their relationship as one ''that takes place, almost entirely, outside social norms; one in which all kinds of set ideas and traditional concepts – prejudices – are uprooted'' (158). However, after the news of Jane and Bingley's engagement spreads, Elizabeth receives a surprise visit from Lady Catherine who states that she has heard a ''report of a most alarming nature'' (*Pride and Prejudice* 294).

Engagements in the eighteenth century ''[involved] family honour in the gentry class'' (Honan 253) and this is why Lady Catherine feels justified and called upon to investigate this rumour and, if need be, break the engagement. She informs Elizabeth that it has been planned since Darcy's birth that he should marry his cousin Anne de Bourgh, and that she is now worried that this should be ''prevented by a young woman of inferior birth, of no importance in the world, and wholly unallied to the family!'' (*Pride and Prejudice* 296). She goes on to claim that ''honour, decorum, prudence, nay, interest, forbid it'' (298), which links back to Margaret Sullivan's statement that ''one great fortune tends to look out for another great fortune'' (28). Lady Catherine obviously agrees with John Essex's earlier mentioned claim that ''there must be a suitable Agreement and Harmony in Age, Humour, Education and Religion'' but most importantly ''in Families and Fortunes'' (97), as she repeatedly mentions ''[t]he obvious social contrast between the two extended families and their connections'' (Butler 203). Elizabeth disagrees with Lady Catherine and states that she and Darcy are equal, as she is a gentleman's daughter, but Lady

Catherine brings up her mother's side of the family, and states that ''a connection with [Elizabeth] must disgrace [Darcy] in the eyes of everybody'' (*Pride and Prejudice* 299).

Darcy himself returns to Longbourn while accompanying Bingley, and soon he and Elizabeth are left alone while on a walk, and Darcy renews his proposal, encouraged by Elizabeth's responses to his aunt. Elizabeth accepts him this time, and in their following conversations, Darcy and Elizabeth both ''attribute their personal growth to one another'' (Ray 40). Elizabeth explains that after reading Darcy's letter ''all her former prejudices had been removed'' (*Pride and Prejudice* 308) and Darcy states that the change in his behaviour was because of Elizabeth and that it was meant to show ''that [he] was not so mean as to resent the past; and [he] hoped to obtain [Elizabeth's] forgiveness, to lessen [her] ill opinion, by letting [her] see that [her] reproofs had been attended to'' (*Pride and Prejudice* 310).

Mr Bennet is very surprised when Darcy and Elizabeth's engagement is brought to his attention and he asks his daughter ''are you out of your senses, to be accepting this man? Have you not always hated him?'' (314). Elizabeth manages to convince her father that she really loves Darcy ''by explaining the gradual change which her estimation of him had undergone, relating her absolute certainty that his affection was not the work of a day, but had stood the test of many months suspense, and enumerating with energy all his good qualities'' (*Pride and Prejudice* 315) and eventually even relates what Darcy has done for Lydia and Wickham. The secrecy of the development of their relationship provided the opportunity for Darcy and Elizabeth to slowly built trust, equality, and mutual affection between them. These are all important to Elizabeth, as she has already twice refused a marriage proposal that could not offer her these qualities. Elizabeth and Darcy's relationship now revolves around ''mutual respect'' (Hardin 42) based upon ''what each has done for the other's education'' (Hardin 42). Elizabeth refused to be pushed into a marriage for financial reasons, and defied many social conventions and rules to finally marry on her own conditions. And it is not just in her relationship with Darcy that Elizabeth challenges ideas and concepts, but also Georgiana Darcy ''received knowledge which had never before fallen in her way. By Elizabeth's instructions, she began to comprehend that a woman may take liberties with her husband which a brother will not always allow'' (324).

Both Lydia and Elizabeth have unusual courtships, with Lydia's even being tainted with a sexual aspect that most eighteenth century courtships did not have. It becomes a matter of great distress for her family because of their worry for their reputation, and Lydia ending up being married to Wickham is the most positive outcome for them, as it in a way covers up what previously happened. Austen seemingly provides Lydia with what she wanted and Lydia shows no remorse for her actions, but in the end the reader is told that the Wickhams are ''always spending more than they ought'' and that affection has sunken into indifference (*Pride and Prejudice* 324). Lydia often has to ask Jane and Elizabeth for money, which they can supply because

of their advantageous marriages. The Bennet sisters entered into their respective relationships because they loved their men, but while Lydia went because of passion, and Jane for pure love and bliss, Elizabeth needed love, equality, and mutual respect before she was able to accept Darcy. In reality, however, it was simply not possible for young women to ignore their financial situations and they had to be smart about who they married. But with her fiction, Austen indicated why women should receive a better education, not solely focussed on getting a husband. With Lydia, Austen has provided an example of a girl who lacked a real education and thus was unable to rationalize her own feelings, but also a girl who lacked even the education most young women did have in the eighteenth century. If Lydia is an example that women needed an education, Charlotte is an example that even though the current education taught women *something*, it was not enough. With Elizabeth, Austen provides her readers with an example of what a young woman's mind could achieve when she did receive an actual education. Austen criticises her world, in which ''women, however marked their abilities, are not thought of (. . .) as equals'' (Kirkham 84). Elizabeth demands equality and enforces it by humbling Darcy and teaching him to be a better person, and by allowing him to teach her not judge as quickly and to not hold on to her prejudices. Austen has shown that she is aware of all the rules, and she has written several characters and courtship according to those rules and standards, but by granting her heroine such an unusual courtship and marriage, takes a firm stand and critiques the current educational and marriage system.

Conclusion

This thesis has discussed the rules and regulation concerning courtship in the eighteenth century, and compared these to the courtships of Charlotte Lucas and Mr Collins, Jane Bennet and Mr Bingley, Lydia Bennet and Mr Wickham, and Elizabeth Bennet and Mr Darcy. The main claim of this thesis was that because modern-day readers have forgotten about most of the strict rules concerning behaviour, social conduct, and courtships in the eighteenth century, Austen's radical characters do not seem as radical anymore. As mentioned in the first chapter of this thesis, Austen plays off ''realistic scenes against their stock counterparts in idealized etiquette'' (Georgia 56) and in doing so she critiques the current situation in female education and marriage.

In *Pride and Prejudice*, Austen shows that she is aware of the situation young women were in during the eighteenth century, writing ''a gentle but thorough critique of the eighteenth-century marriage system'' (Thomason 155). The novel is built around the entailment of Longbourn, and all the Bennet sisters would be in trouble if they, or at least some of them, did not marry well. This threat is at the heart of the novel. Throughout the story, Austen displays four different ways to escape such a fate: Luck and love, sacrifice and willingness, ignorance and passion, and wit and respect. Jane and Lydia have the easiest courtships, both of them based on feelings and ending with a marriage to the man they wanted all along. Jane is a very special case, as she gets extremely lucky, and it is mainly through others that she eventually marries Bingley. Lydia is too ignorant to be ashamed of her own behaviour, or to realize that the eventual financial and romantic situation of herself and Wickham did not work out. Charlotte is moderately content with the results of her subtle work, and even though she did not marry out of love, she got what she wanted; financial and emotional security. Elizabeth crossed all borders in her behaviour towards Darcy, rejected two lucrative proposals, and refused to marry solely because of financial needs but instead demanded respect and equality. And she got exactly what she wanted, and even more. Elizabeth marries the wealthiest man in her acquaintance, therefore providing security for Mary and Kitty as well, but this is not the reason why she marries him. Initially, she did not think it would be *Darcy* who would be able to respect her and make her respect him, but because of their growth, both individual and in their relationship, he does. With Elizabeth, Austen has written a heroine who shows that wit and intelligence should be the main focus of female education, as this would lead to marriages based on mutual respect, therefore creating the happiest lives for all involved.

Austen has described Elizabeth as ''as delightful a creature as ever appeared in print, & how I shall be able to tolerate those who do not like her at least, I do not know'' (Le Faye 210). By claiming that Elizabeth is her favourite fictional character, and at the same time describing her as a strong female who is equal to her husband, Austen strengthens the notion that she believed in a better education for the females of her time. But although ''Elizabeth Bennet could triumph and

prosper in the pages of a novel, (. . .) the circumstances for real women remained much more complicated'' (Thomason 156) and it took an ''ongoing debate about the proper role of women'' (Littlewood XIII) to change the situation of women in the real world. And, albeit through her character, stories and novels, and not as loud as Mary Wollstonecraft or in her personal, private life, Austen had a voice in this debate. But 200 years later, we have forgotten about the rules, regulations and constrictiveness women had to endure in the eighteenth century, and because we forgot, we have neglected to recognize Jane Austen as the radical author she was: A female author, discussing the female situation of her time and critiquing it.

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