



Men: Notes from an Ongoing Investigation

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From the notoriously contrarian author of *Against Love*, a witty and probing examination of why badly behaved men have been her lifelong fascination, on and off the page.

It's no secret that men often behave in intemperate ways, but in recent years we've witnessed so many spectacular public displays of male excess—disgraced politicians, erotically desperate professors, fallen sports icons—that we're left to wonder whether something has come unwired in the collective male psyche.

In the essays collected here, Laura Kipnis revisits the archetypes of wayward masculinity that have captured her imagination over the years, scrutinizing men who have figured in her own life alongside more controversial public examples. Slicing through the usual clichés about the differences between the sexes, Kipnis mixes intellectual rigor and wit to give us compelling survey of the affinities, jealousies, longings, and erotics that structure the male-female bond.

Men: Notes from an Ongoing Investigation Details

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From Reader Review Men: Notes from an Ongoing Investigation for online ebook

Izzy Book Queen says

Well that was no good. Both content and writing it was just

Karen says

Facetiously, I want to say: not enough misandry.

In a more serious vein: I was really disappointed by this. I liked Kipnis' "Against Love", so was looking forward to reading this collection of essays. Some of it was enjoyable enough: I actually quite liked her Larry Flynt essay, her essay about Andrea Dworkin, and her essay about men who hate Hillary Clinton. But other ones, such as 'The Critic' and 'Cheaters', were dulllllllll and full of bland pop-psychologising. The ones that weren't dull were infuriating: in 'The Manly Man' she presents a self-congratulatory transcript of a debate she held with an old misogynistic guy, meant no doubt to show how much she 'owned' him. But to me, it just reads like her rebutting conceptions about feminists in a really conventional and normalising way: e.g. "no it's not true that feminists are promiscuous!" instead of challenging the gendered social construction of 'promiscuity' itself. To be honest, this is a guy whose views are really quite abhorrent, and I was frustrated by how much equanimity and flippant humour she approached the encounter with. But she does admit in an earlier piece that she finds it hard to get worked up about much of anything at all - even misogyny, it seems. My frustration turned to disgust in her essay 'Gropers' where (in my interpretation at least) she normalises and justifies sexual harassment against women (see her sneering at Naomi Wolf's speaking out against the unwanted sexual advances made on her by a professor when she was younger). One choice quote: "I fully agree that men have too much power though....that power continues to be propped up by women's fantasies about masculine icons". So...women are in part to blame for patriarchy? I almost abandoned the book at this point, and only a dogged completionism made me carry on.

All in all, a really strange mix between boring and infuriating. I probably won't waste my time reading anything else she puts out in future.

Tepintzin says

Laura Kipnis is one of those university professors whose lives I envy, living in New York, going to cocktail parties with other intellectuals and engaging in witty banter. This book is largely about the kind of men you'd find at such parties: literary critics, political pundits, other academics. The exceptions are the first essay, about Larry Flynt, and the last, about Andrea Dworkin. So if you're looking for thoughts about your average man on the bus, or the local hipster bar, or anyone a non-academic with a subscription to the New York Times might know, you're out of luck. Still, an engaging read, if not completely relevant to me.

C says

The title of this collection almost belies the wide range of topics Kipnis covers across 14 essays. The cover is kitschy, but the essays are deft--especially "The Lothario," "Gropers," "The Manly Man," and "Men Who Hate Hillary." I appreciate Kipnis' fearlessness in skewering the men she covers while simultaneously poking fun at herself. In fact, some of the best moments in the collection are when she turns inward or identifies with less savory aspects of the men in question (she illustrated men "performing for a few crumbs of love" with a story from her childhood where she pretended to know how to read by "memorizing a Peter Rabbit book. . .including exactly when to turn the pages"). Her points about men's anxieties re: women controlling the workplace and the home ("Men Who Hate Hillary") and of the power dynamic between teachers and students ("Gropers") feel spot-on. Overall, a solid collection and looking forward to reading more from Kipnis.

Brian Palmer says

Laura Kipnis, a film studies professor who's made a name for herself in irreverent yet provocative writings on feminism, collects a number of essays loosely strung together in this entertaining book. (I'm not sure that the title theme quite fits all the essays, but they flow nicely).

The weakest essay (imo), "Gropers," covers material presented in her earlier book *The Feminine Thing*, in which collegiate policy on faculty/student relationships prompts her to attend a training class and lead a mock rebellion of the attendees against the trite platitudes. Although presented in chirpingly self-congratulatory fashion, the complaint about the impossibility in knowing whether advances are unwanted until made felt superficial and glib; the entire thing felt in some sense undeservedly juvenile. But in this, she develops a theory that melodramatic narrative has come to envelope the student experience and feminism.

Other essays feel stronger; she manages to flit from branch to branch and circle around to repeatedly nibble at an argument from different perspectives. She draws upon both literature and film as references, as when she discusses the magazine *Hustler* as an outlet of Rabelaisian perspective, or addresses Sartre's bad faith argument in the context of his own biography as (apparently) a womanizer. I ended up making a small list of books and works I should read based on her references. Her background as someone who came of age in second wave feminism and academic Marxism is used to punctuate points, in her casual dismissal of capitalism ("the job market played women off against men to depress everyone's pay....") and her Freudian interpretations of pretty much everything.

Kipnis doesn't have a lot of answers, but the essays are provocative and entertaining. As she describes in "Juicers," she may not have infinite wells of outrage to fuel takedowns of "moral turpitude and ethical lapses," but that gives her just a little bit more distance to consider them.

Andrew says

Having read this in tandem with *Men Explain Things To Me* by Rebecca Solnit, herewith a double review.

Laura Kipnis is one of those happy warrior feminists whom I'm always keen to read. Her essays on different types of men (that's types with a big capital Greek T for *topoi*) show command of gender theory and a

willingness to poke fun at both the sexes. I couldn't wait to see the next balloon punctured, especially when she looks at modes of how men and women relate. Written with wit, insight, and provocation, this is the gleeful (impish even?) type of book that asks us all to read a bit more gender theory. And to enjoy it instead of suffer it.

Rebecca Solnit's collection of essays is not. As in, it is not witty, nor laugh-inducing, nor attractive. It's the sort of dour (at least if you're a man) feminist writing that scars young male undergraduates for life and discourages them from further reading in the discipline. Moreover, Solnit doesn't have the same solid grasp of gender theory as Kipnis. Where the latter obviously knows her stuff so well that she can hide it in the subtext and manipulate ideas with ease, the former retains that clunky men-are-bad blunt instrument so beloved of earnest writers. I didn't learn how men explain things but I did learn that they can be jerks, violent, and generally unpleasant.

Of course, as a man, am I just keener on the more attractive writing over the scolding? To what extent does my self-awareness as a man predispose me to prefer one of these books over the other? Important questions whenever we're talking about gender theory. Well, I tried. I really did with Solnit. And ignoring some of the more man-hating parts of the book I still couldn't get past the writing. It was so earnest. So heavy. So self-consciously *New Yorker*. Whereas Kipnis develops her own style, not needing to rely on such artifices, but stands surely in the public square on the strength of her own voice. And that is admirable no matter who you are as a reader.

Also on Twitter.

Maggiemuggins says

If I had taken the time to discover who Kipnis is and what she represents before borrowing the book. I would have found this: . . .cultural critic and essayist whose work focuses on sexual politics, gender issues, aesthetics, popular culture, and pornography. She began her career as a video artist, exploring similar themes in the form of video essays - subjects in which my interest is nil.

As she is now 59 and the book was published in 2014, her first mistake was using a photo of herself for the back flap that is easily 25 years old. Was that fraud; mild deception; silly; all three? If, however, the photograph really is a recent one, she could more usefully have written a book on how to achieve everlasting youth!

It might have been wiser to hide Larry Flynt, the subject Kipnis chose for her first chapter, somewhere in the middle of the book as some people (me - almost!) might be so seriously put off by that first chapter that they would go no further.

There is no question that Kipnis is clever, educated and literate - she writes with a lively, readable and sometimes amusing style - and much of the book is insightful and interesting but there is also a lot that sounded more like what one might expect to hear around 4 p.m. any week day near the average North American high school; teenage versions of true confessions. Given that other people's romantic successes and failures are almost never of interest to those with better things to think about, Kipnis drags in far too many of her own (failed) romantic experiences.

Those offended by vulgarity might want to look elsewhere for a read; those who don't mind the odd use of

the lowest slang will probably find it interesting.

Kent Winward says

At one point in my reading, Goodreads in its infinite Twitter wisdom sent out the Tweet:

88% done with *Men*

which my younger brother promptly pounced upon.

I just wanted to let my little brother know that I am now completely done with *Men*.

P.S. After initially posting my review, Goodreads asked me, "Which of your friends might enjoy *Men*?"
Inquiring minds. . .

P.P.S. This also just goes to show how important the right title can be.

Gin Jenny (Reading the End) says

On a process level, *Men: Notes from an Ongoing Investigation* is a successful essay collection. Kipnis is a fluid writer with an eye for the *mot juste*; she varies her sentence structures with grace; nothing she writes ever feels forced. If that sounds like faint praise, it's because (alas) I have a lot of problems with the sentiments Kipnis expresses in her elegant prose. Here are the main three:

1) So. Much. Freud. Lady, you are aware that further work has been done in psychology since the mid-twentieth century? Kipnis's references to Freud, Oedipal complexes, and psychosexual development are so numerous they would make an excellent drinking game condition, an idea I am sorry I have only come up with now because I would probably have enjoyed this book more if I had been a bit drunk for it.

Sometimes this leads to interesting insights — there's a reason Freud's giant shoulders are the ones everyone's been standing on — but as a theoretical framework, it's sharply limited, and you run up against the limits fairly quickly. The essay about Dale Peck and how his harsh reviews are his way of enacting the same abuse scenarios to which he was subject as a child is armchair psychology of the most simplistic variety.

2) Perhaps this is my own limitation, but Kipnis doesn't seem to be in conversation with much of modern feminism. She does have an essay about outrage culture (framed as a cutesy confession of her own tendencies to moral relativism, gag), but it's mostly about something else, and in a later essay she says this:

Yes, Dworkin reads like a stampeding dinosaur in our era of bouncy pro-sex post-feminism. Feminist anger isn't exactly in fashion at the moment: these days, women just direct their anger inward, or carp at individual men, typically their hapless husbands and boyfriends.

Er. What now? There is certainly a strand of bouncy post-sex writing, but — like, Amanda Marcotte, Roxane

Gay, Jessica Valenti, Anita Sarkeesian, Mychal Denzel Smith, Lindy West, Jamia Wilson? I'm not even trying hard to think of names of fashionable feminist writers who regularly express anger about feminist issues.

And relatedly:

3) Kipnis has an air of being above the fray when it comes to many of the issues that occupy feminist writers and thinkers. Since she's written this book, it's clear that she isn't above the fray; but she gives the impression that she is far too cool for your petty problems. Her reaction to crappy behavior (whether it's Norman Mailer being a shit or Harold Bloom hitting on students) is frequently along the lines of "How can you be mad at them when all they want is attention? I just find it rather endearing!"

Well. Neat? I guess? That you feel that way? But that sort of reaction elides and perpetuates the troublesome power dynamics at play. It tells the people who are bothered that they are wrong to be. And it tells the people doing the bothering that they are okay to continue behaving that way, as everyone will just chuckle indulgently. And that, my friends, is how we all end up jumping over missing stairs.

To return to the Harold Bloom example, Kipnis has a lengthy essay about the absurdity of sexual harassment policies at universities. Much of her alarm over these policies feels like received wisdom, given that she admits upon reading her own university's guidelines that they are "far less prohibitive than other places I'd been hearing about" (where are these mythologically prohibitive universities?). She goes on for a while about how when she was in school everyone slept with their professors and they were totally happy about it, because actually the power was quite balanced: The students had the power of being young and beautiful and desirable, and the professors had the power of, you know, actual power over the students' futures.

Kipnis feels that the tricky part of sexual harassment is that you don't actually know until you have already groped the student whether that sexual advance is "unwanted" (prohibited in school guidelines). So what is a professor to do? Here's one idea, just off the top of my head: perhaps professors could try the radical strategy of waiting until the class is over and grades are handed out, and then to hit on their students by saying "Now that class is over and grades are handed out, I wanted to tell you that I think you're swell, and I would love to take you out for dinner sometime if you're interested." And if that is too much of an emotional challenge for the poor wee vulnerable bunnies in the professorial field, I submit that they perchance should find something else to do with their genitals.

Sigh.

James says

She just gets better and better. I think if I could magically write like anyone else, I would want it to be Laura Kipnis. Her ideas are bold but carefully reasoned, she expresses them in witty, elegant prose and she manages to combine a wicked irreverence with unfailing empathy and generosity. I can't think of anyone who is so capable of simultaneous confidence and self-skepticism. I've been a fan since I read *Against Love*, and while that had passages of sustained brilliance (I'm thinking particularly of the chapter, "The Domestic Gulag"), there were certainly a few doldrums. *Men*, by contrast, is pretty much all killer, no filler. Identity politics and ideology have been very much in the air in the last year and I'm sick to death of them. I've blocked at least half of my social media 'friends' because I can't take anymore sanctimonious pronouncements about social justice, 'mansplaining,' the NRA or Cecil the Lion. I generally take a "no

politics" stance in social situations. So the alacrity with which I read Kipnis' provocative political essays, compulsively gobbling them up like kettle corn, is a real testament to her masterly rhetoric. I even enjoyed a chapter entitled "Men Who Hate Hillary," which is about a group whose ranks I have only recently joined, albeit somewhat reluctantly. I'm not in the least ambivalent about Ms. Clinton, but I'm not crazy about the company and I'd rather not be someone about whom Kipnis can pronounce, "you can tell a lot about a man by what he thinks about Hillary, maybe even everything." It's not Clinton's cankles or helmet hair that bug me, really. It's her entitled heir-presumptive's attitude and her fealty to her Wall Street suzerains. "Men Who Hate Hillary" was, nevertheless, a fair and funny piece and it made me at least take a look at my prejudices. Having to do so was made more tolerable because Kipnis had been so rigorous in *Men* about examining her own. I think, apart from the seductive wit, it's her relentless self-honesty that I find so profoundly appealing. For example, in a piece largely about the political self-destruction of Anthony Weiner called "Humiliation Artists," she has this to say about the compulsion to indecent exposure implicit in the act of writing: "Writers are compelled to flash their underwear around in public, too, camouflaged to varying degrees by form or craft, with critics playing the sadistic teachers, camouflaged to varying degrees by attacks on your form or craft. Yes, it's back to the third grade classroom with every sentence you write, which is part of what makes it so excruciating. Sure, writing has its moments of sublimity - grasping after the ineffable, realizing something just out of reach - yet at every instance modulated by the chronic substratum of shame about having taken a dump in public." Damn, I love that. I've always said you can be just about certain that anyone who claims to enjoy writing is no good at it.

miteypen says

I expected more from this book: more dissection of men and more lightheartedness. (The cover and title created that expectation.) instead I got essays that are almost incidentally about men, which probably made it a stronger book. The essays are well thought out and well written. And although they aren't strictly speaking humor writing, they do exude a certain flipness which at times is funny.

I didn't like this book well enough to look up the author's other books, but based on her writing I don't know if that's entirely fair. I would like to know more about her views on feminism, gender theory and politics, because the glimpses she allowed of herself made her seem like a very interesting person. There just weren't enough of them for my taste.

Stewart says

The ideas of Laura Kipnis, which I've encountered reading four of her books and a few magazine articles, have intrigued me, no matter the topic. Her 2003 book "Against Love" is an inquiry into the world's favorite emotion, conducted with honesty, insight, and humor – and featuring an examination of our deep-seated assumptions about romantic love that I have not seen elsewhere, with the exception of Robert Solomon's book "Love: Emotion, Myth, & Metaphor."

The subject of "Men: Notes From an Ongoing Investigation," published in 2014, is a subject that is obviously dear to my heart – because I am a man. Reading this slim volume, I was pleased to encounter the same high level of writing and ideas about men. The book is a series of essays, previously published and revised, making no claim to be a systematic and definitive treatise on men. The book is rather a subjective

look at different types of men and Kipnis' reaction to these men. It is also an examination of intimate relations between the sexes and attitudes held by men and women generally.

There are quotable sentences sprinkled through the book that are illuminating even when taken out of context. Here are a few:

"Writing about someone is a kind of intimacy, after all: as in any relationship there's a lot of projection. It goes without saying that we make other people up according to our own necessities and imaginative horizons, writers no less than spouses, nonfiction writers no less than novelists. What strikes me most about these essays is my covert envy of men, including the ones I would also like to thrash and dismember. Men have always wrested more freedom from the world and I envy that, even when it's a stupid kind of freedom." Kipnis comments on the question of nature vs. nurture with regards to gender differences:

"I'm not one of those people who believe in built-in gender differences – that men are rational and women emotional, or other variants on the theme: that way lies cliché. No doubt having different bodies gives us different experiences in the world. But every society in history has also invented a different list of differences between the sexes, and which trait is assigned to which side of the divide keeps changing. Sometimes men are the lusty ones, sometimes it's women; sometimes men are practical, sometimes it's women, and so on."

What I have especially liked about Kipnis' writing on men and women and their precarious relationships is that she tries to be fair, as much as one can be fair talking about the opposite sex. She admits women, including her, have their faults just as men do. She does not agree with the "women are near-angels, and men are brutes" attitude sometimes expressed by a few women.

"What I am saying is that beyond our pleasant façades, women's attitudes toward men are just as rapacious and primitive as the most notorious emblems of hardcase masculinity around. We're just politer about expressing it – eternally polite."

These are but a few of her many provocative and insightful opinions in the book. Anyone who is a man or a woman – and I assume that includes most of us – will find the book a delightful read and a thought-provoker.

Robert Miller says

In her essays, the author takes a look at men from the perspective of exposing certain negative traits, and then finding some value in those faults- not that she doesn't find many of the traits problematic in relationships between women and men. For example, she finds Larry Flynt, the publisher of "Hustler", to be a smut-peddler and "Scumbag", yet she finds some redeeming value in him because of his genuine support for the first amendment and other seemingly uncharacteristic acts of compassion. She uses an old "B" movie to illustrate the flaws in a highly educated woman (Psychiatrist) who is taken by a con man who has street-smarts versus her academic prowess; he is better at analyzing people than her, and that's her area of expertise. She takes shots at Tiger Wood's wife and his list of lovers all which are deserved. She denounces author Naomi Wolf for her pathetic, if not psychotic, claim that her professor, Harold Bloom, made an "unwanted sexual advance" towards her and that she is still crying about it decades later. Kipnis adds a very funny essay on "Men Who Hate Hillary" opining that many of her critics are obsessed with her- although she provides ample anecdotes to support a basis for the criticisms. In all, she offers 15 essays that isolate distinctions between men and women in good, bad and indifferent ways. At the end of the day, many of her observations are familiar, but interesting. She likes to use big words, so keep your dictionary handy.

Amy says

Thoughtful. Provocative. Worth reading.

"The problem with the groupie dynamic, at least from the savvy celeb's standpoint, is that someone who craves the proximity of celebrity limelight and feels confirmed by hit-or-miss attentions bestowed under less-than-egalitarian circumstances is also likely to be someone afflicted by greater-than-usual quantities of insecurity and self-doubt, yet hopeful that a bit of the limelight will rub off, improving life in some unspecified fashion."

--from "Cheaters" MEN by Laura Kipnis

David Dinaburg says

I have never read Pride & Prejudice, but I picked up the basics of its plot quickly. If you've never experienced it but have lived through a few years of American cultural productions, it has seeped into you as well: It was the radioactive spider bite that spawned an entire genre, the gamma ray burst that even now continues to produce the next thousand years of romantic comedies.

You'll recognize the zippy dialogue, you'll know the "will they/won't they?" plotline, the dramatic irony. Or perhaps, if you are someone intimately familiar with the story, you are right now yelling at your screen that I am dumb; that while it is *clearly* a comedy, it is not the Ur romantic-comedy. You may continue to say, perhaps, that the inherent class divide between Elizabeth and Darcy required too much personal growth from both of them before they were ready for each other, which runs counter to current rom-com strictures which require two soulmates—perfect for each other from the get-go—experiencing, then overcoming, a series of quirky events that conspire to hold them apart.

To each of these nuanced approaches to the romantic comedy landscape, I applaud the reader and recommend my heretofore unwritten review of Jane Austen's Pride & Prejudice. In a move that would personally disgust me if someone claimed it for Song of Ice and Fire, I have only watched the BBC miniseries yet am talking about the source material. I thought the show was done well. It was funny. My points are, in a slightly twisted way, even a bit supported by my not having read it; the aura of "girl-book" clings so heavily to the text that I see no other logical reason for it being left out of standard American curriculum in favor of stories like Hatchet, Banner in the Sky, Where the Red Fern Grows, To Kill a Mockingbird, Great Expectations, Of Mice and Men, and so forth aside from masculine posturing and fear of juvenile teasing.

Sometimes I wonder how often those concerns still motivate my behavior. Men: Notes From an Ongoing Investigation suffers from the same prejudice. Sitting on the train, the cover of my book a giant magnifying glass centered on the large-typeface and boldly highlighted word "MEN" made me, while not uncomfortable exactly, at least aware of what I was afraid I looked like to others. This concern never crossed my mind while reading the unsettlingly decorated Confessions of a Sociopath, or this book with a d20 prominently displayed. Self image is oddly fragile.

Men is funny and insightful, tying various archetypes— caricatures?—of masculinity to a modern personality and digressing from there. Recognizing most of the names from their time exuded the same

comfortable familiarity—without actual knowledge—that made Pride & Prejudice so consumable: I know Larry Flynt, I know Carlos Danger, I know Tiger Woods; I know Bridget Jones, I know Keri Russell in Austenland, I know Ross and Rachel. But I didn't know Andrea Dworkin:

Any woman who won't admit [to Dworkin's belief that female sexuality is either specifically maligned or magnificently condescended to] just enforces Dworkin's view that we lose any capacity for self-knowledge and honesty in sex, since to the extent we reconcile ourselves to enjoying it, our brains turn to mush. Worse, women transform themselves into pathetic sex scavengers, wanting sensuality and tenderness but settling instead for "being owned and being fucked" as a substitute for the physical affection and approval we actually crave from men. Women need male approval to be able to survive in our own skins, and solicit it through sex; but obtaining sex means conforming in "body type and behavior" to what men like. Given the vast amount of time, energy, and disposable income many of us invest in achieving and maintaining whatever degree of sexual attractiveness is feasible (sometimes known as "fuckability"), again, it's hard to argue. Self-knowledge might be the means to really knowing a lover in sex—the only thing that makes passion personal instead of generic—but self-knowledge is impossible for women because having intercourse in the first place requires eroticizing powerlessness and self-annihilation. If the argument seems tautological, you're getting the point: fucking is a vortex, and abyss, a sinkhole from which you never emerge.

The author wraps these points, these heavy points, around a bemused tone torn straight from Elizabeth Bennet's mouth. Listen closely enough and you can almost hear her rebuking the Austen's effigy for High Society, stately old Catherine de Bourgh:

Yes, Dworkin reads like a stampeding dinosaur in our era of bouncy pro-sex post-feminism. Feminist anger isn't exactly in fashion at the moment: these days, women just direct their anger inward, or carp at individual men, typically their hapless husbands and boyfriends. Nevertheless, the theme that sex injures women more than men continues to percolate through culture, though in a well-meaning nibbled-to-death-by-ducks sort of way, in books with titles like *Unhooked: How Young Women Pursue Sex, Delay Love and Lose at Both* or *Girls Gone Mild: Young Women Reclaim Self-Respect and Find It's Not Bad to Be Good*. The arm-twisting subtitles tell you everything you need to know. The general worry is that casual hookups have replaced dating, young women are having too much sex, and girls who are slutting around are never going to find husbands. Besides which, it's supposed to be woman's task to train men to act better than they do, and this is no way to go about it. Also, with so many women hooking up with no strings attached, things aren't fair for girls who won't.

These lengthy pull-quotes do more than liken the author to Lizzie Bennet; they provide context for what might be my favorite quote I've read this year:

All in all, if I have to cast my vote for a sexual alarmist, I'm for Dworkin, the radical firebrand, in lieu of the well-meaning aunties. Sex for her was catastrophic and disgusting, but at least she wasn't trying to spawn a generation of nice girls. True, she had no time for sexual experimentation—she disliked men too much to admit that nice girls stifled by conventionality and greedy for freedom have always pursued it by trying to act like men, whether that means careers, adventurism (from Joan of Arc to Amelia Earhart), or sleeping around. Emulating men has its problems, to be sure—they haven't got it all figured out either, other than how not to buy books telling them to have less sex, which is probably why no one writes them. For my money, this in itself would be a condition to aspire to.

The storyline of Pride and Prejudice may not be the exact blueprint for the quirky, star-crossed romantic comedies that dominate the breezy zeitgeist of “*Love, Instantly Forever, and Indefinitely Pure*,” but it is an early illumination finding your own way—against society, against family, against her own pride. She may have ended up with a husband, but not because of fate—because of her own agency. I, too, side with caustic extremism over banal platitudes; anything to avoid a generation of Janes who sit around sighing, waiting for their smarter, better sisters to fix their lives for them.
