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## Pride, My Dear

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# Pride and Prejudice: The Student Blog

Thursday, March 7, 2013

## Pride, My Dear

The quote above describes 'pride' from the perspective of a mother to her child, written in the publication [Polite Lady; Or a Course of Female Education in a Series of Letters, from a Mother to her Daughter](#). This book, published in 1798, was written "to the governesses of Ladies' Boarding Schools in Great Britain and Ireland" (Carey 5), contains a series of letters addressed to Sophy and signed "your affectionate mother, Portia" (Carey 237). The letters contained in the book detail how to behave properly in terms of everything from reading, writing, dancing, drawing, music, etcetera on and on. The book even goes into evaluating virtues like temperance, chastity, and evaluates vices like pride. Chapter fourteen of volume 3 of Jane Austen's novel, *Pride and Prejudice*, depicts a scene in which the character Lady Catherine de Bourgh exhibits a great deal of pride and contempt for the lowliness of the Bennet family. This primary source from the time period in which the novel was written shows how Lady Catherine de Bourgh's behavior is rude and inappropriate, despite her higher position of class.

Pride, my dear, can never produce any other effect, than to render the person infected with it ridiculous and contemptible.

In letter number thirty seven of the book, Portia details to her daughter the downfalls and the disadvantages of pride. She also insists that pride can only do harm to yourself and others. She writes that "pride, my dear, consists in having a high opinion of ourselves, in over-rating our own abilities, and in looking down upon the rest of the world with contempt and disdain" (Carey 224-225). Lady Catherine most certainly exhibits these traits during her visit to the Bennet's house. She waltzes into their home, does not request an introduction, which one of superior rank should have done in the situation, she goes on to criticize the size of their 'park' as well as the position of their windows saying "this must be a most inconvenient sitting room for the evening, in summer; the windows are full west" (Austen 392-393). Once outside in the garden with Elizabeth, Lady Catherine continues to criticize the Bennet family, saying that they are no match for her family. Upon reading this chapter of the novel, one could come to assume that Lady Catherine's rudeness is simply a result of her holding a much higher social standing and financial standing than that being held by the Bennet family. However, in the novel, *The Polite Lady*, a book written with the intent of instructing young ladies in behavior and virtue, pride is described as being a fault regardless of one's social and economic standing. Portia writes "because you may happen to be high born and well proportioned, are they [those of lesser standing than oneself], on that account, to be insulted with your lofty and supercilious airs? No, my dear, they are not" (Carey 231). She goes on to write that people will not endure that type of behavior, and that there is no reason or merit in treating those beneath you as beneath you, even if they are your servants. She writes that "pride, my dear, can never produce any other effect, than to render the person infected with it ridiculous and contemptible" (Carey 231). After reading *The Polite Lady* one can see that this type of prideful and rude behavior was not acceptable, even when dealing with people of a lower social and economic standing. It illuminates the fact that Lady Catherine de Bourgh was acting very rudely during her visit to the Bennets', and that her behavior was not, or at the very least, should not have been typical of higher class to lower class relations.

Posted by [Nathaniel Berry](#) at 9:34 AM

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### About

A blog site featuring original research by undergraduate students at Wright State University enrolled in Crystal B. Lal's course on *Pride and Prejudice* (Spring 2011).

We hope you enjoy reading about the novel and historical contexts surrounding it. And be sure to participate in Celia's Bicentennial events on October 2013. Click [here](#) for more information.

### Blog Archive

- ▼ 2013 (26)
  - ▶ April (6)
  - ▼ March (19)
    - Inactivity of the Inhabitants of Hertfordshire
    - "Nothing so Unmilitary": Examining How Uniforms Influence
    - The Physic or Exotic Garden
    - I Never in My Life Saw Anything More Elegant than ...
    - Why Will Thou Bind Thy Love Brow?
    - "But the clothes, the wedding clothes!": Fashionability
    - "Dancing is of More Importance to a Gentleman Than ..."
    - There Are But Few Things We Can Afford Us Great ...
    - I'll tune my pipe to playful notes ... And hail ...
    - Life is Really Too Short: Was Time with Regency ...
    - The Most Elegant Collateral Embellishment of Taste ...
    - The Importance of Practice
    - "From Every Window There Were Beauties to Be Seen" ...
    - Attract Notice by the Copiousness of His Talk ...
    - Thus Does Gaming Harden the Heart and Swallow up E...
    - "Harry Will be the Gentleman: The Nature of Men ..."
    - Pride, My Dear
    - These Works of Fancy
    - She Heard Him With A Visible Emotion
  - ▶ February (1)

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