




## 19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century, No 7 (2008)

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### *The Republic of Pemberley: Politeness and Citizenship in Digital Sociability*

Fiona Brideoake

#### **Abstract**

*Early theorists of online networks likened the ideals underpinning emerging cyber-communities to Jürgen Habermas's conception of the bourgeois public sphere. This association is evoked by the online Jane Austen community, The Republic of Pemberley, which elaborates its enthusiasm for Austen's oeuvre within the Habermasian rhetoric of eighteenth-century Bluestocking feminism. In its celebration of female sociability and textual production, The Republic of Pemberley recalls the female-centred social and intellectual circles that formed in eighteenth-century Britain around Bluestocking hostesses including Elizabeth Vesey, Frances Boscawen and Elizabeth Montagu. This essay explores the extent to which the theoretically democratic spaces of the Bluestocking salon were constituted by rigorous class and sexual standards, these strictures masking the extent to which Bluestocking sociability and scholarship transgressed the gendered and sexual norms of late-eighteenth-century Britain. Pemberley and the eighteenth-century public sphere are moreover linked by an analogous tension between their democratic ideals and their actual social instantiation, each employing rigorous social regulation to quell the embodied and affective energies constitutive of their alternative polities.*

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