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The transforming heroine: becoming a wife in the Austen marriage plot

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THE TRANSFORMING HEROINE:
BECOMING A WIFE IN THE AUSTEN MARRIAGE PLOT

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Abstract

This thesis argues that through the use of character transformation in her heroines, Jane Austen uses marriage plot novels to romantically idealize the role of being a wife. In particular, heroines Catherine Morland, Marianne Dashwood, Elizabeth Bennet, and Emma Woodhouse lose autonomy and become more limited within their characters as they are influenced by the societies around them. The stories of Austen's other heroines offer dissimilarities in their trajectories that support the idea of achieving "happily ever afters" by exhibiting propriety in roles subordinate and dedicated to their future husbands. By imposing limitations on her heroines, Austen is suggesting that women should accept societal expectations and desire to become wives.

Introduction

The Transforming Heroine: Becoming a Wife in the Austen Marriage Plot

Jane Austen has been frequently considered a champion of advancements in feminism due to her writing autonomous female characters. Much research done on her work suggests Austen intentionally developed heroines that characterized women of agency, individualism, and strength in order to critique the unappreciated role of women in society. Due to her use of parody and irony, Austen's work is described as satiric compared to the work of other novelists of her time as she finely pinpoints the faults of her society rather than abides its expectations. However, despite Austen's reputation as a champion for women's rights who satirically asserts her beliefs to encourage change, I stand on the side of criticism that reads Austen conservatively, as a woman writing novels not only representative of her time, but idealistic in their representation of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century feminine desires.

In *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*, Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar write specifically on Jane Austen, suggesting that through her self-effacing ways and satiric writing, Austen was criticizing and even rejecting her patriarchal society's treatment of women. Gilbert and Gubar suggest Austen's "self-imposed novelistic limitations to define a secure place" (Gilbert and Gubar 108) were combined with the admission that finding comfort in such a place was impossible. While I agree with Gilbert and Gubar that many of Austen's novels fail to define secure places for their heroines, I suggest this limitation only occurs prior to and within each heroine's courtship phase; in fact, all of Austen's heroines inevitably find security,

both in character and marriage, by the end of their tales, suggesting Austen did believe the security could exist in a love-filled marriage. Moreover, the two authors propose, “the point of [Austen’s] parody is precisely to illustrate the dangerous delusiveness of fiction which seriously presents heroines [...] as models of reality” (115), or rather that novels portray intriguing and adventurous situations so frequently that the reality of those stories become idealistic yet unrealistic. At the root of their argument, Gilbert and Gubar suggest that under the veil of parody, “Austen shows how popular romantic fiction contributes to the traditional notion that women have no other legitimate aim but to love men and how this assumption is at the root of ‘female’ narcissism, masochism, and deceit” (118), that women are dependent on men in her current society and that Austen believed this was a problem. While Gilbert and Gubar’s assertion is strong, and parody can easily play a role in societal criticism, I argue Austen’s use of irony is not against the idea of the aim to love men or the role of marriage, but rather the opposite since Austen centrally focused her novels on each heroine’s courtship rather than the marriage itself, as well as the changes each heroine goes through during her courtship. Furthermore, since the men in the novels are generally equally dependent on the heroines, and due to the focus on marriage for love from both genders, the aim to love, as Gilbert and Gubar refer to it, cannot be seen as the root of female narcissism, masochism, and deceit. Instead, the aim to love becomes the core purpose or function within the novel, with Austen supporting the outcome of marriage.

Similar to Gilbert and Gubar, Claudia Johnson, author of *Jane Austen: Women, Politics, and the Novel*, suggests female authors wrote novels as answers to social, political, or theological questions plaguing their male-dominated societies as she critically adopts historical and feminist approaches in reviewing Austen’s stylistic and thematic choices.

Johnson suggests Austen's approach to writing was intended to ignite social reform. For her study, Johnson examines "social questions raised in England by the revolution in France" (xxi) and Austen's participation in answering those questions through writing. Johnson argues that "Austen's sex [is] a crucially significant factor, not only in the formation of her social opinions, but also in the development of aesthetic strategies for writing about them" (xxiii), suggesting Austen quietly challenges notions of female propriety impacting her characterization of female characters, and that Austen's "silence" is an enabling strategy in political matters. I agree that Austen's sex was significant in her writing, but I disagree that she is fully challenging the ideas of female propriety. Austen's portrayal of women, specifically in marriage plots, rather suggests Austen believed women should regress from their autonomous selves into dependent wives.

In her article "Reading the Marriage Plot," Mary-Catherine Harrison analyzes love and courtship in the marriage plot and the role these stories play in relation to human life, suggesting that reality is shaped by fiction. Harrison cites previous research stating "humans are 'storied selves,' in which humans use stories to make meaning of their own lives and experiences" (112), as well as the narrative identity thesis, which suggests human conception of identity is "given form and content through story" (113). Notably, Harrison argues cultural expectations about marriage and family are formed through narratives on those topics, and that early British novels had an influence on how English-speaking Western societies view marriage. Considering marriage plot novels focus on the courtship between a man and a woman with the marriage coming at the end of the story as the "happily ever after," Harrison argues that this ideology of what she refers to as affective marriage "associates courtship with conflict and marriage with resolution" (114), which

leads Harrison to believe the structure of fiction, specifically the marriage plot, is important to how humans view marriage and their lives. I use Harrison's research as a source for explaining why Austen's heroines so frequently lost autonomy throughout their stories, indicating their identities and expectations for marriage are formed by cultural expectations, which Austen encourages in her own writing.

In *Unbecoming Women*, Susan Fraiman examines the bildungsroman, or novel of development, a typically male novel form, reworked in relation to female main characters. Specifically, Fraiman scrutinizes the path from childhood to womanhood as a series of crossroads dependent on a woman's social status. Fraiman focuses on novels in which the main characters "account for growing up female as a deformation, a gothic disorientation, a loss of authority, and abandonment of goals" and challenge the idea of courtship as education (Fraiman xi). Moreover, Fraiman notes "the heroines I will consider have, by contrast, a clearer sense that formation is foisted upon them, that they are largely what other people, what the world, will make of them" (6). Fraiman argues that the female authors she studies show their writing was both symbolic as well as authentic in their portrayal of how women lived in their quest for "female destiny" (xii). She continues by asserting that stories following heroines' female destinies are rivaled within texts by destiny narratives of secondary female characters. Fraiman acknowledges that female development is hinged on social and class institutions, and that the works she examines "could hardly help enforcing ideologies of femaleness and maleness that were lived as such" (15). I agree with Fraiman's argument that the heroines she considers in her research are often influenced by their societies, which I use to support my argument that Austen's heroines conform to their societies.

Much of the research I have come across suggests that Austen was trying to change society's views and treatment toward women through her satiric novels. Gilbert and Gubar argue that Austen's irony is proof she was criticizing her patriarchal society and women's dependence on men. Similarly, Johnson suggests that all female novelists of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-centuries, including Austen, were writing in response to questions or concerns they had regarding their male-dominated societies, and by doing so, these authors were attempting to reform societal views on women. While these critics make strong arguments, I respectfully disagree with their analyses. At the very least, Austen is portraying women's roles in her society in a romantic way, causing women to idealize the role of marriage. As Harrison argues that reality is shaped by fiction, it is possible that Austen was writing her marriage plot novels to provide women with hope in attaining their "happily ever afters" through quixotic notions. However, when considering Fraiman's approach to analyzing Austen's works as bildungsroman novels, I believe Austen's use of satire throughout her novels, specifically at times when the heroine is still learning from the world around her and faltering in several missteps, and by having her characters' tales end in marriages, argues for the acceptance of conforming to the role women are expected to play in their society.

Throughout this thesis, I chronologically focus on individual Austen novels by when they were written rather than when they were published, with the exception of *Mansfield Park*, which is addressed in the final chapter with *Persuasion*. In Chapter 1, I introduce *Northanger Abbey* and track heroine Catherine Morland throughout her regression as an autonomous individual into a wife while comparing her with other female characters in the story. Initially, Austen provides her readers with a heroine unaffected by social

expectations at the beginning of the novel that transform her into a wife by the end of the story. Catherine's transformation in *Northanger Abbey* is propelled by other characters within the heroine's society. Specifically, Catherine's relationship with other women she encounters, including Mrs. Allen and Isabella Thorpe are used in juxtaposition with the transforming heroine. I explore the relationships and the influence other female characters have on Catherine in her relationships with men. Primarily, I explore her relationship with Henry Tilney, who has the greatest influence on Catherine's regression into wife. Finally, I consider the parallel structure within the novel, including Catherine's response to nature and her multiple carriage rides, and Catherine's reaction to each event to document her change from start to finish.

Chapter 2 explores *Sense and Sensibility*, focusing on the Dashwood sisters, Elinor and Marianne, their differences as individuals, their faltering courtships, and their marriages. The focus of the chapter centers around personality differences in Elinor and Marianne, how these personalities contribute to the merit and faults in their respective courtships, and how both women predictably find love and marriage. I also examine how each character's transformation, despite how subtle the transformation may be, relate to societal expectations of women and wives, and attempt to delineate Austen's purpose for giving both women "happily ever afters."

The focus of Chapter 3 looks at *Pride and Prejudice* and Elizabeth Bennet's regression from an outspoken autonomous woman into Darcy's wife. Specifically, the chapter examines Elizabeth's desiring suitors and her subsequent courtships to track Elizabeth's changes throughout the novel. I examine how Elizabeth interacts with her prospective suitors—Mr. Wickham, and Mr. Darcy—and determine how her interactions

differ and change with each man as her character regresses, specifically noting moments of insubordination and moments of meeting societal expectations. The differences between Elizabeth Bennet and her sisters were also explored. Finally, I have shown how Elizabeth's relationship and her "happily ever after" with Fitzwilliam Darcy, specifically the course of their relationship from detestation to love, contributes to Elizabeth's regression.

Chapter 4 looks at the novel *Emma* and the title character's differences from the previously mentioned heroines. Focusing on her character, I study Emma's influence over her own father and Harriet Smith. Her influence and loss of it contributes to the marriage plot structure and to a regression in her originally autonomous character. I analyze her matchmaking schemes and plot Emma's regression from a privileged woman who believes she's in control to one who is dependent on the men in her life. This coincides directly with Mr. Knightley's constant judgments on her behavior, which lead Emma through her regression.

The concluding chapter explores *Mansfield Park* and *Persuasion*, considering the dissimilarities of Fanny Price and Anne Elliot from Austen's other heroines, the consistencies that remain in each character throughout the novels, and the marriage plot endings. Regarding *Mansfield Park*, I argue the character of Fanny Price, who despite experiencing enormous changes in her life, has limited changes in her character from beginning to end of the novel. Unlike the heroines explored in the previous chapters, Fanny remains relatively consistent in her beliefs, often condemning the actions of those around her for their impropriety. Anne, on the other hand, is the oldest of Austen's heroines. I argue that Anne's courtship, specifically her marriage proposal and engagement in her youth, is exactly where she ends up at the end of her story, with her "happily ever after."

While their stories may take a different path, Fanny and Anne's stories end in marriage plots just like the other heroines.

I argue that, despite having agency at the beginning of the novels, Austen's heroines lose their individuality and become more limited within themselves by adopting the views of those characters they encounter. In fact, Austen's marriage plots lead her heroines in a regression of their personalities due to each heroine adhering to tradition. Austen fates her unique characters to become clichéd wives by the end of each novel by essentially finding their "happily ever afters" in the arms of men. With this limitation for female characters remaining throughout her novels, especially in female characters with agency that initially go against social norms, Austen is suggesting women should accept their expected role by following social expectations and desiring to become wives.

Chapter One

Catherine Morland: Anti-Heroine to Heroine to Wife

In *The Madwoman in the Attic*, Gilbert and Gubar suggest, “Austen keeps reminding [readers] that Catherine [Morland] is typical because she is not born to be a heroine” (Gilbert and Gubar 129). However, while Catherine may be considered common within her own society, I argue that of all Austen’s heroines, Catherine Morland is the most atypical. Where we are first provided with positive qualities for most other protagonists, we are initially given presumably negative characteristics in the introduction to Catherine: she’s a tomboy, she’s plain and awkward, she’s inattentive in learning. Most importantly, she is not a heroine. Austen provides us with an “anti-heroine” to set up her parody of gothic literature and with that she gives us a unique, spirited individual unaffected by social expectations.

Yet the course of the novel changes our heroine. Catherine’s transformation can be plotted through significant milestones in her story. Most notably, major changes occur within the first chapter of the novel, signifying Catherine’s development from infancy and young adulthood during which she loses her sense of self as she begins to shift into society; the remainder of the novel draws out changes within Catherine throughout her seventeenth year, in which Catherine relies on others to guide her in how to act in social situations, leaving behind her innate sense of self from childhood; and, finally, we see a transformation in Catherine from unattached woman to wife in the last chapter during her eighteenth year.

Based on *Northanger Abbey*, what are Austen's comments on societal expectations toward women and their roles in society, and do readers have to approve of Catherine's change? Despite Austen's spoof on gothic literature, Catherine is ultimately compared to or influenced by the other women in her society, in particular female characters that do not experience much transformation throughout the novel. Essentially, all women are viewed as potential wives and must act accordingly to land a husband. Even though Catherine transforms throughout Austen's parody, she becomes more limited with each chapter and loses any agency she may have had.

Transformations in Catherine are also brought on by male characters within the story – primarily Henry Tilney – and are forced upon the teenage anti-heroine due to societal expectations of young women. As Catherine is introduced and becomes accustomed to the rules and regulations for women – how to act, learn, and approach courtship – in Regency society, she loses the spark that makes her special. She changes from a unique individual to a more traditional societal woman. Catherine's continuous change throughout *Northanger Abbey* constricts her into societal norms. In an attempt to mock gothic literature and with her adherence to the marriage plot, Austen limits Catherine into a traditional woman compensated with marriage, suggesting that despite writing a female character with agency who initially goes against social norms, in the end women should follow social expectations and desire to become wives.

Catherine from Infancy to Seventeen

From the beginning, we are told by the narrator that “No one who had ever seen Catherine Morland in her infancy, would have supposed her born to be an heroine” (*Northanger Abbey* 37), for she has ordinary features, prefers to play with the boys, causes

mischief, and is inattentive, unintelligent, and slow in learning (37-38). For all intents and purposes, Catherine begins life as a tomboy who does not follow the “typical” growth and milestones expected in a girl’s life. Even Catherine’s parents are described in less-enchanting terms: her father “had never been handsome” and her mother was “a woman of useful plain sense” (*Northanger Abbey* 37). From birth, everything was stacked against Catherine. Yet, through the negative descriptions provided, readers learn early on that Catherine is not your ordinary female character, and despite the focus on her undesirable, un-heroic qualities, Catherine is earnest, kind, and unlike most women society would raise.

Catherine’s childhood is influenced fully by her family: she has three older brothers who influence her tomboyish ways; “her next sister, Sally,” who is far better at learning and repeating the “Beggar’s Petition”; and a mother who birthed ten children, all of whom occupied her time and attention (*Northanger Abbey* 37-38). For Catherine, her knowledge of the world and societal norms is limited to the environment she lives in and the instruction she receives at home. Elvira Casal argues Mrs. Morland “had a strong influence on Catherine in her formative years [...] she respects each child’s individuality” (Casal 148). Mrs. Morland’s carefree teaching methods prevented Catherine from excelling in “feminine accomplishments – the term used in the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century England to denote those ‘ornamental’ pursuits such as music, drawing, dancing, foreign language, and fine needle work in which young women were commonly educated” (Wells 1). Limited in the proper education many young girls were expected to obtain in order to be considered accomplished when they are older, Catherine is unrestricted in her personal desires between infancy and seventeen: at age eight she began learning to play the pianoforte, but stopped lessons at age nine because she “could not bear it” (*Northanger Abbey* 38); she was

taught French and writing by her parents, but “she shirked her lessons in both whenever she could” (38-39). Catherine’s disinterest in learning initiates her lack of “accomplishments” that are expected of girls and women, and yet this unobstructed upbringing shows in her development and sense of individualism: as a child, Catherine knows what she likes, what she wants, and what she doesn’t without many suggestions from outside sources, and this understanding of herself shows in her education, or lack thereof.

At age fifteen, though still in the first chapter of *Northanger Abbey*, readers see the first changes in Catherine: her “appearances were mending; she [...] long[ed] for balls; her complexion improved [...] her love of dirt gave way to an inclination for finery” (*Northanger Abbey* 39). This development signifies the first step of Catherine beginning to transform not necessarily into a heroine, but rather out of a tomboy and into an ordinary female member of society. She leaves behind the days of rolling down hills and boy’s play, substituting in her desire for dances and finery. Most importantly, Catherine begins to superficially read “books of information” (*Northanger Abbey* 39) and memorize quotations suitable for heroines, foreshadowing her new willingness to learn and understand her society. Her mother and father “are honest and straightforward [and] have not taught Catherine to question appearances, to distinguish fiction and truth, between social myths and reality” (Casal 152). Because her imagination was allowed to run free and without any restraint as a child, Catherine’s imagination holds strong as she grows into a young woman.

This inevitably leads to Catherine at age seventeen, the year during which the majority of *Northanger Abbey* takes place. The narrator is careful to inform the reader about Catherine’s slow transformation:

So far her improvement was sufficient [...] for though she could not write sonnets, she brought herself to read them; and though there seemed no chance of her throwing a whole party into raptures by a prelude on the pianoforte, of her own composition, she could listen to other peoples performance with very little fatigue. Her greatest deficiency was in the pencil—she had no notion of drawing—not enough even to attempt a sketch of her lover’s profile, that she might be detected in the design [...] She had reached age seventeen, without having seen one amiable youth who could call forth her sensibility; without having inspired one real passion and without having excited even any admiration but what was very moderate and very transient” (*Northanger Abbey* 41).

Even with some feminine improvements, Catherine still lacked skills typical for other women her age to take on – writing, drawing – and due to a lack of men in her neighborhood was unable to fall in love. The few areas of improvement—reading sonnets and listening to others play the pianoforte—are indications to Catherine’s transformation, most specifically hinting towards Catherine’s likelihood of being influenced by others. Catherine is shown as being inclined to participate in skills in which women were expected to excel. Though she still could not actively partake in writing or playing, Catherine is no longer dismissing the feminine activities, yet her deficiencies in both writing and music allow her to still be true to her inner, nonconforming self.

With a mother who left her daughters to “shift” without her guidance, Catherine is under the obligation of Mr. and Mrs. Allen to bring her out to society, and with her surrogate parents, she spends a series of weeks in Bath where those around her test her individuality and naïveté. According to Claudia J. Martin, Austen’s

characters [engage] in the relentless pursuit of the happiness that they only achieve after rigorous self-examination, reflection, and decisions that often defy the constraints of class, economics, and gender [...] For a character to achieve true happiness in an Austen novel, he or she must engage in a course of self-evaluation and self-transformation that will facilitate making those choices that will lead to a happiness both long lasting and morally correct. (Martin 1)

While I agree that Austen's characters, including Catherine, evaluate and transform along the course of the novels, I question the use of the phrase "true happiness," especially in Catherine's story. I argue that Austen endorses women of her time to seek love and marriage in spite of the loss of individuality that comes with being a wife, no matter how undesirable the position. This can be seen very specifically in *Northanger Abbey*: Catherine Morland seems most happy at times of least change, and her whole-self makeover by the end of the novel suggests she has lost her identity rather than found happiness.

Influence from Other Female Characters

Barbara Horwitz notes in her study on Jane Austen and women's education, that Austen draws upon John Locke's views and that "the basic goals of [women's] education must be virtue, breeding, and learning [...] that one important manifestation of virtue consists of doing one's duty" (Horwitz 136). Austen agreed with Locke's goals, and yet created a female character that specifically lacks an education at the start of the novel. Catherine is disinterested in everything a young girl should be interested in and the only woman she has around to imitate—Mrs. Morland—is not the societal archetype of a woman but rather a mother who was too lenient in raising her daughter. It is not surprising that Catherine develops in a way that conflicts with social norms, creating an individualistic anti-heroine. Theoretically, Catherine is not only an anti-heroine in this parody of gothic literature; she is unlike any other female character in the story or her society.

The first characters to interact with Catherine away from her pastoral upbringing are the Allens. Specifically, Mrs. Allen, who has the responsibility of bringing Catherine out to society in Bath, is supposed to model appropriate behavior for her young guest and offer connections to society, guiding Catherine in the ways of how a woman should act in public.

However, Mrs. Allen proves to be an unreliable caretaker: she has few connections in Bath, her concerns are primarily focused on fashion, and she repeatedly gives Catherine unbecoming advice regarding proper behavior.

Just as she had with her heroine, Austen introduces Mrs. Allen using rather negative characteristics:

Mrs. Allen was some of that numerous class of females, whose society can raise no other emotion than surprise at there being any men in the world who could like them well enough to marry [...] she had neither beauty, genius, accomplishment, nor manner [...] Dress was her passion [...] and our heroine's entrée into life could not take place till after three or four days had been spent in learning what was mostly worn. (*Northanger Abbey* 44)

Austen presents her readers with a woman presumably incapable of teaching a girl how to present herself in society since Mrs. Allen is, herself, unaware of societal expectations. In spite of all she lacks, Mrs. Allen did land a husband and now spends her days shopping and attempting to socialize. Being the first example of a woman other than Catherine's own mother, Mrs. Allen is an unfortunate example of societal decorum for a seventeen-year-old girl. Mrs. Allen comes across as self-focused and incapable of leading Catherine into society, despite earnestly enjoying societal events herself.

As a chaperone, Mrs. Allen can only offer the ability to enter events and places, such as dances or the Pump-room, but provides little to no assistance to Catherine in engaging in conversation with others or making acquaintances. Austen describes the scene of the first dance attended by Catherine and Mrs. Allen: the group is late due to Mrs. Allen taking too long to dress, the event is crowded when they arrive, and Mrs. Allen has "more care for the safety of her new gown" as Catherine follows her through a "throng of men" only to find a safe place to stand away from the crowd, never to be introduced and never to dance (*Northanger Abbey* 44-45). Through all of this, Mrs. Allen fails in her responsibility to attach

Catherine to others due to concern for her own gown, and as Catherine wishes to dance, Mrs. Allen merely repeatedly offers superficial condolences of “I wish you could dance, my dear,—I wish you could get a partner” (*Northanger Abbey* 45), never once actually helping Catherine. Mrs. Allen’s lackadaisical behavior is detrimental to naïve Catherine, who leaves the ball with only being admired by two young men but never having made an acquaintance (*Northanger Abbey* 47-48).

However, Mrs. Allen continues her societal introduction of Catherine the next morning, which “brought its regular duties” (*Northanger Abbey* 48) of shopping, viewing the town, and visiting the Pump-room. These “duties” are different from the duties Horwitz describes regarding Locke’s views on women’s education. Rather than introduce Catherine to quality education in virtue and learning, Mrs. Allen focuses Catherine’s “education” on superficial activities that, while socially engaging, do not produce quality wives. Yet, with this Mrs. Allen does successfully model the typical activities expected of women in society, introducing Catherine to ordinary qualities and hobbies women were expected to uphold, and indoctrinating her into a stereotypical female lifestyle. The ball the night before and the morning “duties” are Catherine’s first practices of becoming a societal woman in Bath, and in both instances Mrs. Allen proved an incapable mentor. In fact, Catherine is introduced to her first acquaintance, Henry Tilney, not by Mrs. Allen but by the master of ceremonies (*Northanger Abbey* 48). The only connections Mrs. Allen does provide Catherine are the Thorpes, a family that is deceitful and self-focused, whose relationship proves more damaging than helpful.

Yet Mrs. Allen’s worst offenses toward Austen’s naïve heroine do not come in her inability to properly bring her out to society, but rather when Catherine seeks her mentor’s

advice. On three separate occasions, Catherine is invited to take part in open carriage rides with her brother, James, and the Thorpes. On two of these occasions, Catherine, new to the world of carriage rides and propriety, asks Mrs. Allen's opinion on going:

Catherine's silent appeal to her friend, meanwhile, was entirely thrown away, for Mrs. Allen, not being at all in the habit of conveying any expression by a look, was not aware of its being ever intended by anyone else [...] "Do as you please, my dear," replied Mrs. Allen, with the most placid indifference. Catherine took the advice, and ran off to get ready. (*Northanger Abbey* 82)

Despite hoping to see the Tilneys at the Pump-room, Catherine, who is naively unaware of decorum in such circumstances, relies on Mrs. Allen's guidance to ensure she is behaving with propriety. Unconcerned for the girl's actions, Mrs. Allen not only willingly lets Catherine go with the trio on an open carriage ride, but she encourages Catherine to "do as [she] please[s]," even though Catherine is unable to distinguish fully between right and wrong, proper and improper.

Mrs. Allen again steers Catherine in an inappropriate direction when the young heroine is invited a second time on an open carriage ride to Blaize Castle. While waiting to see if the Tilneys will arrive late for a scheduled walk after an unexpected rainstorm, Catherine is again encountered by the Thorpes and her brother, and asked to go on another carriage ride. This time, despite initial rejections, Catherine inevitably turns to Mrs. Allen for guidance, asking, "Shall I go, Mrs. Allen?" and without much concern, Mrs. Allen replies, "Just as you please, my dear [...] Well, my dear, suppose you go" (*Northanger Abbey* 103), to which Catherine again joins the immodest group for an afternoon ride.

It isn't until the third invitation to go on an open carriage ride, one that Catherine rejects on her own accord, that Mrs. Allen shows any other opinion of the activity. Mr.—not Mrs.—Allen is the character to point out the impropriety of riding in carriages alone with a

man. In fact, Mr. Allen prompts his wife's thoughts on the matter when he explains the impropriety of open carriage rides to Catherine, to which Mrs. Allen responds:

Open carriages are nasty things. A clean gown is not five minutes wear in them. You are splashed getting in and getting out; and the wind takes your hair and your bonnet in every direction. I hate an open carriage myself [...] Yes, my dear, a very odd appearance indeed. I cannot bear to see it. (*Northanger Abbey* 108-109)

Miriam Rheingold Fuller suggests, "Austen uses clothing in other novels to signal women's loss of virginity" (Fuller 2) and is doing similar with Mrs. Allen's focus on appearance in *Northanger Abbey*. Fuller argues that an open carriage ride could lead to loss of virginity, and while it does not specifically for Catherine, her disheveled appearance might imply something different. With "Mrs. Allen's sartorial concerns [Austen] symbolize[s] the dangers inherent in a young woman riding out alone with a man [...] Austen has tricked her audience into thinking that Mrs. Allen is a vapid, silly woman, so they take nothing seriously, even about clothes, when this speech is actually the most useful counsel she gives Catherine" (Fuller 2-3). While Fuller successfully argues the connection between appearance, clothing, and loss of virginity, she does not connect each of the three carriage ride instances with one another. Should the only occasion in which Catherine were asked to join in a carriage ride alone with John Thorpe have been the last one that was declined, or should Mrs. Allen's response to each of the three offerings have been met with concern and talk of the disastrous appearance Catherine's clothing would take from the rides, Fuller's argument for seeing Mrs. Allen as a positive counsel would be stronger. However, the first two occasions met Catherine with not only no objection toward going on the rides but assurance that she should, and certainly no concern for Catherine's impending appearance or the impropriety of the rides. Since Mrs. Allen has primarily been concerned with her own gowns up to this point, it is actually surprising she does not take more caution and

care in advising Catherine against carriage rides from the start, but rather ignores her responsibility to the young heroine. In this case, I argue it is more likely that Mrs. Allen was taking on the role of a good wife by agreeing with her husband on the impropriety of the activity and merely imagining herself and her own dress should she be the victim of a carriage ride.

Catherine's interactions with Mrs. Allen do few positive things for the heroine. Mrs. Allen's obsession with fashion and shopping, and her willingness to make appearances in public, teach Catherine how women approach societal interactions of each day, albeit with an extreme favor toward muslin. Her mentor's unfortunate advice puts Catherine in regrettable predicaments and positions for a short time. However, Mr. Allen's concerns, along with Mrs. Allen's casual agreement, eventually teach Catherine the proper activities for young women in her society, allowing her to better formulate herself into a well-respected woman by following decorum.

Mrs. Allen is not the only woman who has an influence over Catherine. Austen's heroine also interacts with her own polar opposite, Isabella Thorpe, the superficial, self-absorbed, husband-seeking society woman, who is too bold in her actions and words. Catherine navigates her own interactions with her friend and her own actions as she changes her individualistic qualities through the novel.

Catherine and Isabella "called each other by their Christian name, were always arm in arm [...] and if a rainy morning deprived them of other enjoyments, they were still resolute in meeting [...] and shut themselves up, to read novels together" (*Northanger Abbey* 58). Isabella's greatest influence on Catherine comes in the form of reading gothic literature. Prior to arriving in Bath, Catherine shunned reading, merely memorizing

excerpts from great works of her time, but never fully understanding the meanings behind the words (*Northanger Abbey* 40-41). Isabella's influence over Catherine initiates a gothic obsession that follows Catherine throughout the remainder of the novel. When asked by Isabella if she has continued reading Radcliffe's *Udolpho*, Catherine responds, "Yes, I have been reading it ever since I woke [...] I should like to spend my whole life reading it. I assure you, if it had not been to meet you, I would not have come away from it for all the world" (*Northanger Abbey* 61-62). Elaine Bander suggests "that Catherine, under Isabella's corrupting influence, is in danger of becoming addicted to suspenseful sensational fiction" (Bander 51). Already, Catherine is dedicating herself to reading the novel when she wakes, and finds it difficult to be pulled away from her gothic reading. Austen shows her readers, first, that Catherine is susceptible to the influence of others, whether it is positive or negative; after all, without Isabella, it would have been unlikely that Catherine should pick up a novel. Further, Austen moves her heroine from the anti-heroine she introduced her reader to toward the heroine of her own story by allowing Catherine to associate her own world with gothic fiction.

Isabella's friendship opens Catherine to fictional idealism, and, as Fuller suggests, "Catherine's love of the gothic and sentimental, in fact, turns out to be one of her greatest assets, though a liability in the short term [...] Catherine is free to imagine and invent, and therefore free to act" (Fuller 94, 102). Catherine's natural tendencies to imagine and apply gothic notions to her own world—her reaction to her second carriage ride with John Thorpe, her visit to Northanger Abbey—allows her to avoid any realistic danger or trouble she may truly face as she readily assumes herself a character in a novel, transforming her from anti-heroine to heroine in Austen's novel, though such applications of the gothic

disable Catherine from accurately understanding her society and world. Catherine's adherence to loving the gothic causes her to remain friends with Isabella longer than she may naturally have been. According to Fuller, “[Catherine] is more gullible for a longer time with Isabella, but Isabella is pretty, ingratiating, and [...] often speaks like a heroine from” the books Catherine reads and loves (Fuller 94). As a result, Catherine follows along with Isabella's schemes and puts up with her selfishness.

However, differences can be seen between Catherine and Isabella in various minor interactions between the two women. Comparing how both react to and address issues that are not of feminine concerns as well as the way Catherine's reactions to Isabella change throughout the novel show the reader the most transformation within Catherine. When Catherine first meets Isabella, she is nearly inseparable from her newfound friend (*Northanger Abbey* 58), and over the following few chapters, Catherine remains a loyal confidant to Isabella. Catherine's admiration of Isabella can be seen in her praises during a conversation with her brother James, during which Catherine claims she is “particularly” fond of Isabella, she “love[s] her exceedingly,” and “Mr. Allen finds her the prettiest girl in Bath” (*Northanger Abbey* 73). Quixotic in her praises of Isabella, Catherine finds no fault in her friend and even applauds her brother for being acquainted with the socialite.

Yet, not long after James's arrival in Bath, Catherine begins to experience Isabella's true personality. At the next dance, Catherine finds herself left alone, without a partner or friend, as Isabella focuses her attention on James. In the middle of the dance, “Catherine found her arm gently seized by her faithful Isabella” (*Northanger Abbey* 78). During this encounter, Isabella frequently redirects all conversation toward her own desires, acting as a heroine in her own story. When Isabella grabs hold of Catherine, she ceremoniously

claims, “at last I have got you. My dearest creature, I have been looking for you this hour [...] I have been quite wretched without you” (*Northanger Abbey* 78). Isabella's dramatic entrance into the scene signifies the sensibility any girl mimicking novels would expect to have: Isabella acts as though she is filled with absolute misery over being separated from her dearest friend—though the honesty behind her misery is lacking—but fails to accept any accountability for the separation. Catherine innocently inquires how she was supposed to find her friend in such a crowded dance, to which Isabella continues placing blame on everyone else, including her dancing partner, James. According to Susan Zlotnick, “Catherine stands in contrast to Isabella, with her shameless self-promotion” (Zlotnick 279). In Isabella's story, Isabella becomes her own victim. Isabella continues to focus the attention on herself by claiming she does not want attention: “It would make us the talk of the place, if we were not to change partners [...] My sweet Catherine, do support me, persuade your brother how impossible it is. Tell him, that it would quite shock you to see me do such a thing; now would not it?” (*Northanger Abbey* 79). Catherine, with her social ignorance and inability to understand Isabella's plea, responds, “No, not at all; but if you think it wrong, you had much better change” (79). Austen shows Catherine's autonomy with her response: Catherine is not persuaded to agree with Isabella, but rather encourages Isabella to act according to her own thoughts, in part because Catherine is incapable of guiding Isabella to virtuous behavior regardless of the impropriety in her choice. As Isabella declines a third dance with James, Catherine decides, for herself, that she should not remain attached to John Thorpe for the evening and seeks out a dance with Henry Tilney. Juliet McMaster argues that readers cannot claim Catherine “is finely aware and richly responsible” (McMaster 16) in the moment before the dance that Catherine suggests

she would be happy to see Thorpe at the Fullerton ball, giving Thorpe, in his own mind, romantic encouragement. Claiming, “there is something of the Holy Fool about Catherine, the kind of wisdom in simplicity that we find in Lear’s fool” (16), McMaster goes on to argue that “For all her ignorance, Catherine is wise. Even if only intermittently. And there’s a particular quality to her innocence” (McMaster 16-17). McMaster’s argument about Catherine is rather accurate. For all Catherine is not aware of in her society or when interacting with others, her honesty and natural sincerity, especially in times of complete independence on thought, showcases Catherine as an autonomous and wise woman. It is only when she is influenced by others that she loses her independent and naturally, instinctively intelligent qualities.

Parallel Structure

While several events throughout the story contribute to Catherine's loss of uniqueness, three sets of parallel scenes highlight her transformation from an individual woman into an ordinary society-influenced wife: discussions on nature, carriage rides, and Catherine's reading and understanding of gothic literature. According to Kathleen Ann Miller, “women's Gothic often features repetitive scenes and events” (Miller 127), first to recreate scenes from other novels and second to recreate scenes within one’s own novels, emphasizing particular character performances. By using identical scenarios in *Northanger Abbey*, Austen devalues the situation and emphasizes Catherine's character transformation, ultimately ending with her dent into society and marriage.

Parallel Structure and Nature. During a walk to Beechen Cliff, Catherine states that she cannot look at the hill “without thinking of the south of France,” only to reveal she has never traveled to the country but has merely read descriptions of it in *Mysteries of Udolpho*

(*Northanger Abbey* 120). Without a proper upbringing, Catherine is socially unaware of her surroundings. As a child, Catherine “had no taste for a garden; and if she gathered flowers at all, it was chiefly for pleasure of mischief” (*Northanger Abbey* 38). Her inability to draw or paint leaves her even more desperately oblivious to real-world beauty. The only beauty Catherine can behold is the scenery that she can imagine from literature. It is during this scene that we see a subtle change in Catherine's awareness to her own unawareness:

They were viewing the country with eyes of persons accustomed to drawing [...] with all the eagerness of real taste. Here Catherine was quite lost. She knew nothing of drawing – nothing of taste: – and she listened to them with an attention that brought her little profit [...] The little which she could understand however appeared to contradict the very few notions she had entertained on the matter before [...] She was heartily ashamed of her ignorance. (*Northanger Abbey* 124)

Here Catherine shows signs of wanting to assimilate to the world around her. She recognizes that she does not relate to the educated Tilneys and cannot discuss the beauty of the world in an eloquent manner. As a result, Catherine determines to learn about the beauty of nature, signifying a transformation in her character. The girl who had a distaste for gardens and gathered flowers for mischief now desires to learn about nature's splendor; she was now “so hopeful a scholar” (*Northanger Abbey* 125) as opposed to an inattentive and stupid girl.

Readers see this transformation continue during Catherine's stay at the abbey, as she directs the conversation to the gardens after a stormy night: “What beautiful hyacinths!—I have just learnt to love a hyacinth [...] your sister taught me; I cannot tell how. Mrs. Allen used to take pains, year after year, to make me like them; but I never could, till I saw them the other day [...] I am naturally indifferent about flowers” (*Northanger Abbey* 175). Juliet McMaster notes that

we are led to believe this is not just an accidental change, but a triumph [Catherine] has worked at. She has *learned* to love a hyacinth [...] it is a central moment in Catherine's development. That freshness and accessibility that makes her so attractive has now been converted from the 'voluntary, self-created delusion, ... From an imagination resolved on alarm' to an outward-looking delight in what is actually around her. And of course her teachableness of disposition. (McMaster 22)

McMaster suggests Catherine's development affects her character: she is no longer delusional but rather thoughtful. While I understand McMaster's reading of Catherine's newfound love of hyacinths, I wonder what Catherine has lost. By accepting or acknowledging beauty, or by simply recognizing beauty in a hyacinth, Catherine is showing a change from unique, imaginative tomboy into an inept but teachable socialite. She is accepting the role as one of many women in society who love hyacinths; she is essentially mimicking Mrs. Allen, Isabella, or Eleanor, all of whom appreciate flowers and nature's splendor. Our anti-heroine is becoming the heroine of her story by becoming a typical woman showing sensibility in something she never showed sensibility in previously. With the knowledge of natural beauty comes Catherine's awareness of society and human nature. *Parallel Structure and Carriage Rides.* Furthermore, Austen uses parallel structure to inform Catherine's trajectory as a character. In fact, the way Austen's heroine views her world through a fictional lens can be seen predominantly during carriage rides as well as during her time traveling to and arriving at the abbey.

Throughout *Northanger Abbey*, Catherine takes several carriage rides that signify her transformation. During her first two carriage rides, Catherine accompanies John Thorpe, a parody of a villain who is vying for the heroine's heart. Prior to and during the initial moments of the first carriage ride, John Thorpe ineloquently describes his horse; during these moments, Catherine is passive, trusting, and despite her own intuition, incapable of accurately reading others: "Catherine, though she could not help wondering

that with such perfect command of his horse, he should think it necessary to alarm her with a relation of its tricks, congratulated herself sincerely on being under the care of so excellent a coachman" (*Northanger Abbey* 83). Catherine's innocence and willingness to trust those she meets also leads her to misread each character. With her first carriage ride, Catherine makes two missteps: she takes part in an activity inappropriate for a young woman—after all, open carriage rides alone with men imply impropriety—and she incorrectly judges Thorpe's character. Throughout the ride, Catherine is inundated with enough lies, exaggerations, and worries to begin to question Thorpe's character, but she does not fully trust her own judgment:

Little as Catherine was in the habit of judging for herself, and unfixed as were her general notions of what men ought to be, she could not entirely repress a doubt, while she bore with the effusions of his endless conceit, of him being altogether completely agreeable. It was a bold surmise, for he was Isabella's brother and she had been assured by James, that his manners would recommend him to all her sex; but in spite of this, the extreme weariness of his company, which crept over her before they had been out an hour, and which continued unceasingly to increase till they stopped in Pulteney-street again, induced her, in some small degree, to resist such high authority, and to distrust his powers of giving universal pleasure. (*Northanger Abbey* 86)

Catherine recognizes Thorpe as dishonest, though because he is Isabella's brother and James' friend, she is reluctant to fully accept her distrust in him; instead, as the narrator acknowledges, Catherine questions her own judgment only to convince herself to a "small degree" that she should not trust Thorpe's authority or ability to generate enjoyment. In fact, it isn't until the carriage ride is over and Isabella questions Catherine on the "swiftness"—or in this case, enjoyment—of the ride, to which Catherine "could not tell a falsehood even to please Isabella" (*Northanger Abbey* 87) that readers see Catherine take charge of her mind.

This autonomy continues with the second carriage ride, before which Catherine is more reluctant to attend due to the possibility of an engagement with the Tilneys. Despite her reluctance, and after Thorpe lies to Catherine about the Tilneys' whereabouts and mentally seduces her with promises of the gothic Blaize Castle, Catherine once again agrees to go. Shortly after beginning the ride, Thorpe acknowledges two individuals walking on pavement as they pass in the carriage, who end up being the Tilneys. Catherine's recognition of the siblings prompts her desperate cries to stop the carriage: "Stop, stop Mr. Thorpe [...] Stop, stop, I will get out this moment and go to them [...] Pray, pray stop, Mr. Thorpe.—I cannot go on.—I will not go on.—I must go back to Miss Tilney [...] how could you deceive me so, Mr. Thorpe?" (*Northanger Abbey* 103-104). It is during this carriage ride that readers see Catherine most relating to heroines of gothic literature, as the villainous Thorpe practically kidnaps Catherine in spite of her cries to stop the carriage. Fuller argues that

For Catherine, the threat of sexual violence is real, and it comes from the repulsive John Thorpe, who deceives and seduces her [...] John would like nothing better than to trap Catherine into a dark corner—and hence into marriage with him [...] Significantly, Catherine's ignorance of the danger she is in helps rather than hinders her [...] She may be physically in John's power, but she comes into her own psychological agency as the drive progresses. (*Northanger Abbey* 95-97)

Because of Thorpe's actions, Catherine disassociates herself from him. This is a significant step she makes towards her transformation. Previously, Catherine would have accepted Thorpe's actions considering he was her friend's brother and brother's friend. However, she is now showing the capability of choosing her own path—one that leads to and involves the Tilneys:

Catherine's complaisance was no longer what it had been in their former airing. She listened reluctantly and her replies were short. Blaize Castle remained her only comfort; towards *that*, she still looked at intervals with pleasure; though rather than

be disappointed [or] thought ill of by the Tilneys, she would willingly have given up all the happiness which its walls could supply (*Northanger Abbey* 104)

When in the company of the Thorpes, Catherine's only pleasure is in the horrid and mysterious. Yet, Austen establishes another subtle change in her heroine, one that won't be fully addressed until the end of the novel. Even while Catherine visits Blaize Castle with the Thorpes, she is still preoccupied and more desiring of spending her time with the Tilneys. This preference to spend time with the Tilneys signifies Catherine's transformation and foreshadows Catherine abandoning her fondness toward the gothic for her role as Henry's wife. Catherine shows her faithfulness to Tilney once again when asked to go on a third carriage ride, this time to Clifton. Undeterred by Isabella's begging and Thorpe's sneaky schemes, Catherine gathers her confidence to decline the invitation and escape the situation (*Northanger* 114-116). While she is not completely willing to give up her beloved fiction just yet, her tendencies gear her toward the one man able to stabilize her imagination and turn her into a sensible woman.

Parallel Structure, the Abbey, and Henry Tilney. Henry Tilney, Catherine's eventual hero, accompanies Catherine on her third open carriage ride, and though she has initial reservations regarding the practice, Catherine reasons her ability to ride alone with Henry on the fact that it was General Tilney's suggestion (*Northanger Abbey* 159-160). This is a stark difference from her most recent assumption, provoked by Mr. Allen's explanation of the impropriety of open carriage rides in which Catherine was mortified at her own indecorum. However, Austen realizes that "A heroine so innocent but ripe for impressions, with a mind (so far) devastatingly under stocked, is like a vessel needing to be filled, an identity ready to happen" (McMaster 17), and she uses Henry and Catherine's carriage drive to exploit Catherine's fantastic knowledge of abbeys, suggesting her impending

experience will be filled with dark passages, secretive servants, mysterious furniture, and distant rooms separating her from her hosts as a way to continue Catherine's impending transformation (*Northanger* 161-162). Catherine allows her fancy to overtake her excitement, expecting the fictional world, and is wholly disappointed and confused when the abbey does not match her expectations:

"This is just like the book!" [...] her impatience for a sight of the abbey [...] returned in full force, and every bend in the road was expected with solemn awe to afford a glimpse [...] But so low did the building stand that she found herself passing through the great gates of the lodge into the very grounds of *Northanger*, without having discerned even an antique chimney [...] to find herself with such ease in the precincts of the abbey, and driven so rapidly along a smooth, level road of fine gravel, without obstacle, alarm, or solemnity of any kind, struck her as odd and inconsistent. (*Northanger* 162).

Catherine's reading influences her to relate to the world as gothic heroines relate to their fictional worlds (Nelson). Catherine "fall[s] back upon fictional models for understanding human behavior. In this she is encouraged by Henry's own parodic gothic tale, spun as he drives her to *Northanger*" (Bander 56). Her understanding of the world is strictly formed from the romanticized ideas in literature; the only knowledge she has of an abbey is suddenly being contested by reality. Henry Tilney, realizing Catherine's enjoyment of the gothic, takes advantage of her innocence and imagination. While Henry may not be aware of how closely Catherine relates fiction with reality, he encourages her obsession, which inevitably leads to Catherine misreading the history of the abbey and Henry's harsh but realistic correction of her error.

Mary-Catherine Harrison argues that "individuals 'emplot' their own lives [and] also that life stories are shaped, perhaps made possible, by the plot structures of fictional stories" (Harrison 113). Catherine does just this as she interjects the fantastical notions of the gothic into her stay at *Northanger Abbey*. Her first night staying in the abbey, Catherine

comes upon a locked cabinet, similar to one Henry described during the carriage ride, and one that she can't resist opening. Opening the cabinet, Catherine finds what she believes to be a manuscript and is forced to leave it until morning to read, at which time "Her greedy eye glanced over a page. She stared at its import. Could it be possible [...] An inventory of linen, in coarse and modern characters, seemed all that was before her! [...] How could she have so imposed on herself?—Heaven forbid that Henry Tilney should ever know her folly!" (*Northanger Abbey* 174). Fictitious notions from gothic literature control Catherine's imagination, and again Catherine's fanciful ideas are disproved by reality, leading to her being able to more accurately read the world around her. In this case, however, her recognition of reality is more direct and accepting. Rather than being confused by reality, as she is coming upon newness and pleasantness in the abbey, Catherine is embarrassed to have believed the papers she found were anything but explainable. Able to recognize her own silly error, Catherine begins to dismiss her initial assumptions of the abbey's history.

In a final gothic reference, Austen places Catherine in the midst of a perceived mystery. Catherine believes something horrific happened to the late Mrs. Tilney years ago, suspects General Tilney of murder, and takes it upon herself to investigate the wife's forbidden bedroom. Entering the bedroom, Catherine is greeted with a pleasant, well-furnished chamber, and immediately laments her suspicions: "Catherine had expected to have her feelings worked, and worked they were. Astonishment and doubt first seized them; and a shortly succeeding ray of common sense added some bitter emotions of shame. She could not be mistaken as to the room; but how grossly mistaken in everything else!" (*Northanger Abbey* 192). Once again, Catherine confronts a situation she believes should be

filled with clandestine gothic secrets only to realize the lack of mystery and become grounded in reality.

The situation takes a more drastic turn when Henry confronts her and her accusations, pointing to her errors and wrongful suspicions. Upon finding Catherine roaming his deceased mother's room, Henry begins to question the heroine's intentions. He begins the interrogation subtly, claiming his mother's room should be of no interest to anyone, unless the visit "must have proceeded from a sentiment of respect for my mother's character," only to find Catherine's true purpose for snooping having to do with her interest in his mother's sudden death (*Northanger Abbey* 194). Beginning to understand Catherine's fanciful and grotesque interest in the room, Henry initiates the logical explanations for his mother's demise, accusing Catherine of the ridiculousness in her assumptions of negligence and explaining that his mother's death was sudden, though her sons were "both at home" in the days prior to her death (*Northanger Abbey* 195). While Catherine is corrected, she still adheres to the possibility that General Tilney played a part in his wife's death, only to be told by Henry of how much his father loved and valued his wife. During Henry's reprimand, Catherine moves from full assumption of complete horror surrounding the lonely and sudden death of Mrs. Tilney, to recognizing Mrs. Tilney was cared for at the time of her death by her sons and only questioning the intentions of General Tilney, to expressing "tears of shame [as she] ran off to her own room" (*Northanger Abbey* 196). In three pages, Austen is able to use Henry as a way of eliminating Catherine's horrid assumptions; Henry changes Catherine's mind, forcing her to read the world around her rather than see the world through the lens of her books. By the following scene, Catherine takes her final step away from gothic tendencies, and is able to

distinguish fiction—both from the novels she reads and the images Henry implanted in her mind during the carriage ride—from reality.

In each subsequent scene, Catherine's understanding of her world is adapted by her ability to make sense of the situation she is in, many in relation to Henry Tilney. Her relationship with Henry Tilney greatly influences her experiences within the abbey; he teaches "Catherine to see his family home through the conventions of gothic novels" (Cordon 56) and then abruptly redirects her attention to understand the reality within those same abbey walls. Catherine's understanding of gothic literature misguides her understanding of reality, or rather she confuses the two. Catherine changes after giving up her idealistic view of life for a more traditional and accepted view, thanks to Henry. Reality demystifies Catherine. Applying her understanding of the books she read to the world around her gave Catherine a way "to navigate her social world, but it also prompts her to act in ways that suggest an enhanced sense of autonomy [...] Until her famous reprimand by Henry Tilney" (Zlotnick 288-289). Despite her incorrect assumptions about the abbey and General Tilney, prior to understanding the reality of her visit to Northanger Abbey, Catherine was (inaccurately) reading the world as though she were a heroine in a gothic novel. While she may try to exhibit qualities of fictional heroines – she is, after all, Austen's anti-heroine – Catherine is not at all like other women in the real world, who would not expect the abbey to be old and mysterious, fiddle around at night with an old cabinet, expect to find an ancient manuscript, or inwardly accuse her host of murder. All of Catherine's autonomy and independence disappear after she is faced with the truth of the abbey and becomes more capable of reading the world around her: "The visions of romance were over. Catherine was completely awakened. Henry's address, short as it had

been, had more thoroughly opened her eyes to the extravagance of her late fancies than all their several disappointments had done. Most grievously was she humbled" (*Northanger Abbey* 196). Once again, Henry influences Catherine's perspective on the world. In the initial stages of their acquaintances, Henry taught Catherine to read nature at Beechen Cliff; on their carriage ride, Henry inadvertently inspired Catherine to seek gothic plots at the abbey; and now, finally, Henry has taught Catherine how to read her society and the world. Through this upheaval, Catherine has become "humbled," and no longer seeks the gothic that made her imaginative, fanciful, and autonomous; rather, she is careful with her assumptions and her actions, transforming her into a more subdued woman.

After Catherine's Dismissal from Northanger Abbey

In her final carriage ride, Catherine is traveling alone, home from Northanger Abbey after being rejected by General Tilney: "The journey in itself had no terrors for her; and she began it without either dreading its length, or feeling its solitariness" (*Northanger Abbey* 222). All gothic tendencies and sensibility in Catherine are gone by this final carriage ride. She leaves the abbey without a fight, promises to write her friend, and, upon arriving at home, composes herself for her family. Martin notes, "[Austen] formulates happiness as a reflection of the internal and external processes that facilitate recognizing and making correct choices" (Martin 2), but I would argue that Catherine is less happy by the end of her story. Throughout *Northanger Abbey*, Catherine desperately assimilates to the society around her, altering herself from the carefree tomboy to a mannered woman. In Chapter 30, her mother remarks, "My dear Catherine, I am afraid you are growing quite a fine lady" (*Northanger Abbey* 230). Catherine's mother recognizes her daughter's growth and transformation by the end of the novel, though the sentiment attached to her

acknowledgement is not necessarily one of joy or happiness for Mrs. Morland. After all, Catherine has changed. Catherine has lost her spirit: “in her silence and sadness she was the very reverse of all that she had been before” (*Northanger Abbey* 230). The mother who willingly allowed her daughter to be the person she wanted to be now sees her daughter trying to be the woman society expects. Catherine has matured, she acknowledges natural beauty, and she even participates in needlework. Even after Henry Tilney heroically travels to Fullerton to right his father’s wrong, Catherine never regains the individuality she had in the beginning. At his arrival, despite being excited, Catherine remains silent. Austen spends the remaining chapters explaining General Tilney’s error and summarizes the brief missteps before Catherine and Henry marry.

As Catherine becomes more adept in society, she no longer has her own thoughts or opinions. Instead those around her—and primarily Henry Tilney—drive her thoughts. Catherine is certainly easy to influence, especially for Henry Tilney. Due to her naiveté and desire to impress her hero, Catherine moves from reading literature uncritically to reading people uncritically, never questioning Henry Tilney’s teachings. After Henry’s lessons, Catherine may be able to better understand society and human nature through a sense of irony, but she loses the sense of self she had at the beginning of the novel. Schaub further suggests, “*Northanger Abbey* [...] is a survival manual [...] Knowledge might make one a better navigator of the shark-infested waters of English society, but will not transform that society for the better” (Schaub 3). Catherine, unaware of the world, becomes acquainted with her society; the shark-infested waters do not transform for her, she transforms to the world around her. As Catherine becomes more socially adept she actually loses her individuality and succumbs to the typicality of other women in society who fall victim to

the same storyline. In the end, Catherine gets a husband, placing her in Austen's favorite role for her protagonists: wife.

Chapter Two

Juxtaposing Siblings and the Taming of Marianne

Jane Austen wrote *Elinor and Marianne*, the first draft of *Sense and Sensibility*, some time between 1795 and 1796 as a series of letters focusing on the relationships and lives of two sisters (Tomalin 107). In 1809, Austen revised her novel for a final time and published *Sense and Sensibility* in 1811 (*Sense and Sensibility* Introduction). Austen uses her heroines, sisters Elinor and Marianne Dashwood, to contrast the approaches to female conduct, with Elinor representing sense and propriety and Marianne epitomizing sensibility and unrestrained emotion. Their differences are easily seen through their individual reactions to similar events throughout the novel, their approaches to love, and their varying levels of transformation.

As Claire Tomalin notes, “Austen is considering how far society can tolerate openness, and what its effect on the individual may be [...] One theme of the book is that survival in society means you cannot afford to live with Marianne’s openness” (155-156). I agree with Tomalin’s analysis of *Sense and Sensibility*, and considering Austen’s own personality and relationship with Tom Lefroy between writing her first draft of *Elinor and Marianne* and her final revisions, I argue Austen (re)modeled Marianne to imitate her own life as Austen herself came to terms with societal expectations. Marvin Mudrick has previously suggested, and I agree, that “Austen herself is partly mirrored by both heroines of *Sense and Sensibility*: Elinor would be the author’s conscience, while Marianne represents [...] her author’s spirit” (Giobbi 242). By using Elinor, who Austen likely originally modeled after her own sister Cassandra, as the example of how a woman or wife

is expected to act, while leading Marianne through a regression to become more decorous and like her sister, I suggest Austen uses her heroines as a way to balance how she wishes she could act versus how she inevitably should, and in the end mourning but condoning Marianne's transformation.

General Comparisons Between Sisters

The first chapter of *Sense and Sensibility* gives readers a distinct comparison between the Dashwood sisters. Austen's narrator describes Elinor, the eldest Dashwood daughter, as "possessed by a strength of understanding [...] coolness of judgment [...] excellent heart" (*Sense and Sensibility* 44). The narrator also informs readers of Elinor's abilities to govern her strong emotions, being the only Dashwood woman able to do so (44). Later, readers learn of Elinor's accomplishment in drawing (66), a solitary and quiet hobby perfect for Elinor's introvert manners. Unlike Elinor, Marianne, the middle Dashwood daughter, was "sensible and clever [...] eager in every thing; her sorrows, her joys, could have no moderation [...] she was every thing but prudent" (44). Further, Marianne is accomplished in playing the pianoforte (66), an instrument that automatically engages those around as she performs and demands attention of a room.

Austen's contrasting is easily derived from the lives of her sister Cassandra and herself. Like Elinor, Cassandra was "pretty, sensible, and pleasing [...] had taken up drawing [...] was prim" (Tomalin 60-61, 211). Phylly [Phila] Walter, and friend of the Austens, wrote of the sisters in a letter claiming Cassandra "keeps up conversation in a very sensible & pleasing manner" (le Faye 64), a trait Elinor encompasses throughout *Sense and Sensibility*. After the death of her fiancé in February 1797, "Cassandra's attentions were given to her immediate family circle—taking over more of the house responsibilities as her

mother grew older” (le Faye), a quality also shown in Elinor as she prepares her family, especially her mother, for their move from Norland and during Marianne’s illness later in the novel. Just as Elinor resembles Cassandra, Marianne too resembles Jane Austen. Phyllis Walter, who had taken to the older Austen sister, did not think equally of Jane, describing the young Austen as “whimsical and affected” (Tomalin 60). Similar to her literary counterpart, Austen played the pianoforte (61). Austen also had her imprudent side, seen when she unabashedly announces to her sister her newfound acquaintance with Tom Lefroy as well as in her references to the provocative story of *Tom Jones* (114-115).

Austen paints two distinct, completely different heroines for her readers from the beginning of the novel. Yet, despite the novel being written in third person, it is from Elinor’s perspective, the character developed after Austen’s own sister Cassandra, who the narrator seems primarily to be drawn. Tomalin suggests, “Austen sets out to present Elinor as the model of good behavior” (Tomalin 155). Gilbert and Gubar argue that “Austen questions and criticizes her own aesthetic and ironic sensibilities, noting the limits and asserting the dangers of an imagination undisciplined by the rigors of art” (Giobbi 242). By paralleling Gilbert and Gubar’s argument with the characters of *Sense and Sensibility*, I argue that Austen was mirroring her imprudence, imagination, and sensibility with the emotionally excessive Marianne. As Giobbi suggests, Austen was torn between “Marianne’s spontaneity [and] Elinor’s reserve” (242). By the time she began revising *Elinor and Marianne* into *Sense and Sensibility*, Austen had experienced her own heartache from a relationship in which she acted similar to Marianne, and one in which Cassandra warned her to approach with more propriety (Tomalin 156-157). Austen’s favoring of Elinor, or at least having her narrator favor Elinor, indicates Austen’s acceptance of Elinor as the proper

example of potential wife, and suggests Austen's own concerns with Marianne's personality, as well as her own, signifying the greatest transformation will be seen in the younger heroine.

Reactions to Leaving Norland

Differences in the sisters' reactions to various events throughout the novel emphasize Austen's predilection toward using Elinor as the archetype for a societal woman and eventual wife. Despite encountering exact and nearly similar experiences, Elinor and Marianne have drastically conflicting attitudes, reflections, and opinions of their episodes, with Elinor approaching each event with propriety, calmness and quiet, and Marianne relying on extravagant emotions and outspoken opinions. Their differences are seen in their reactions to leaving Norland.

One of the first events to take place in which readers are able to see distinct differences between the Dashwood sisters occurs throughout chapters 3 and 4, during which the Dashwood women must leave the Norland estate. After the death of Mr. Dashwood in chapter 1, Mrs. Dashwood and her daughters are left to the forced hospitality of Mr. John Dashwood and his atrocious wife, Fanny. As personalities increasingly clash and the mutual contempt between Fanny and Mrs. Dashwood grew, Mrs. Dashwood inevitably concluded to leave Norland. With an income of only 700 a year, Mrs. Dashwood "suited the prudence of her eldest daughter, whose steadier judgment rejected several houses as too large for their income" (*Sense and Sensibility* 52). There is no surprise in Mrs. Dashwood seeking Elinor's opinion; in the initial description of Elinor, the narrator explains to readers that the eldest daughter is "the counsellor of her mother" (44). Mrs. Dashwood turning to Elinor for housing opinions, especially after a time of bereavement and as a character much

more likened to her middle daughter, indicates both Mrs. Dashwood's incompetence and Elinor's duties. The seeking of Elinor's judgment implicates her responsibility within her family and is the first notion that she is more mature than her mother and a sister, suggesting that Elinor's prudence is a desirable characteristic in her and in women.

When Mrs. Dashwood receives a letter from a relation in Devonshire offering the Dashwood women property, Mrs. Dashwood immediately agreed to moving to Barton Park and inhabiting Barton Cottage. Despite not wanting to ever leave Norland, Elinor believes it to be more prudent to leave the area due to current relations, and "therefore, it was not for her to oppose her mother's intention of moving into Devonshire" (61). Approaching the move away from Norland less prudently is Marianne. Upon leaving Norland, Marianne turns toward the estate with tears in her eyes and professes her sorrow for their departure:

when shall I cease to regret you!—when learn to feel a home elsewhere!—Oh! happy house, could you know what I suffer in now viewing you from this spot, from whence perhaps I may view you no more!—And you, ye well-known trees! [...] No; you will continue the same [...] But who will remain to enjoy you? (64)

In her most dramatic moments, as Gila R. Reinstein suggests, "Marianne's speeches are typically graced with rhetorical questions, apostrophe, personification, and hyperbole" (Haggerty 222). In one of her first expressive speeches, one almost represented as an aside in a play as Marianne is speaking to only Norland—or in this case, Austen's audience—Marianne personifies both the estate and the trees. No one can love Norland as much as Marianne. No one can appreciate the beauty of the grounds and foliage like Marianne. Once she leaves, Norland's magnificence will go without appreciation, because only Marianne can appreciate it. Compared with her sister's subdued reaction to leaving their home, Marianne's reaction shows her youth, sensibility, and superficiality. Her reactions intensify

and her emotions increase with each event she encounters until she ultimately initiates her own depression, signifying a major point in her transformation.

Like her sentimental heroine, Austen too experienced the melancholy event of leaving her childhood home. In December 1800, nine years before the final revisions on *Sense and Sensibility*, Austen's parents chose to leave their home at Steventon, causing Jane to feel exiled to Bath. Austen was twenty-five at the time and became "greatly distressed" at the idea of leaving her home (Tomalin 168-169). As did her heroine, Marianne, Austen experienced disappointment and emotional suffering due to her parents' decision.

The parallels between Austen and Marianne continue when comparing the individuals who took control of Norland and Steventon, and the bitter circumstances of relinquishing each property. After deciding to relocate to Bath, Mr. And Mrs. Austen left Steventon to their son, James, and his wife, Mary. Distraught over the circumstances of losing her home, Austen, "made it clear she felt the James Austens showed too much eagerness to take over Steventon" (169). In fact, Austen lost her home and many of her family's possessions when her brother took over their estate. However, "Since both her parents were agreeable to all this seizing, Jane herself was powerless" (169). Austen's anger and sadness over the relinquishing of Steventon can be seen paralleled in *Sense and Sensibility*. Just as Steventon is relinquished to James, Norland was bequeathed to John Dashwood, half brother of Elinor and Marianne. And, just as Austen believed her own brother to be "too eager" in possessing the property, she wrote two selfish, self-satisfying characters in John and Fanny, both who are represented as "property hungry." Despite promising his father to take care of his sisters, John—with the help of his wife, Fanny—fail

to support the Dashwood girls. The beloved home of Norland that Marianne knew was lost forever, just as Steventon was lost to Austen.

Approaches to Love

Elinor and Marianne also differ in their perceptions on other characters and their approaches to love. Giobbi suggests, “Elinor’s self-restraint and Marianne’s indulgence in sensibility are shown as equally possible and plausible female attitudes”(242). In Chapters 3 and 4, Austen highlights the difference of opinions between the heroines when each gives their opinion on Edward Ferrars. The younger heroine focuses on her desires for sensibility and emotional intuitiveness whereas the eldest heroine remains prudently objective.

Before any dialogue occurs between Marianne and Elinor on the state of Elinor's courtship with Edward, Marianne is consumed in her unfavorable opinion of the man, explaining to her mother,

there is something wanting—his figure is not striking [...] His eyes want all that spirit, that fire, which at once announce virtue and intelligence. And besides all this, I am afraid, mama, he had no real taste. Music seems scarcely to attract him, and though he admires Elinor's drawings very much, it is not the admiration of a person who can understand their worth [...] He admires as a lover, not as a connoisseur. To satisfy me, those characters must be united. (*Sense and Sensibility* 55)

In all of her youthful sensibility, and in believing she emotionally understands what is important in love, Marianne comes across as superficial and self-focused. When considering Edward as a lover and husband, Marianne easily forgets with who it is she's associating him. While the conversation with Mrs. Dashwood begins discussing Elinor and Edward's potential engagement, Marianne quickly judges the man on her own standards rather than her sisters. Instead of viewing Edward from her sister's perspective, Marianne assumes Elinor's role, claiming Edward lacks all the necessary qualities that are important to her in a man: he is not handsome, virtuous, nor intelligent. Marianne even points out that

Edward does not seem to enjoy music—an activity Marianne happily takes part—before approaching the topic of his appreciation for Elinor's drawings, again placing her preferences ahead of her sister's.

By the time Marianne speaks with Elinor regarding Edward, she refocuses her complaints to coincide with her sister's interests: "What a pity it is, Elinor, that Edward should have no taste for drawing" (57). Marianne's assertions prompt the eldest Dashwood daughter to politely retaliate and defend the man she loves, claiming Edward

is by no means deficient in natural taste, though he has not had the opportunities of improving it. Had he ever been in the way of learning, I think he would have drawn very well. He distrusts his own judgment [...] but he has an innate propriety and simplicity of taste, which in general direct him perfectly right [...] Of his sense and his goodness [...] no one can, I think, be in doubt, who has seen him often enough to engage him in unreserved conversation [...] I have seen a great deal of him, have studied his sentiments and heard his opinion on subjects of literature and taste [...] his mind is well-informed [...] his imagination lively [...] At present, I know him so well, that I think him really handsome; or, at least, almost so. (57-58)

Elinor's defense of Edward is kind, thoughtful, and dependent on the time she has spent getting to know him. She is careful not to outwardly claim she loves him, but is able to show her appreciation for Edward by speaking positively on the qualities Marianne had previously brought into question. Elinor knows Edward beyond the surface; she has spent time with him, has had conversations with him, and has grown attracted to him.

Austen exemplifies the difference between the sisters through their opinions on Edward and their specifications for love. Susan Morgan argues, "Jane Austen has arranged the opening scenes so that Elinor, in describing Edward, provides the first expression of proper feeling in the book [...] The reader must feel that Jane Austen does not allow us to see Edward's charm, but we are asked to value him because Elinor does." (190). Whereas Marianne is portrayed searching for cosmetic and depthless qualities in a man—qualities

that she believes signify great emotion and depth of character—her sister is capable of actually finding and appreciating the depth Marianne only imagines she understands. Opposed to Marianne's superficial view of Edward, Elinor's descriptions of him come across as more accurate as she has looked beyond his deficiencies. Readers are more willing to accept Elinor's opinion as Austen places her as the role model for propriety and epitome of future wife. Marianne's youth subjects her to immature wants and the juxtaposition of her personality with her sister's indicates Marianne must change her views, or at least succumb to a world dictated less by sensibility and emotion.

Austen further stresses Marianne's lack of control in courtship when she introduces Willoughby into Marianne's whimsical desires. Marianne and Willoughby's relationship begins dramatically when he saves her from a fall down a rain-soaked hill in the woods and carries her heroically back to Barton Cottage. The narrator informs the reader of "His manly beauty and more than common gracefulness" and continues to assure that "His person and air were equal to what [Marianne's] fancy had ever drawn for the hero of her favorite story (*Sense and Sensibility* 78-79). From their dramatic introductions, Marianne and Willoughby hastened a courtship that included public displays of affection and open carriage rides, creating a spectacle of the young heroine. Marianne's "Eagerness of fancy is a sign of immaturity and of disappointment and grief" (Giobbi 243). Unlike Elinor, who is capable of loving strongly without having to showcase her desire to the world, Marianne succumbs to her emotions regarding her vision of a perfect man, of which she has only imagined in stories. Marianne believes she has found love because "Willoughby's appearance, his looks, and behavior [...] perfectly match her picture of a romantic hero drawn from her reading" (Ogawa 3). Marianne can only accept a reality built from her

imagination. Marianne's imprudence not only exemplifies Elinor's discretion but also amplifies Marianne's shortcomings and implants the need for change. By playing the role of the quixotic heroine, Marianne essentially surmises her own transformation later in the novel that causes her to develop a sense of propriety and regress from her individualistic sentimental self into Colonel Brandon's wife.

In her own life, Austen embodied Marianne's reckless character. As Tomalin points out, while "Austen did not break accepted codes of behavior as she makes Marianne do, by corresponding privately with a man to whom she was not engaged [...] she did let everyone see her attraction to Tom Lefroy" (Tomalin 156). In a letter to her sister written between January 9 and January 10, 1796, Austen wrote,

You scold me so much in the nice long letter which I have this moment received from you, that I am almost afraid to tell you how my Irish friend and I behaved. Imagine to yourself everything most profligate and shocking in the way of dancing and sitting down together. I *can* expose myself however, only *once more*, because he leaves the country soon after next Friday, on which say we *are* to have a dance at Ashe after all. (Republic of Pemberley)

While Austen's actions were less severe than her literary counterpart, her "delight in announcing this shines unashamedly" (Tomalin 114), and though it seems she attempts to make light of the entire situation through teasing her sister's concerns, her jokes also mask her unrestrained feelings toward Lefroy. Austen further parallels her naïve heroine after herself in that their attraction and relationships with Lefroy and Willoughby were noticed by the society around them. Just as Marianne was candid in displaying her affections toward Willoughby, including traveling alone with Willoughby to walk the grounds at Allenham, and drew the attention of Mrs. Jennings (*Sense and Sensibility* 101), Austen, too, drew the attention of others, including family friend, John Warren:

He and Jane were good friends too, and he was one of her dancing partners the night before [...] He was back in Hampshire a few days later, when Jane discounted the idea that he might be in love with her, on the grounds that he presented her with a portrait of Tom Lefroy, drawn by himself; a gesture that made it quite clear that the flirtation had attracted attention and become common knowledge. (Tomalin 115)

Unconcerned with the views of her society, Austen characterized similar sensibility as Marianne, caught up in her own brief passionate flirtation in early 1796. By late 1797, just over a year after her connection with Lefroy, Austen revisits her draft of *Elinor and Marianne*, revising the work, “having decided that the letter form did not suit her purposes well enough” (Tomalin 120). By the end of writing *Sense and Sensibility*, Austen’s revisions into narrative allowed her to mirror her own affair more directly in Marianne, and juxtapose Elinor and Marianne’s reactions as a way of examining her own self.

Reactions to Other Characters

Austen further emphasizes the dissemblance between Elinor and Marianne’s characters further when each are given the chance to befriend and vocalize opinions on Colonel Brandon. Mrs. Jennings audaciously declares Colonel Brandon's attachment to Marianne shortly after their meeting, a declaration Marianne expressly objected to in a conversation with her mother and Elinor:

you cannot deny the absurdity of the accusation [...] he is old enough to be *my* father; and if he were ever animated enough to be in love, must long outlive every sensation of the kind [...] When is a man to be safe from such wit, if age and infirmity will not protect him? [...] Did not you hear him complain of the rheumatism? [...] thirty-five has nothing to do with matrimony. (*Sense and Sensibility* 74)

Marianne's misconceptions remain rooted in superficiality as she focuses solely on Colonel Brandon’s age. Unlike her perceived hero Willoughby, Colonel Brandon does not exhibit Marianne's story-perfect qualities: he is “silent and grave [...] His appearance however was not displeasing [...] though his face was not handsome” (*Sense and Sensibility* 71). Yet the

biggest deterrent for Marianne was his age: at thirty-five, Colonel Brandon was too old and lacking life. Marianne is fixed in her opinions (Morgan 202) because she believes in expressing what she feels regardless of decorum or offense. Marianne's youth and idealistic beliefs interfere with her ability to fully understand the character of someone else. Misunderstanding Colonel Brandon and misreading Willoughby lead Marianne to her downfall and trigger her inevitable transformation.

On the other hand, Elinor allows “herself space and time to form her opinions [...] uses social forms to keep her mind and heart free while sparing her acquaintance the pain those free opinions must sometimes produce” (Morgan 202). Elinor approaches her association with others and her opinions of others with objectivity, and allows herself to learn about the other person before solidifying her opinion on them. After meeting Colonel Brandon and hearing her sister's unfavorable assessment, Elinor questions Marianne: “Infirmity! do you call Colonel Brandon infirm? [...] Perhaps, thirty-five and seventeen had better not have anything to do with matrimony together. But if there should by any chance happen to be a woman who is single at seven and twenty, I should not think Colonel Brandon's being thirty-five any objection to his marrying *her*” (*Sense and Sensibility* 74). Elinor's reaction to her sister's assessment of Colonel Brandon suggests that Elinor recognizes Marianne's immaturity. By countering Marianne, Elinor provides a logical contrast to Marianne's emotionally driven personality.

The heroines' opinions on Colonel Brandon are further juxtaposed when discussing him with Willoughby. The narrator presents the opposite sentiments of the girls directly, stating that Elinor “liked him—in spite of his gravity and reserve, she beheld in him an object of interest, His manners [...] were mild [...] she regarded him with respect and

compassion" (*Sense and Sensibility* 85). Directly after, readers are told "Marianne [...] prejudiced against him for being neither lively nor young" (85) and are subjected to a scene in which Elinor thoughtfully defends Colonel Brandon against the injustice given to him by Marianne and Willoughby. Elinor once again arises as the "moral center of *Sense and Sensibility*" (Morgan 191) while Marianne is presented needing a change of thought and attitude.

Shawn Lisa Maurer argues, and I agree, that Marianne experiences "painful process of maturation, a developmental progression from the intense emotions and dangerous passions associated with adolescence to the duties and responsibilities of adulthood" (Maurer 723). Marianne is still in a state of immature youth, during which she openly provides her opinions, idealizes the storybook hero, and condemns anyone who does not fit her fancy. However, Marianne's actions eventually lead to her heartache, and she is forced to reconcile her sensibility with reality. However, I will go further than Maurer and suggest Marianne's experience is more than simple—though painful—maturation. Marianne matures by the end of the novel, yes; she is more logical and less romantic, seemingly more under control of her emotions as her sister, Elinor. Yet, by the time she marries Colonel Brandon, Marianne has lost the autonomy and individualism that made her a quixotic heroine, that made Colonel Brandon fall in love with her, and that allowed her to speak her mind. More than maturation, Marianne goes through a regression of character. She no longer relies on her sensibility. Rather, she molds into a socially accepted version of a wife, much like Elinor; less eager, less bright, more subdued.

Reaction to Edward and Willoughby Leaving Barton

Beyond approaching other characters differently, the two sisters' approaches to loss juxtapose one another. Elinor and Marianne both experience moments of loss throughout Austen's novel, and each of them, though their losses are similar in context, react opposite the other. One particular moment of loss both heroines encounter involve their respective heroes leaving Barton Cottage: Willoughby leaves without explanation after a short courtship with Marianne; similarly, after a short visit to Devonshire, Edward is once again separated from Elinor. And, with the men once again absent from their lives, Marianne and Elinor each adopt rituals independent to their personalities: Marianne sinks deeper in misery, succumbing to her melancholy, and Elinor presents herself unscathed as a way to manage daily life.

Once again paralleling Austen's own life, the departure of Willoughby from Marianne mirrors Tom Lefroy's disappearance from Austen's life. While Austen's reaction to Lefroy leaving is unknown as a result of Cassandra destroying her sisters' letter later in life, the events surrounding his departure are similar to Willoughby's. Readers are told that Willoughby "had no property of his own in the country; that he resided there only while he was visiting the old lady at Allenham Court, to whom he was related, and whose possessions he was to inherit" (*Sense and Sensibility* 80); in other words, Willoughby's future was dependent on his relation, Mrs. Smith, especially since his way of life exceeded his income (105). In fact, it is Mrs. Smith who sends Willoughby away from Barton, inevitably leading to his engagement and marriage to another. Similar to Willoughby, Lefroy was monetarily dependent on a great-uncle who paid for his schooling and "he could not be allowed to risk his future by entangling himself in a love affair with a penniless girl"

(Tomalin 119). As a result, Lefroy was sent away from Jane by his aunt, Mrs. Lefroy, just as Mrs. Smith sent Willoughby away. Mrs. Lefroy recognized the impossibility of marriage between Tom and Jane; according to Mrs. Lefroy's son, George, his mother "sent Tom packing so 'that no more mischief might be done,' and that she blamed him 'because he behaved so ill to Jane'" (Tomalin 119). Tomalin argues Mrs. Lefroy's response of sending away her nephew suggests that Austen "took [Tom's] attentions seriously" (119). It is quite possible Austen felt the same heartache she wrote in the character of Marianne after Willoughby's departure.

Willoughby's exit from Barton Cottage and Devonshire initiated the affliction that is the cause of Marianne's slow and reluctant transformation. Prior to Willoughby's departure, Marianne was able to successfully engage in her sensibilities and idealistic infatuations regarding love and life. After all, through Willoughby, Marianne had found her quintessential hero and was able to retain her fancied, adolescent recognition of emotion. It is Marianne's grasp on her emotions, or rather what she believes her emotions should portray, that creates the first of her violent afflictions:

Her eyes were red and swollen; and it seemed as if her tears were even then restrained with difficulty. She avoided the looks of them all, could neither eat nor speak, and after some time, on her mother's silently pressing her hand [...] she burst into tears and left the room. This violent oppression of spirits continued the whole evening. She was without any power, because she was without any desire to command over herself. (*Sense and Sensibility* 114)

Despite initially retreating to her room on receiving the news of Willoughby's leaving, Marianne eventually displays her grief in front of her family, involving her mother and sisters in her feelings without providing them the opportunity of helping her overcome her melancholy. Subjecting her family to her mourning without allowing them to assist her through it further reveals Marianne's selfishness and self-indulgence in the emotions she

refuses to renounce. This is one of many moments in *Sense and Sensibility* in which Marianne revels in extreme “adolescent angst” (Maurer 742). She truly believes she is in deep anguish and “takes her suffering seriously” (742). Yet, Marianne's compulsion to expose her affliction is not controlled, and as a result her family is left unable to help, which allows Marianne to indulge further in her misery. Unfortunately, as Ogawa suggests, “self-indulgence becomes her most prominent feature. It is the excess of feeling rather than the feeling itself that is portrayed as problematic” (Ogawa 1):

Marianne would have thought herself very inexcusable had she been able to sleep at all the first night after parting from Willoughby. She would have been ashamed to look her family in the face the next morning, had she not risen from her bed in more need of repose than when she lay down in it [...] She was awake the whole night, and she wept the greatest part of it. She got up with an headache, was unable to talk, and unwilling to take any nourishment; giving pain every moment to her moth and sisters, and forbidding all attempt at consolation from either. Her sensibility was potent enough! [...] She spent whole hours at the pianoforte alternately singing and crying; her voice often totally suspended by her tears. (*Sense and Sensibility* 115)

Through the narrator, readers are informed of Marianne's condition and her emotions, which are rarely described directly by Marianne herself. Readers must rely on a third party—the narrator—to learn that Marianne fixates on her emotional sensibility after Willoughby's departure. Austen's narrator carefully describes Marianne as having chosen to preoccupy herself with her wretched affliction; Marianne recognizes that if she were to consider herself emotionally affected she would need to remain unable to sleep and have her exhaustion recognized by others around her. Haggerty points out, “she is so devoted to her fantasies that she establishes them in her imagination as fact; her feelings take such precedence that she goes out of her way to create situations that will elicit them [...] she does nothing to curb the pain [...] [Marianne] becomes trapped in her own self-conscious response” (Haggerty 224). Without Marianne's intimate thoughts, Marianne's actions and

the given reasons for her actions come across as superficial and forced. On top of that, Marianne's meltdown once again involves her family, who are unable to console the distraught heroine when she consciously chooses not to eat breakfast. Marianne's focus is not solely on her separation from Willoughby, but also on how she should respond to her now-shattered idealistic, storybook romance. Her contrived approach to forcibly expose her emotions diminishes any true feelings that might exist; Marianne is more concerned with proving the authenticity of her despair than authentically experiencing it.

Marianne's fanciful reaction to her emotional affliction causes her to continue her unrealistic and delusional expectations of romance with Willoughby, so far that she believes it will be merely a matter of weeks before she is reunited with the gentleman again and to mistake Edward for her own faulty hero when Elinor's admirer arrives at Barton Cottage (*Sense and Sensibility* 117). Despite being pleased for her sister, Marianne remains restricted by her feelings in believing hers the quintessential romance. With Marianne's first genuine display of fanciful suffering, Austen opens the possibility for the heroine's transformation. Without Marianne anguishing over Willoughby leaving Barton, she would idealize their immature love and never speculate unspoken promises. Had Willoughby remained at Barton, Marianne would not be able to mature as she continued to romanticize their relationship. Marianne had to be jolted into her impending depression, which enables her to ultimately mature and transform.

Directly after Marianne loses Willoughby for the first time, Edward arrives unexpectedly at Barton Cottage. The narrator notes Marianne's observations on his reserve toward Elinor, explaining "there was a deficiency of all that a lover ought to look and say on such an occasion [...] seemed scarcely sensible of pleasure in seeing them" (*Sense and*

Sensibility 118). While Marianne typically idealizes what romance should be, in this case her observations establish an underlying secret of Edward's. Marianne's sensibility and acute awareness, in this case, are far less selfish than in previous events. In a rare moment, and despite always feeling Elinor and Edwards romance was cold and emotionless, Marianne recognizes in Edward a void of affection. Marianne's small recognition and momentary focus on someone other than herself and her loss of Willoughby is the first small step of her transformation.

During Edwards visit to and subsequent departure from Barton, Elinor experiences a loss similar to Marianne's. Throughout the visit, Edwards "coldness and reserve mortified" Elinor, yet despite his demeanor, Elinor was able to maintain her own composure and regulate her emotions (*Sense and Sensibility* 120). Maurer argues, "Austen presents [Marianne's] self-indulgence in direct contrast to the self-control of Elinor" (733). Marianne is always established as selfish in her actions compared to Elinor; however, while Elinor is capable of containing her emotions, the narrator reveals Elinor is capable of accessing similar sentiment as Marianne. As the tenure of Edward's stay continues, Elinor finds herself analyzing his every action and reaction in search for his affection:

It was evident that he was unhappy; she wished it were equally evident that he still distinguished her by the same affection which once she had felt no doubt of inspiring; but hitherto the continuance of his preference seemed very uncertain; and the reservedness of his manner towards her contradicted one moment what a more imaged look had intimated the preceding one. (*Sense and Sensibility* 126)

By scrutinizing Edward's manner, Elinor adopts a version of Marianne's sentimentality, presenting a slight decline in her prudent nature. While Elinor can outwardly maintain composure, through the narrator readers are able to perceive her subconscious that present her insecurities; and though she does not express her concerns for others to see, as

Marianne does, readers are able to know Elinor's rising concerns, showing a small resemblance to her sister's personality. Elinor further experiences the beginnings of her limited transformation midway through Edward's visit when Marianne calls attention to a "ring, with a plait of hair in the centre" that he is wearing: "That the hair was her own, she instantaneously felt as well satisfied as Marianne [...] she internally resolved henceforth to catch every opportunity of eyeing the hair and of satisfying herself, beyond all doubt, that it was exactly the shade of her own" (*Sense and Sensibility* 128). Elinor seeks security in the ring after suffering Edward's unfamiliar behavior, and by the time Edward leaves Barton, Elinor "was forced to turn for comfort the renewal of her confidence in Edward's affection to the remembrance of every arm of regard in look or word which fell from him [...] to that flattering proof of it which he constantly wore round his finger" (*Sense and Sensibility* 132). Like Marianne, Elinor finds false assurance and proof to guard her emotions. The rational Elinor, who earlier was reluctant to assume without confirmation, is now actively accepting the unreliable when it comes to her relationship with Edward. I propose that Austen, identifying with the more imaginative and idealistic Marianne who requires a complete transformation, is reluctant to surrender the character's sensibility completely; as such, Austen provides her prudent heroine with a smattering of emotional-indulgence. In this way, Elinor becomes more vulnerable.

Still, Elinor's indulgence is maintained inwardly, and her reactions to Edward's departure, though she is emotionally tormented, remain poised and composed. Readers are informed by the narrator that Edward's departure from Barton "left an uncomfortable impression on Elinor's feelings especially, which required some trouble and time to subdue [...] she did not adopt the method so judiciously employed by Marianne" (*Sense and*

Sensibility 133-134). Elinor neither lessened nor increased her sorrow, and remained in control of her emotions after Edward's exit. The juxtaposition of Elinor and Marianne's reactions further expose the need for Marianne's transformation. Marianne must become Elinor, who despite exhibiting some emotional-indulgence is still capable of commanding her feelings and censuring herself in public. Marianne must regress away from her dramatic reactions and subdue her emotions in order to establish herself as marriage material. It is not until she is able to take hold and control her emotions that she does settle down.

Marianne's Transformation

The success of Marianne's transformation depends solely on how accurately she is able to emulate her sister. It is essential for Marianne to regress from her individualistic, idealistic self to better follow the same prudence and decorum her sister is capable of maintaining. And yet, unwilling to omit all overt emotion, Austen is deliberate in her treatment of Elinor's transformation, having the prudent heroine digress and adopt some of Marianne's selfishness.

Elinor's most severe heartache comes when she learns of Edward's engagement to Lucy. On hearing of the engagement, Elinor is incredulous. She is unable to believe the man she has believed herself to have a courtship with to be engaged, and in order to learn the truth of the matter, she employs herself as a confidant to Lucy, not to alleviate the girls secret but rather to selfishly discover how her life has been affected: "Much as she had suffered from her first conversation with Lucy on the subject, she soon felt an earnest wish of renewing it; and this for more reasons than one" (*Sense and Sensibility* 167). Barbara K. Seeber accurately notes the Elinor behavior is "frequently cited as selflessness in

comparison to Marianne's selfish insistence on individual happiness [but] her behaviour is no more selfless or selfish than Marianne's [since] she receives an opportunity to satisfy her curiosity about Lucy and Edward's engagement" (Seeber 230). Elinor's intentions are no longer focused solely on the happiness of those around her. By simulating interest in Lucy's life, Elinor actually gains gratification by obtaining the information, even if the information causes her pain. Though subtle and still capable of presenting a logical and judicious individual, by pursuing any information Elinor embraces a small part of Marianne's personality. Even though Elinor is Austen's exemplar heroine in the story, Austen allows her to have flaws, suggesting that through her own growth, Austen struggled with the conflict of being true to her overt emotions and being societally proper.

Marianne's transformation was initiated when Willoughby left Barton, though the effects of her regression are not seen until much later. Before she is capable of surrendering her sensibility, Marianne must experience total heartbreak. After arriving in London, Marianne immediately writes to Willoughby, though no response is ever received. It isn't until Marianne attends a party that she once again encounters her runaway hero, now barely addressing the young heroine and treating her with a lack of emotion. Willoughby's treatment of Marianne at the party triggers her misery as she begs her sister to seek an explanation from the gentleman. By the next morning, Marianne has entered into the illness that signifies her transformation: "Marianne was in a silent agony [...] Marianne, only half dressed, was [...] writing as fast as a continual flow of tears would permit her [...] she was writing for the last time to Willoughby" (*Sense and Sensibility* 201-202). In this moment, Marianne is desperately trying to preserve her relationship with Willoughby, thereby subconsciously attempting to protect her own emotions, actions, and sensibility.

Should she admit that she has lost Willoughby, she must also recognize her idealistic storybook romance was a farce. During the course of her depressive illness, Marianne slowly admits to the misinterpretations and misrepresentations of hers and Willoughby's courtship: he never explicitly declared his love and Marianne was acting on her assumptions of what existed between them. As a result, Marianne is forced to purge her emotions and misery. Still selfish and focused on her own anguish, Marianne cries for her misery, asks to be left alone, and asks for forgiveness for causing her caring sister pain (*Sense and Sensibility* 207). Marianne's emotions remain the ruling force behind her actions.

However, unlike her first bout of misery after Willoughby's departure in which she actively chose to cry and remain awake through the night, Marianne's current misery is more authentic. She is capable of feeling the heartache and begins to rationalize the reasons behind Willoughby's actions. After hearing from Elinor the story of Eliza, Marianne "attempted no vindication of Willoughby" and "no longer avoided Colonel Brandon when he called, in her speaking to him, even voluntarily speaking, with a kind of compassionate respect" (*Sense and Sensibility* 231). With Marianne's perspective on these two men changing, their positions in her life are slowly and subtly switching places. Marianne is able to acknowledge Willoughby's faults, something she was unable to acknowledge earlier; and, more importantly, she is able to recognize something beyond fault in Colonel Brandon. This shift of thinking suggests that Marianne is maturing.

After showing signs of thinking logically, and after learning of Edward's engagement to Lucy, Marianne was more capable to addressing the relatable event with Elinor, asking her sister how she possibly managed to maintain composure for four months of heartache (*Sense and Sensibility* 275). Elinor's reply, that she had a duty to her family and loved those

around her beyond Edward, is one more step in Marianne's transformation. Maurer notes, "by prohibiting Marianne the same direct and intimate access to Elinor's painful situation afforded the reader, the novel's structure accentuates Marianne's egotism" (732). Until this moment, Marianne has been convinced that only she has suffered the loss of love. Hearing of her sister's strength, "Marianne engaged never to speak of the affair to any one with the appearance of bitterness [...] she preformed her promise of being discreet [...] such advances toward heroism in her sister, made Elinor feels equal to any thing herself" (278). Marianne's newfound ability to keep secrets, hold her opinions, and remain prudent in relation to Edward and Lucy's engagement finally allowed Elinor to see her sister as an equal, a woman with sense and decorum. The impetuous, bold, opinionated young heroine had completely given up her sensibility and attachment to outward emotion.

Marianne's "heavy cold" is the final cast off of her sensibility, After Marianne recovers from her illness, the narrator informs readers that Mrs. Jennings "really grieved" for Marianne, for "The rapid decay, the early death of a girl so young, so lovely as Marianne, must have struck a less interested person with concern" (*Sense and Sensibility* 321). Marianne's death was far from physical. While her violent affliction causes much suffering, the real death comes in Marianne's demeanor, her personality. For, after her depression and after her sickness, Marianne has now transformed into a prudent woman.

In a letter written to Fanny Knight in 1816, Austen gave her opinion to her niece regarding love and matrimony:

To you I shall say, as I have often said before, Do not be in a hurry, the right man will come at last; you will in the course of the next two or three years meet with someone more generally unexceptionable than anyone you have yet known, who will love you as warmly as possible, and who will so completely attach you that you will feel you never really loved before. (Republic of Pemberley)

Austen's advice to her niece corresponds to Marianne's discovery by the end of *Sense and Sensibility*. The narrator explains, "Marianne Dashwood was born to an extraordinary fate. She was born to discover the falsehood of her own opinions, and to counteract, by her conduct, her most favorite maxims" (*Sense and Sensibility* 380), and she marries the one man she vowed never to marry, the one who "loved her as warmly as possible." Though her love for Colonel Brandon may not be as strong as it was for Willoughby, it is not necessarily nonexistent. As Marianne regresses, she becomes more subdued. As Marianne matures, she in turn needs a more mature husband and stable life, something she would not have had with Willoughby. Though her maturation diminishes who she was at the start of the novel, it also provides Marianne with a happy ending in the sense she finds someone who loves her; the taming of Marianne suggests that she has found the happiness with Colonel Brandon that she initially sought with Willoughby. In the end, Marianne is the exact opposite of who she was at the beginning and who she set out to be, but found security in becoming a wife.

Chapter Three

The Silencing of Elizabeth Bennet

It isn't difficult to argue that heroine Elizabeth Bennet experiences a transformation in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. She goes from despising Mr. Darcy at the beginning of the novel to marrying him at the end. The opposition Elizabeth has toward her rich suitor inevitably melds into love, which is one reason *Pride and Prejudice* "has probably given more perfect pleasure than any other novel" (Farrer 158). And yet, Elizabeth's transformation is not as complete as Austen's previous heroines. Through their transformations, both Catherine Morland and Marianne Dashwood not only fulfilled their roles as wives, but also as women with propriety in the eyes of society. It is only in her relationship with Darcy that Elizabeth transforms. By the end of the story, Darcy is the only character in the novel with whom Elizabeth eventually finds difficulty speaking her mind, while being overtly outspoken around her societal superiors. As she begins to recognize her feelings for her future husband, Elizabeth becomes shy, refuses to laugh at her suitor, and reverses her views on his entire character in order to submit herself into becoming his wife.

Elizabeth Bennet at the Beginning of *Pride and Prejudice*

Readers are introduced to Elizabeth Bennet slowly. With a brief mention of her in chapter 1 and little interaction involving her in the following chapter, Elizabeth doesn't get her chance to shine as an independent thinker or even appear as the heroine of the story until the Meryton ball. And yet, within those short three chapters Austen conspicuously develops her autonomous heroine. Anderson suggests, "The delineation of Elizabeth's

character begins in the first chapter, before her appearance. She has, her father says, 'something more of a quickness than her sisters'. With her wit and epigrammatic style, she seems equal to the narrator and is superior to all her female companions. Darcy similarly dominates the men" (Anderson 374). Elizabeth is her father's favorite daughter, a result of her "quickness" and wit inherited from the Bennet family patriarch. Susan Fraiman suggests, and I agree, that "Enabled by her father, this unique Bennet daughter sets out with a surplus of intellectual confidence and authority which, in the course of the novel, she must largely relinquish [...] the heroine's deformation involves her continual circulation among paternal figures" (Fraiman 63). Elizabeth's isolated and inflated image of the paternal, considering the closeness of her relationship with her father, and considering her elevated view of her father, leads her into similar relationships with the only other man in her life she deems superior, Darcy. Even after she leaves the household ruled by Mr. Bennet, who she looks up to, Elizabeth finds herself married to Darcy, causing her to lose any autonomy and confidence, traits that signified her as being better than other females in her family and society, that she initially inherited from her father.

Alex Woloch argues that Austen juxtaposes major and minor characters in order to propel an asymmetrical narrative in which the development of the characters in relation to the central plot of the story causes characters to gradually become flat or round; in fact, Woloch argues that the characterization of major characters, such as Elizabeth Bennet, is not individualized or fully developed until seen through their interactions with minor characters. This is seen through the Bennets' descriptions of Elizabeth as well as Elizabeth's interactions with those in her society. From the beginning, Austen establishes Elizabeth as a more intelligent character with substance beyond superficial appearance and superfluous

giddiness. Prior to the Meryton ball, with little known of any of the Bennet daughters, Elizabeth is identified as an autonomous female, quite different from her sisters and her mother. It is at the ball, however, that Elizabeth's individuality, audacity, and opinionated mindset become apparent. After being slighted by Darcy and now having an automatic animosity toward the gentleman, Elizabeth is still capable of turning her unfortunate and embarrassing situation into a diverting antic: "she told the story however with great spirit among her friends; for she had a lively, playful disposition, which delighted in anything ridiculous" (*Pride and Prejudice* 51). By mocking the entire situation and, as a result, insulting Darcy's character, Elizabeth succeeds in distracting others from her embarrassment and regales them with an amusing story, suggesting she is not only amiable, but witty enough to remove negative attention from herself onto others. With these interactions, Elizabeth is moving from being a flat character to a round one, and the reader sees her individualizing into the autonomous heroine.

Austen also emphasizes Elizabeth's kindness toward her sister, Jane, the Bennet sister to experience the most happiness at Meryton. Having caught the attention of Mr. Bingley, Jane finds herself at the beginning of a courtship with the rich suitor. Despite her own misfortunes at the ball, "Elizabeth felt Jane's pleasure" (*Pride and Prejudice* 51), suggesting at the beginning of the story Elizabeth can look beyond her own desires and needs, and focus on those important to her, a quality not practiced by several of her female family members. In the short and sporadic introduction of Elizabeth Bennet, Austen manages to develop her character through the opinions of her family and Elizabeth's small but telling actions. Rather than outwardly tell readers that Elizabeth is a witty, intelligent, independent female, Austen unfolds her character over the first chapters, through the

juxtaposing opinions of her parents and in Elizabeth's own interactions with others to not only indicate her individualistic qualities and contradicting relationships with her parents, but to establish her as a free-thinker, a story-teller, a playful spirit, a caring sister, and an easily opinionated woman.

Elizabeth Compared to Other Female Characters in *Pride and Prejudice*

Woloch considers the meaning of character and its representation in the novel: first readers see an omniscient narrator, which allows the reader to see the psychology behind and within each major and minor character (personality, inner quality), as well as the comparisons between the characters (social beings). Elizabeth's transformation depends on the subtleties she extracts from other characters in the novel, which are only noticeable when pinpointing the initial differences between her and other characters at the onset of her story (Woloch). As such, before analyzing Elizabeth's transformation into wife, it is important to compare her to other female characters in the novel, showing her initial differences from them and her eventual adoption of some of their qualities as she changes. Further, examining differences not only in character but also in marriage plot trajectories will show Elizabeth conforming to the role of wife.

Elizabeth's outspoken and independent personality is in stark contrast to her sister Jane, "who is quiet, unwilling to express her needs or desires, supportive of all and critical of none" (Gilbert and Gubar 137), all the while Elizabeth's opinionated and autonomous nature is subdued compared to that of her sister Lydia, who "is a decoy who attracts the disapproval to which Elizabeth herself could otherwise be subject, and by lamenting Lydia's flaring excesses, Elizabeth is cleared for her less egregious but still 'improper' rambles, conceit, and impertinence" (Johnson 77). The differences between Elizabeth and

her two sisters are noticeable in their reactions and opinions of Wickham. Austen informs her readers of Wickham's handsome appearance and personality, explaining, "he had all the best parts of beauty, a fine countenance, a good figure, and very pleasing address" (*Pride and Prejudice* 106). With all of the positive qualities, Elizabeth finds herself admiring the soldier. As a result of her immediate attraction, Elizabeth is automatically unable to find fault in Wickham; therefore, when she found out of the feud between him and Darcy, Elizabeth was inclined to believe the lowly soldier and once again condemn Darcy for his alleged misdeeds. Jane, on the other hand, reacts differently. Refusing to believe Darcy's unworthiness, and, even more, refusing to believe Bingley's regard for Darcy would be so faulty, Jane insists that Elizabeth "consider in what a disgraceful light it places Mr. Darcy [...] No man of common humanity, no man who had any value for his character, could be capable of it" (*Pride and Prejudice* 119). Unlike Elizabeth, Jane approaches the story with sense, considering what she knows of Darcy's character and what she knows of Bingley's character, Darcy's closest friend and confidante. By presenting Elizabeth's opinions as questionable, Austen sets up her heroine for transformation. Elizabeth relies on her initial impressions of the men to determine her belief in who is at fault; however, as Elizabeth begins to recognize her own errors, she is allowed to question not only the character of both Wickham and Darcy, but her own, as well. When Elizabeth adopts Jane's ability of not relying on first impressions and, to a small extent, finding good in those she initially believed to exhibit negative qualities, as Jane is capable, Elizabeth establishes one step in her transformation, and becomes capable of searching beyond superficial qualities within each suitor.

As Elizabeth adopts more of Jane's characteristics, she furthers herself from those she shares with Lydia. With a sister as self-focused and imprudent as Lydia, at the beginning of the novel, Elizabeth is capable of being viewed as sensible and discerning, especially in social situations, even if she focuses on the superficial to form her opinions of the men in her life and adheres to her first impressions. Yet, the major difference between the sisters relies on their relationship and understanding of Wickham. Lydia's persistence in landing a soldier and insistence in maintaining her flirtatious silliness juxtaposes Elizabeth's interactions with Wickham. While Elizabeth was enchanted by Wickham initially, she soon loses her initial feelings toward him. Elizabeth becomes capable to looking past her superficial ideals of a handsome soldier—and, in the same respect, a proud man—as her feelings for Wickham and Darcy begin to transpose. Lydia and Elizabeth are moving in opposite directions in their regards for and relationship with Wickham. Austen uses Lydia's actions, from the start of her disappearance with Wickham to her marriage, to show just how little Lydia transforms over the course of the novel. Elizabeth uses her prejudice more accurately. By reviewing and changing her opinions, and listening to Darcy's version of the reason for the feud, Elizabeth becomes more capable of understanding, and is closer to becoming Darcy's wife

Darcy's Transformation

While Elizabeth's shared characteristics with her sisters help illustrate a change in her character, it is important to recognize that Elizabeth's regression is preceded and prompted by Darcy's own transformation. As Anderson argues, "Although Elizabeth and Darcy both undergo changes of thought and feeling in the course of the action, his affect the plot more profoundly" (Anderson 370-371). Without even a slight change in Darcy,

Elizabeth would have been unable to move beyond her initial prejudices of him. When readers first meet Darcy, the narrator provides a juxtaposing description of his appearance and his attitude. Regardless of his being handsome, tall, noble, and rich, Darcy is eventually “discovered to be proud” (*Pride and Prejudice* 49) and disagreeable. Yet readers aren't as quick to dismiss Darcy as those around him. While the society he currently exists in, save the Bingleys, “doubts his worth [...] Austen's ambiguous treatment of him prevents the reader from sharing even Elizabeth's initial judgment, though we know little more than she does” (Anderson 373). Readers eventually learn that Darcy is unable or reluctant to correspond with people he does not intimately know, allowing others to perceive him negatively and causing him to appear conceited. During their first encounters at Meryton, Darcy inadvertently insults Elizabeth's beauty, and only a few chapters later his transformation begins:

Mr. Darcy had at first scarcely allowed her to be pretty [...] when they met next, he looked at her only to criticize. But no sooner had he made it clear to himself and his friends that she had hardly a good feature in her face, than he began to find it was rendered commonly intelligent by the beautiful expression of her dark eyes [...] he was forced to acknowledge her figure to be light and pleasing; and in spite of his asserting that her manners were not those of the fashionable world, he was caught by their easy playfulness [...] He began to wish to know more of her, and as a step towards conversing with her himself, attended to her conversation with others. (*Pride and Prejudice* 61)

Through his observances, Darcy unintentionally finds himself attracted to Elizabeth. Darcy even surprises himself with his newfound attraction toward the heroine, but determines to become better acquainted with her. He moves from a reserved, inhibited man to one attempting conversation, who is willing to interject himself into discussions with others in order to eventually take part in some tête-à-tête with Elizabeth. Now, beyond being able to see her beauty, “Darcy discovers that Elizabeth also has a mind, but he does not learn to

assess her character fully until she rejects his offer” of marriage (Anderson 373). Still the initial change seen in Darcy is monumental, as it forces him to begin to look beyond his comfort, his status, and Elizabeth's status.

The change in Darcy's opinion of Elizabeth can be seen as he and Caroline Bingley describe the requirements of an accomplished woman. After describing a nearly impossible list of must-haves including “a thorough knowledge of music, singing, drawing, dancing, and the modern languages” (*Pride and Prejudice* 76), Darcy includes in his description, “to all this she must yet add something more substantial, in the improvement of her mind by extensive reading” (*Pride and Prejudice* 76). Darcy's comment, though coming across innocently enough as though he were merely adding to the long list of requirements, comes shortly after Elizabeth entered the room and, rather than joining in cards, engages in a book. Elizabeth's “preferences for books over cards [...] impressed him, for he possesses one of England's great private libraries” (Anderson 373-374). Whether subconscious or not, Darcy subtly admits his attractions to Elizabeth in this moment, which becomes one of many small steps to breaking Elizabeth's prejudices against him, whether or not she is aware of her own transformation through his endeavors to change.

Darcy continues to engage in banter with Elizabeth, at one point playfully acknowledging her faults as she acknowledges his. Eventually, while at the Netherfield ball, he is led to ask her to dance, an act he despised at the beginning of the story. Knowing her love for dancing and allowing himself to become more comfortable with her allows Darcy to engage in an act he previously refused to participate in with anyone other than his closest acquaintances. Darcy's request, again, takes Elizabeth by surprise, but allows the two to engage in their first conversation without others accompanying. Darcy, willingly

engaging in activities that make him uncomfortable for the sake of becoming better acquainted with Elizabeth, forces Elizabeth to engage further with him. Though she initially intends to keep her prejudices against him, these first attempts by Darcy soften the misunderstanding between the two and allow each to gain a rapport with the other.

By the time Elizabeth and Darcy meet again at Hunsford and Rosings Park, Darcy's comfort and ease around Elizabeth comes naturally. After becoming even more comfortable with Elizabeth during their visits, and after a disappointing proposal, Darcy manages to maintain composure, and rather than disregard Elizabeth after her declination, not only informs her of his reasons for stopping Bingley and Jane's courtship, but most importantly of his history with Wickham. As Fraiman suggests, "Darcy's botched proposal marks the nadir of his career after which, launched by his letter, he rises up, verging even on apotheosis. In the remaining chapters he is [...] magically setting everything straight" (Fraiman 79). Darcy's willingness to overlook the slight to his proposal and to open up about a personal history he informs few of is the turning point in Elizabeth's prejudices. Transforming from a private individual, who would never inform anyone of his feud with Wickham to relaying the entire tale to Elizabeth inevitably aids in her transformation; should she never learn the truth of the feud, Elizabeth would have remained judgmental toward Darcy, and any visit to Pemberley would have resulted in awe of the grounds but intolerance of its owner. Without Darcy's willingness to amend his character, Elizabeth would have been unable to move beyond her predisposed notions of the rich and prideful Mr. Darcy.

Elizabeth's Transformation

Elizabeth begins her story as an autonomous freethinker. From the beginning, Elizabeth shows she is unafraid to speak her mind, though is capable to following rules of propriety. Despite having an element of frankness in her character, Elizabeth is witty in her remarks and is capable of knowing when to remain politely quiet and hold her occasionally biting tongue. And yet, Elizabeth's outspoken, spirited nature escalates once she knows Darcy.

Meryton and Netherfield. Megan Stoner Morgan suggests that, from the start, Elizabeth is "rather taken with her own opinions" (Morgan 4). On the other hand, Barbara Sherrod suggests Elizabeth's hostility, including both her outspoken dislike for Darcy and her willingness to retell an embarrassing event, are due to her "attraction for Darcy [...] she is unwilling to be attracted to a man who she believes despises her" (Sherrod 67). While Sherrod makes a compelling argument, there is little in Elizabeth's character to assume she chooses to dislike an individual because she assumes that person dislikes her, whereas Morgan's analysis supports Elizabeth's witty characteristics and self-aware intelligence. Having been insulted by Darcy, Elizabeth's opinions of him have ingrained into her mind, and she becomes reluctant to let them go. Elizabeth's prejudices are based solely on her first meeting with Darcy and she is ever reluctant to relinquish her impressions; as the narrator informs, "to her he was only the man who made himself agreeable no where, and who had not thought her handsome enough to dance with" (*Pride and Prejudice* 61). Elizabeth's prejudices are superficial; her main reason for disliking Darcy is due to his rejection of her. Since her views on Darcy are based solely on superficiality and faulty first impressions, Elizabeth sets herself up for her eventual transformation; as Bingley later

points out, Elizabeth Bennet is “a studier of character” (*Pride and Prejudice* 79), yet she so frequently misinterprets the character of others in her initial impressions. It isn't until she has time to survey, investigate, and learn another's true character that she is capable of developing a fair opinion of him or her. Because of this, Elizabeth inevitably examines and studies her own character and faults, forcing her to reconsider her actions and causing her to later transform from freethinking autonomous woman into Mrs. Darcy.

It isn't until Elizabeth's time spent at Netherfield that a minuscule change can be noticed in her character. Previously, Elizabeth was unencumbered by the idea of offending Darcy, though she managed not to insult him directly to his face and remained witty in any circumstance where she spoke with him; and yet, whether she acknowledges her minor change in thinking or not, after her time spent taking care of Jane at Netherfield and being in his daily presence, Elizabeth becomes slightly more careful of how her family is perceived by the gentleman. In a moment after Mrs. Bennet arrives to check on her eldest daughter, the company at Netherfield find themselves in a discussion on the study of character. Stepping out of his comfort zone, Mr. Darcy inserts his opinions on the best places to study intricate characters, suggesting, “the country can in general supply but few subjects for such a study. In a country neighborhood you move in a very confined and unvarying society” (*Pride and Prejudice* 79). Mrs. Bennet takes offense to Darcy's remarks, defending *her* country ways, and finally asserts her misinterpretation of Darcy's comments by comparing him to Bingley, who declares he can be happy in either the country or town (*Pride and Prejudice* 80). In response, Elizabeth defends Darcy, explaining to Mrs. Bennet that she misunderstood his meaning and that “he only meant that there were not such a variety of people to be met with in the country as in town” (*Pride and Prejudice* 80).

Elizabeth's defense of Darcy is the first indication of her transformation. Although subtle, and in spite of her continuing reluctance to like or even agree with the man, Elizabeth blushes for her mother's error and is eager to correct any insult to Darcy. This is a stark difference from Meryton when she was eager to share her embarrassing story of Darcy's horridly proud attitude. Now, Elizabeth is more aware of his feelings, and even if she still finds the man disagreeable, she adjusts herself to not offend him.

It is only shortly later during the conversations between the companies at Netherfield in which Elizabeth again shows slight reshaping of her personality. As Mrs. Bennet relays a story of Jane's past courtship to Bingley, Elizabeth once again finds herself embarrassed by her mother and quickly attempts to end the entire story by mocking the idea that poetry can continuously encourage love. Darcy respectfully disagrees. He considers "poetry as the food of love" (*Pride and Prejudice* 81), allowing Elizabeth to retort, "Of a fine, stout, healthy love it may. Every thing nourishes what is strong already. But if it be only a slight, thin sort of inclination, I am convinced that one good sonnet will starve it entirely away" (*Pride and Prejudice* 81). With her repartee, Darcy smiles and there is a lull in conversation, causing Elizabeth to become nervous: "the general pause which ensued made Elizabeth tremble lest her mother should be exposing herself again. She longed to speak, but could think of nothing to say" (*Pride and Prejudice* 81). Elizabeth did not realize why Darcy smiled—he is beginning to apply her description of strong love to his affections for her—or even understand why the conversation would pause, particularly at a moment when Darcy could give a comeback. It is at this moment that Elizabeth finds herself momentarily uncomfortable, not only because it gives her mother ample opportunity to speak and embarrass, but also because she found herself speechless. Elizabeth becoming

speechless as a result of Darcy's actions—or inaction—puts her in a position with which she is unfamiliar, but also causes her to hold her tongue, even if involuntarily.

Another moment at Netherfield highlights Elizabeth's willingness to check her actions toward Darcy. When a discussion arises on Bingley's behavior, Darcy contradicts his friend's self-analysis. Whereas Bingley believes he has great humility, Darcy accuses him of indirectly boasting through seemingly negative qualities, and suggests Bingley's personality is less independent than he claims. In a retort, Bingley mocks Darcy's penchant for particulars, offending Darcy in the moment: "Mr. Darcy smiled; but Elizabeth thought she could perceive that he was rather offended; and therefore checked her laugh" (*Pride and Prejudice* 86). Even before Elizabeth learns Mr. Darcy "is not to be laughed at" (*Pride and Prejudice* 92), she stops herself from laughing at and further offending him. Elizabeth's ability to not only recognize that Darcy is offended but her willingness to prevent further resentment shows she is watching her personality and reactions around Darcy. This allows her to engage in friendly banter with Darcy when she does find out he hates being laughed at, allowing Elizabeth slowly to become more familiar with the gentleman, thereby aiding her transformation. By managing her own personality and reactions when around and toward Darcy, Elizabeth is subconsciously taking steps toward not speaking her mind, at least with him and at least in moments where her wit could be construed as offensive. Elizabeth, even before realizing her attraction to Darcy, is changing for him.

Elizabeth exhibits this retention once more at the Netherfield ball when dancing with Darcy. Having just recently met Wickham, learning his side of their feud, and believing it, Elizabeth was "unable to resist temptation" (*Pride and Prejudice* 124) and vaguely referred to her newfound acquaintance while dancing with Darcy: "The effect was

immediate. A deeper shade of hauteur overspread his features, but he said not a word, and Elizabeth, though blaming herself for her own weakness, could not go on" (*Pride and Prejudice* 124). This is the third time Elizabeth has silenced herself for Darcy, furthering herself from how she acted at that initial ball where she regaled a small audience with Darcy's rudeness. Elizabeth has rendered herself speechless, has once again lost her wit and biting tongue, all because of Darcy—she holds back as to not offend him any further than she initially does just by referencing Wickham. When she sees Darcy's reactions, Elizabeth is unable to proceed with her sardonic attack, implicating her subtle and subconscious shift in his presence. Elizabeth is ultimately preparing herself—whether she knows it or not—to accept and protect Darcy's character, enabling herself to later fall in love with the man she frequently claims to dislike.

Kent, the First Proposal, and the Letters. Elizabeth's transformation happens gradually, and with a bit of flip-flopping back and forth along the way. While visiting Charlotte at Hunsford, Elizabeth is subjected to becoming better acquainted with Darcy. As Darcy arrives at Rosings, he and Colonel Fitzwilliam accompany Mr. Collins to Hunsford to wait on Elizabeth; as Charlotte expresses, Darcy "would never have come so soon to wait upon me" (*Pride and Prejudice* 195) as her suspicion of Darcy's love for Elizabeth slowly reveals itself. Elizabeth finds herself, once again, unable to vocalize against the claims, and even more, unable or unwilling to speak in front of Darcy. Elizabeth now consistently finds herself speechless in Darcy's presence, though remains civil to him without saying a word.

As the visit in Kent continue, and as Darcy attempts to become better acquainted with Elizabeth, she once again finds her voice and frequently engages him in familiar tête-à-tête. As Elizabeth mediocly plays the piano, she accuses Darcy of trying to intimidate her

and goes on to claim his tactics will not work since “There is a stubbornness about me that never can bear to be frightened at the will of others. My courage always rises with every attempt to intimidate me” (*Pride and Prejudice* 198). Yet Elizabeth's courage and stubbornness have frequently faltered until this moment. Beyond finding herself consistently speechless in front of the man, she has tried on several occasions to limit the embarrassment of her family because he was present. Elizabeth's courage, at the very least, weakens in Darcy's presence. Even in the current conversation, Elizabeth moves the topic away from her playing the piano—the original subject of her stubbornness and courage—to Darcy's character at the Meryton ball, depicting Darcy's behavior and pinpointing the fact that “He danced only four dances, though gentleman were scarce; and, to my certain knowledge, more than one lady was sitting down in want of a partner” (*Pride and Prejudice* 199). Elizabeth's emphasis on Darcy's lack of dancing shows her superficiality. More so, it shows her pride was offended by his denial to dance with her and that she continues to resent the entire incident. Elizabeth is not telling Colonel Fitzwilliam the story of how Darcy did not dance with anyone at the ball; rather, she is covertly informing Darcy of his offense. Even in her moment of courage, after trying to take the focus off herself and her lack of skill in playing piano, Elizabeth still silences herself to a degree. She is addressing one of her issues with Darcy, but she is not being forthright in her approach. Rather than outwardly tell Darcy she was offended, she once again regales others in his missteps.

However, Elizabeth has given Darcy the criticism he needs to become better acquainted with her; despite his inability to become easily familiar with strangers, Darcy realizes he must practice, just as she does on the piano. Darcy's practicing inevitably leads to Elizabeth and Darcy's first private conversation, which leads to the first proposal. Having

just found out of Darcy's interferences in Jane and Bingley's courtship, Elizabeth is angry with her suitor. Fraiman argues that “the text of Darcy's proposal is completely glossed and glossed over by Elizabeth's response to it. Of her refusal, on the other hand, Austen includes every unmediated word” (Fraiman 77). While Elizabeth is eventually able to respond angrily to Darcy—one of the last times she is verbally overt with him—her initially reaction is just the opposite; as Darcy professes his love for her, Elizabeth is once again speechless: “Elizabeth's astonishment was beyond expression. She stared, colored, doubted, and was silent” (*Pride and Prejudice* 210). Attached firmly to her animosity toward Darcy, Elizabeth declines his proposal, outlining each ill-conceived prejudice she has developed against him. Despite eventually speaking her mind in this scene, Elizabeth's initial silence is indicative of deviation from autonomous heroine into a reliant wife. Her eventual verbal response is a subconscious attempt to gain control over her silence and over Darcy; though, even in moments of tumultuous outrage toward Darcy where her voice and opinions are expressed, Elizabeth is merely reinforcing Darcy's transformation, which in turn aids her own regression.

Had Elizabeth not denied Darcy's first proposal, his pride would not have been hurt and he would have believed himself still entitled. Yet Elizabeth's denial causes Darcy to make significant changes to his behavior, the first of which results in him revealing more of his personal life to her than he normally would. Through his letter, Darcy explained to Elizabeth his reasons for steering Bingley away from Jane. More importantly, Darcy revealed the true reasons for the feud between himself and Wickham. The letter brings the most significant change in Elizabeth. Upon first reading the letter, Elizabeth remains prejudice against Darcy:

Her feelings as she read were scarcely to be defined [...] With a strong prejudice against every thing he might say, she began his account of what happened at Netherfield [...] His belief of her sister's insensibility, she instantly resolved to be false [...] made her angry to have any wish of doing him justice [...] his style was not penitent, but haughty. It was all pride and insolence. (*Pride and Prejudice* 223).

Elizabeth initially approached Darcy's letters the way she originally approached him, believing them to be filled with pride. She is incapable of finding the truth in the words at first because she is prejudiced against the man who wrote the letter; with her mind set on disliking him, she wants to believe everything he writes is a lie. Even when reading Darcy's account of his history with Wickham, Elizabeth made the choice to disbelieve and "wished to discredit it entirely" (*Pride and Prejudice* 223). For Elizabeth to admit Darcy's letter is accurate is also to admit she's been wrong, which is difficult for her when she's spent her entire acquaintance with Darcy feeling animosity toward him and her entire existence priding herself on her forthright beliefs.

It isn't until her subsequent readings of the letter that Elizabeth becomes less partial and adherent to her first opinions. When reexamining the portion of Darcy's letter that discusses his history with Wickham and the attempted affair with Georgiana, Elizabeth realized one of the men was being greatly dishonest, though she hoped she had not been mistaken in her previous defense of Wickham. Elizabeth tried to be impartial until "every line proved more clearly that the affair [...] was capable of a turn which must make [Darcy] entirely blameless throughout the whole" (*Pride and Prejudice* 224). By this time, the letter has turned Elizabeth's opinions of Darcy and Wickham, entirely transposing one with the other. William H. Magee points out that Wickham was never a threat to Elizabeth and Darcy's relationship since he had never intended to marry her; rather "Wickham presents a challenge to Elizabeth's skill as a 'studier of character,' and along with Darcy shows her

how much she still has to learn about her favorite hobby” (Magee 200). Having to silently face her own faulty assumptions of both men without the ability to argue back, as she frequently had in conversation when her unfamiliarity was brought into question, Elizabeth is forced to recognize her prejudices. This is the most prominent change seen in Elizabeth in the entirety of the novel. Up until this moment, Elizabeth has been unable to fully relinquish her initial impressions toward Darcy. Not only does each perusal of the letter force Elizabeth to give up her biases, but also the realization of her errors causes Elizabeth to verbally berate herself, an action that readers have not previously seen from her. By having Elizabeth turn her sharp tongue on herself, Austen demonstrates Elizabeth’s willingness to find her own errors opposed to defending her opinions; Elizabeth is suddenly able to define her faults and errors, no longer aiming her misinformed prejudices toward Darcy.

After Kent. Elizabeth’s evolution can be seen as she returns home, again when she arrives at Pemberley, as well as in her subsequent swift departure due to Lydia’s promiscuous adventures. Having left Kent not long before and by now memorizing Darcy’s letter, Elizabeth is quick to express her changed sentiments toward Wickham after being reunited with Jane, Lydia, and less noticeably Kitty, as they wait for their father’s carriage to bring them home. As the sisters’ discussion turns toward Wickham and Mary King, the differences in each sisters’ personality is easily seen, giving Austen the opportunity to further establish Elizabeth’s transformation. Lydia’s immaturity continues as she declares Wickham is safe from marrying Mary King and depicting Miss King as a “nasty little freckled thing” (*Pride and Prejudice* 236), revealing her own interests in the soldier and her unchanging attitudes. Austen again uses Lydia to establish Elizabeth’s change, not only

depicting the differences between the two characters, but through Elizabeth's inner reaction toward her sister: "Elizabeth was shocked to think that, however incapable of such coarseness of *expression* herself, the coarseness of the *sentiment* was little other than her own breast had formerly harboured and fancied liberal" (*Pride and Prejudice* 236). By juxtaposing Lydia's opinions with Elizabeth's opinions, Austen shows how Elizabeth has become critical of herself. Any coarseness, or anger, Elizabeth felt in that moment was because of her previous feelings toward Wickham. As she had with Darcy's letter, Elizabeth continues to acknowledge her past negative behaviors and faults. Elizabeth is now capable of dissecting her own actions and attitude in a way she had previously dissected others, realizing her own sharpness resulted in incorrect assumptions. Disliking what she sees in Lydia, Elizabeth further criticizes her previous brashness and opinions.

When the young Bennet sisters opt to walk into Meryton after a mere half-day at home, Elizabeth remains at home as "she dreaded seeing Wickham" (*Pride and Prejudice* 239). No longer is she the girl awe-struck enough with the soldier to seek him out. Rather, due to her newfound knowledge of Wickham's past, Elizabeth opts to avoid him as long as possible. More than that, an earlier version of Elizabeth would have boldly and wittily approached Wickham on his indiscretions, calling out any misdeeds at least to the offender himself; however, Elizabeth shows both caution and discretion in avoiding Wickham, though she later approaches the soldier to taunt him with praise for Darcy's character (*Pride and Prejudice* 249). Elizabeth's respect for Darcy and his family has increased, and Elizabeth recognizes the need for prudence on the topic. Elizabeth does not avoid Wickham only for her dislike of him, but also out of respect of Darcy, something she only recently

gained. Elizabeth's deference for Darcy, and her awareness to her previous errors, now instructs her actions.

Shortly after, Elizabeth again acknowledges her mistakes as she explains to Jane what she has learned of Wickham and of Darcy's proposal. In telling Jane the news, Elizabeth admits, "One has got all the goodness, and the other all the appearance of it [...] And yet I meant to be uncommonly clever in taking so decided a dislike to him, without any reason. It is such a spur to one's genius, such an opening for wit to have a dislike of that kind" (*Pride and Prejudice* 241). In her confession, Elizabeth notes her mistakes in misunderstanding the two men and admits to her previous unfair behavior toward Darcy. Elizabeth knew her aversion toward Darcy was "without any reason," but continued it so long in hopes of being witty and clever in front of others. At first, Elizabeth justified abusing Darcy as a way to cope with his prideful slight, and used her wit as an excuse for her insulting behavior. It wasn't until Darcy's letter that Elizabeth understands her error and is capable changing her conduct toward the gentleman. As a result of reading the letter and understanding the backstory of Darcy and Wickham, as well as Darcy's intentions behind his actions with Jane and Bingley, Elizabeth alters her opinions of him and goes as far as to admit her mistakes to Jane. Not only does Elizabeth acknowledge and admit her prejudices, she becomes capable of amending them as well.

Pemberley. The extent of Elizabeth's transformation can be seen in her reaction to and during her time spent at Pemberley. Upon arriving at Pemberley, Elizabeth takes notice of the grounds:

It was a large, handsome, stone building, standing well on rising ground, and backed by a ridge of high woody hills;—and in front, a stream of some natural importance was swelled into greater, but without any artificial appearance [...] Elizabeth was

delighted [...] and at that moment she felt, that to be mistress of Pemberley might be something. (*Pride and Prejudice* 259)

Austen's descriptions of Pemberley and Elizabeth's reactions to it recalls the majestic images of the readers initial introduction to Darcy and "his fine, tall person, handsome features, noble mein" and wealth (*Pride and Prejudice* 49). However, Elizabeth's opinions of each differ as she has transformed; where her initial impression of Darcy drew ire, Elizabeth's sentiments toward Pemberley—and its owner—provoke excitement and wishful thinking. This is the first moment Elizabeth envisions her life at Pemberley with Darcy. Previously, though Elizabeth had significantly changed in her opinions and acknowledged her own errors and prejudices after his first proposal, she had yet to admit any other emotions toward him other than embarrassment and regret for her actions. Now at Pemberley, far from the uninformed woman she had been, Elizabeth finally ponders a future with Darcy.

Elizabeth's altered emotions toward Darcy become more apparent as she tours the Pemberley grounds with her aunt and uncle, accompanied by the housekeeper, Mrs. Reynolds. Listening to the housekeeper's praise of Darcy, Elizabeth further doubts her long-held opinions of Pemberley's owner. Mrs. Reynolds's commendation of Darcy causes Elizabeth to further adjust her own attitude toward him, "her keenest attention was awakened; she longed to hear more [...] Elizabeth listened, wondered, doubted, and was impatient for more" (*Pride and Prejudice* 262). Hearing another opinion of Darcy, especially one so contrasting to her own and those who knew him so little, enlightens Elizabeth to reconsider her judgments and seek to learn more from a trusted source. Wandering the rooms of Pemberley, "Elizabeth walked on in quest of the only face whose features would be known to her. At last it arrested her—and she beheld a striking resemblance of Mr.

Darcy, with such a smile of the face, as she remembered to have sometimes seen, when he looked at her" (*Pride and Prejudice* 263-264). Where previously she would avoid him or do her least to acknowledge his presence, Elizabeth now seeks out Mr. Darcy. He has become a desired entity in both her moment at Pemberley and her life, and Elizabeth "is suddenly shy and conventionally vain. Now her act of looking unexpectedly fixes his eyes on her; now her gaze sees only how she looks to him" (Fraiman 85). Fraiman aptly describes the changes occurring in Elizabeth in this moment. While Austen has depicted Elizabeth's increasing silence, the silence takes a different turn in this scene. As she examines the gallery piece, Elizabeth relates the artwork of Darcy to her own memories of him, conjuring "a more gentle sensation towards the original than she had ever felt in the height of their acquaintance [...] she thought of his regard with a deeper sentiment of gratitude than it had ever raised before; she remembers its warmth, and softened its impropriety of expression" (*Pride and Prejudice* 264). Austen unfolds Elizabeth's transformative thoughts for the reader. As a result, Elizabeth, despite being the voyeur, shrinks herself to the role of being observed thereby relinquishing control over the situation she both sought out and created. In this instance, Darcy—without being physically present—takes on a more dominant role in their budding relationship, and Elizabeth surrenders her independence both in her opinions of Darcy and of herself. No longer does Elizabeth consider Darcy as proud and arrogant; rather, she is capable of exploring more intimate ideals of Pemberley's owner, observing his likeness and her memory of him with newfound affection, warmth, and appreciation that inevitably translates into her admiration and love for Darcy.

By the time Elizabeth and the Gardiners are finished viewing the open sections of Pemberley, they are approached by Darcy. Darcy's unexpected appearance startles

Elizabeth; the heroine who previously could “never bear to be frightened” and whose “courage always rises with every attempt to intimidate me” (*Pride and Prejudice* 198) finds herself wanting to turn away at Darcy’s approach and unable to overcome the mortification (*Pride and Prejudice* 264-265). Elizabeth’s entire demeanor has changed toward Darcy; her boldness is gone and she feels the embarrassment of being caught viewing Pemberley. In this moment, Elizabeth recognizes a change in Darcy, who is now gentler and more personable than she had ever experienced him to be. After Darcy took leave of Elizabeth and the Gardiners, and as the tour of the grounds continued, Elizabeth’s “thoughts were all fixed on that one spot of Pemberley House, whichever it might be, where Mr. Darcy then was” (*Pride and Prejudice* 266) at which point the narrator notes the Gardiner’s remarked on Elizabeth’s “absence of mind” (*Pride and Prejudice* 266). Elizabeth’s sudden change in thought, focused solely on Mr. Darcy, suggests an overall change in herself. While she is perceived by those around her to be dazed or absent-minded, Elizabeth’s whole mind is now focused on the one person she had so frequently been trying to avoid. Again Elizabeth is seeking Darcy out, though this time by imagining him in his dwelling. Shortly later, after meeting with Darcy again, Elizabeth is incapable of complimenting Pemberley beyond the words “delightful” and “charming” (267). Always an expressive and witty woman, Elizabeth is unable to articulate any thoughts beyond civil conversation and becomes concerned with praising the grounds too much. Elizabeth uncharacteristically censors herself in front of Darcy. She is no longer audacious in her conversations with him, and instead opts to stifle her true praise of Pemberley to avoid any misrepresentation of her character. Elizabeth’s careful edits have less to do with her as they do Darcy; with Darcy’s proposal and her rejection clear in her mind, and with her newfound knowledge of his feud with Wickham,

Elizabeth hopes to avoid any encounter that could cause Darcy to think she is only interested in his property, thereby protecting his feelings further.

Elizabeth's transformation by the middle of her stay at Rosings and visits to Pemberley is extensive. Even Elizabeth recollects the progression of her feelings for Darcy one night prior to meeting Georgiana:

her thoughts were at Pemberley this evening more than the last; and the evening, though as it passed it seemed long, was not long enough to determine her feelings toward *one* in that mansion [...] hatred vanished long ago, and she had almost been ashamed of ever feeling a dislike against him [...] The respect created by the conviction of his valuable qualities [...] had for some time ceased to be repugnant to her feelings; and it was now heightened into somewhat of a friendlier nature [...] it was gratitude [...] She respected, she esteemed, she was grateful to him, she felt a real interest in his welfare, and she only wanted to know how far she wished that welfare to depend upon herself, and how far it would be for the happiness of both that she should employ the power, which her fancy told her she still possessed, of bringing on the renewal of his address. (*Pride and Prejudice* 276-277)

The narrator is describing the changes of Elizabeth's feelings to the reader; the progression from hatred to respect to gratitude and gratefulness are plainly laid out to show how Elizabeth's opinion of Darcy is different from when she first met him. With this, Austen is effectively allowing Elizabeth to identify her own transformation, thereby creating another alteration within the character. As Elizabeth thinks through her past emotions, recognizing how her sentiments for Darcy have changed, she is more capable of recognizing her own faults, as well. She feels ashamed of her past prejudices, of her unfounded dislike toward Darcy; she is no longer offended—or annoyed—by her respect for Darcy as a result of her initial misconceptions and hatred.

Lydia's Impropriety. Elizabeth has learned how incorrect her past misgivings had been, and is able to accept and embrace her sentiments for Darcy. Soon after, Elizabeth is faced with her sister's impropriety. Learning that Lydia has run off Wickham, Elizabeth finds herself

confiding in Darcy her fears of Lydia's indecency and the way it will affect her family. Now able to recognize her feelings, Elizabeth speculated her sister's impudence would have a direct affect on her relationship with Darcy: "never had she so honestly felt that she could have loved him [...] As he quitted the room, Elizabeth felt how improbable it was that they should ever see each other again on such terms of cordiality [...] she saw him go with regret" (*Pride and Prejudice* 288-289). Before this moment she had only acknowledged her changing feelings for him, expressing she no longer disliked him, she esteemed him, or she respected him. For the first time, Elizabeth is capable of recognizing her love, or the potential of her love, for Darcy. In the moment all seems lost to her, and she believes a union between them is no longer viable, admitting to herself the desires of continuing a relationship with Darcy.

As Lydia's shenanigans unfold, Elizabeth continues to conjecture how a possibility of a relationship with Darcy has been indefinitely terminated. Believing Lydia's impropriety has fully damaged Darcy's opinions of the Bennet family and herself:

Elizabeth was most heartily sorry she had [...] been led to make Mr. Darcy acquainted with their fears for her sister; for since her marriage would so shortly give the proper termination to the elopement, they might hope to conceal its unfavorable beginning [...] The wish of procuring her regard, which she had assured herself of his feeling in Derbyshire, could not in rational expectation survive such a blow as this. (*Pride and Prejudice* 317)

Elizabeth's transition continues as her feelings are covertly revealed. Believing Darcy held feelings for her during her visit to Derbyshire paired with her own desires to have concealed her sister's indecencies reveals Elizabeth's own altered sentiment toward Darcy. Beyond acknowledging her feelings, by admitting to herself the possibility of Darcy's opinions, despite her belief that his good opinions are now lost due to her sister's affairs, Elizabeth is no longer rejecting her hopes for what she believes could have been.

The Second Proposal. Having resolved to make no promises regarding her relationship with Darcy, Elizabeth continues to face the subject being gossiped around her. After Mr. Bennett receives a letter from Mr. Collins congratulating him on the engagement of Jane to Bingley and the presumed impending engagement of Elizabeth to Darcy, Mr. Bennet unknowingly embarrassed his daughter by mocking the insinuation: “Her father had most cruelly mortified her, by what he said of Mr. Darcy’s indifference, and she could do nothing but wonder at such a want of penetration, or fear that perhaps, instead of his seeing too *little*, she might have fancied too *much*” (*Pride and Prejudice* 364). The narrator, through the subconscious thoughts of Elizabeth, suggests Elizabeth's emotions for Darcy are excessive. Unable to admit to others her feelings for him and having taken so long to admit them to herself, it is possible that Elizabeth's defiance in admitting her sentiments are, in part, a reaction to a subconscious recognition in her own transformation as she becomes less autonomous the more in-love with Darcy she becomes.

By the time Darcy arrives at the Bennet home, Elizabeth has come to terms with her sentiments for him and peeked in her transformation. During a walk through the grounds, Elizabeth thanks Darcy for his part in Lydia's marriage. During this conversation, after Darcy admits his actions were only for Elizabeth, the heroine becomes once again speechless, “too much embarrassed to say a word [...] feeling all the more than common awkwardness and anxiety of his situation, now forced herself to speak; and immediately, though not very fluently, gave him to understand, that her sentiments had undergone so material a change” (*Pride and Prejudice* 365-366). Unlike Jane, who “suffers silently [...] until she is set free by her Prince Charming” (Gilbert and Gubar 137), Elizabeth is repressed as she becomes more intimately aware of her feelings for Darcy. Silenced once again in

Darcy's presence, Elizabeth only finds enough words to profess her love and admiration to him. During their muted conversation, as Darcy explains his encounter with his aunt attempting to secure a promise from him to avoid courtship with Elizabeth, Darcy superficially acknowledges Elizabeth's character alteration: "I knew enough of your disposition to be certain, that, had you been absolutely, irrevocably decided against me, you would have acknowledged it to Lady Catherine, frankly and openly" (*Pride and Prejudice* 366). Embarrassed, Elizabeth can only admit to her past "frankness" and abuse of Darcy previous to this moment. While this moment is intended to capture the love between Darcy and Elizabeth, it reveals more how the heroine has changed throughout the novel, losing herself in her admiration for the hero. Despite not fully knowing if a relationship with Darcy would manifest, Elizabeth was so completely engrossed in her sentiments to rely on the hope it might. Elizabeth is now fully defined by her love for Darcy, and the remainder of the novel focuses on their engagement.

Conclusion: Elizabeth Forgets Her Past Self

While reminiscing together on the past, Elizabeth acknowledges a change in her sentiments, and when remembering his letters, explains, "the feelings of the person who wrote, and the person who received it, are now so widely different from what they were then, that every unpleasant circumstance attending it, ought to be forgotten" (*Pride and Prejudice* 368). This is the first instance where Elizabeth suggests and urges her former self—her actions, thoughts, and words—be forgotten. In her confessions to Jane regarding her engagement to Darcy, Jane accuses Elizabeth of disliking the man, to which Elizabeth repeats the desire for all to forget her former self: "That is all to be forgot. Perhaps I did not always love him so well as I do now. But in such cases as these, a good memory is

unpardonable. This is the last time I shall ever remember it myself" (*Pride and Prejudice* 372). Here, Elizabeth not only encourages Jane to forget her previous opinions of Darcy, she skews her previous sentiment; no longer admitting to have once hated Darcy, or even dislike Darcy, Elizabeth can only bring herself to claim that she may not have loved him as much before as she does currently. Heidi Giles suggests, "Austen's heroines 'reconcile' themselves to marriage but attempt to 'dissolve' the cultural singularity of that institution; they 'determine' to marry but simultaneously maintain a certain degree of 'disintegration,' of unique self or identity, within that marriage" (Giles 77). However, Elizabeth outwardly disregards her former self; everything unique about Elizabeth has nearly vanished due to her engagement to Darcy. More so, Elizabeth fears her past autonomous self, and the thoughts she previously held, because of how wrongly she judged Darcy. However, by avoiding her past thoughts and actions completely, Elizabeth gives up on being freethinking, unmonitored, and independent.

When Mr. Bennet is approached for his consent to Elizabeth's engagement to Darcy, he understandably questions his daughters senses and accuses her of always hating the gentleman, noting "I know that you could be neither happy nor respectable, unless you truly esteemed your husband; unless you looked up to no as a superior" (*Pride and Prejudice* 375). Mr. Bennet's observation and Elizabeth's desire to erase her past self perfectly sums up her transformation: she has changed, become subdued, and given up her independent and autonomous, free thinking ways. Never laughing at her husband, no longer willing to bate him into arguments, Elizabeth has successfully transformed herself into Darcy's wife.

Chapter Four

Controlling Emma

Emma Woodhouse is different from Jane Austen's other heroines. As Barbara Z. Thaden notes, "Emma is at the pinnacle of her society, with no inducement to marry or to change her position, unlike Elinor Dashwood, Elizabeth Bennet, and Fanny Price" (Thaden 48). Readers are told from the very start that Emma is "handsome, clever, and rich, with a comfortable home and happy disposition" (*Emma* 55). On top of that, *Emma* is Austen's only novel named after its heroine, emphasizing her privileged role. After all, Emma is very independent, almost spoiled, and quite egotistical at "nearly twenty-one years" due to her advantages in life. Due to all of this, Emma is unaware how her behavior and attitude has a negative effect on the society around her.

While Emma's ability to sympathize with the world around her is still limited after her proposal and marriage to Mr. Knightley, I argue Austen's privileged heroine transforms more than she was willing. To start, Emma's initial behavior is a catalyst for her inevitable change. Had Emma been more similar to Austen's other heroines, her transformation would be less impressive. R.E. Hughes suggests that the theme of *Emma* is the "education" of the title character, noting that Emma Woodhouse is destined to become the "pupil" but consistently attempts to remain the "teacher" (Hughes 70). Due to her advantaged situation, Emma persistently tries to take control of the lives of those around her for her own amusement in a veiled excuse of trying to help those she sees as less fortunate. Emma's failings and flaws lead to Knightley's corrections of the heroine's behavior. Though Emma begins as an autonomous woman in her own story, by relenting the role of "teacher," Emma

reduces herself to a role she never intended to play. Emma's transformation is the most extreme of all Austen's heroine as she gives up parts of her independence that she consistently embraced. With subtle changes throughout the novel, Emma gives up her individuality and control, and willingly surrenders herself to being Knightley's wife.

Power and Influence

Emma Woodhouse believes she has power and influence in her home and her society. Richard Simpson notes that Emma "fancies herself cleverer than she is, with an insight into other hearts which she does not possess, and with a talent for management which is only great enough to produce entanglements, but not to unravel them" (Southam 73). She poses herself as her father's caretaker, attending to his needs and occasionally indulging his worries, and yet she consistently represents herself as the head of the household. In addition to her apparent power as head of the household, Emma is capable of manipulating Harriet Smith's opinions to suit her own. Despite maintaining constant control over her father and Harriet, Emma eventually loses her power and influence over both. Emma ultimately allows her father's worries to dictate her love life and never achieves success in her schemes involving Harriet.

The first indication readers have of Emma's relationship with her father occurs on the first page of the novel and sets up Emma's presumed authority within her household: "She was the youngest of two daughters of a most affectionate, indulgent father, and had, in consequence of her sister's marriage, been mistress of his house from a very early period" (*Emma* 55). Claudia Johnson suggests, "in *Emma*, woman *does* reign alone" (Johnson 126). Austen shows Emma's power within her household with her heroine assuming the role as mistress of the house while Mr. Woodhouse appears to lack authority over his youngest

daughter, whether due to Emma's influence or his inability to govern. By initially insinuating Mr. Woodhouse's weaknesses, Austen propels Emma into the privileged role of "teacher," or, at the very least, a dominant role within the text.

However, Emma's relationship with her father foreshadows her transformation that questions Johnson's suggestion. Eugene Goodheart draws comparison between Emma and her valetudinarian father, suggesting, "in the characterization of Mr. Woodhouse, we find a foreshadowing of what is deeply troublesome in Emma's fancifulness [...] she shares with her father [...] an inability to enter knowledgeably and therefore sympathetically into the minds of others" (Goodheart 596-597). Similarly, Elizabeth Sabiston argues, "Emma is forced to live within her father's private world of ill health or hypochondria which shapes his well-meaning attempts to interpret everyone else's life" (Sabiston 345). Both critics highlight Mr. Woodhouse's negative influence on Emma, particularly in respect to controlling the world around her. While Mrs. Weston claims Emma "will never lead anyone wrong; she will make no lasting blunder" (*Emma* 81), Emma frequently misreads her society, just as Mr. Woodhouse misreads the needs of others. Emma certainly faults when interpreting the world around her, and like Mr. Woodhouse, she is frequently unable to recognize that her thoughts are not the only thoughts in her society. Emma repeatedly leads others wrong; the only reason her antics have no lasting effect on those she attempts to govern is because her presumed power only goes so far before she loses control. This is more than apparent in her matchmaking scheme between Mr. Elton and Harriet. However, Emma's similarities with Mr. Woodhouse and his immovable opinions hint at Emma's lack of control as mistress of Hartfield. While Emma interprets the relationship as one where

she has complete control, and frequently corrects her father's absurd notions, she invariably and increasingly pacifies her father's wants and needs by sacrificing her own.

In a conversation between Emma and her father regarding the newly wed Westons, Mr. Woodhouse obstinately and repeatedly declares his opinions of "Poor Miss Taylor," who was torn away from Hartfield in marriage. Even though she respectfully disagrees with her father, Emma's focus is to console and subdue Mr. Woodhouse's thoughts: "Emma smiled and chatted as cheerfully as she could, to keep him from such thoughts" (*Emma* 57); Emma's power as "teacher" over her father is futile in these circumstances, and Emma subconsciously recognizes her unsuccessful attempts at quelling Mr. Woodhouse's apprehensions. More than that, Emma's actions are in part controlled by her father's reactions to life, though she still maintains some autonomy in respectfully disagreeing. While allowing her heroine to maintain a sense of propriety, autonomy, and dominance by disagreeing with Mr. Woodhouse, Austen subtly establishes Emma's subconscious need to appease her father, actually rendering Emma less independent than she would like to believe.

Echoing both Goodheart's and Sabiston's arguments, Thaden notes, " Although Emma would like to feel that she is her father's superior, they are very much alike. They begin the novel together and, significantly, end it still together" (Thaden 48). Beyond being similar to her father, Emma is reliant on him for the security of her position at Hartfield. Despite believing herself to be in control, Emma is simply reliant on her father's wishes. In fact, the most revealing situation showing Emma's lack of control and autonomy bookends the novel. In volume 1, chapter 1, Emma reveals her joy in matchmaking, her pride in matchmaking Miss Taylor with Mr. Weston, and her plans to find a match "only for Mr.

Elton. Poor Mr. Elton!" (*Emma* 61). Here, Emma attempts to highlight her governance within her society by bragging about a skill she does not possess. Emma truly believes herself to be a successful matchmaker and, on top of that, believes she is in a prominent position to "help" others. Mr. Woodhouse, the ever-doting and needy father, proceeds to beg Emma not to make a match for herself, to which Emma replies, "I promise you to make none for myself, papa; but I must, indeed, for other people" (*Emma* 60). Thaden argues, "Emma is isolated not because she is superior but because she must feel superior; she cannot participate in a relationship where she is not *first*" (Thaden 50). I agree with Thaden in that Emma must feel superior, whether or not she is; however, Emma does participate in a relationship where she is not first: the one she maintains with her father. Not only does her declaration show her desire to remain independent and without a husband, but Emma's promise to her father is an indication of her dependency on him, and more so, his control over her choices. Austen reveals Emma's need to appease her father as well as her attempts to maintain control of her world through governing the love life of others.

According to Margaret Kirkham,

Emma's concern for her father, although endearing and amiable, is attended by many ill consequences, for it is a relationship in which a good deal of exploitation goes on, and in which Emma, through excessive devotion to him, fails to take adequate account of her responsibilities outside her family, and particularly toward other women [...] By making Mr. Woodhouse a selfish 'old woman', Jane Austen mocks her heroine in the one respect where she believes herself to be above reproach. Unable to see him as he really is, Emma suffers from a peculiarly insidious form of parental tyranny, with all her apparent independence, she is prevented from growing up. (Kirkham 125-126)

I agree with Kirkham on the account that Emma is a devoted daughter, and her devotion affects the way she interacts with her world. However, along with being the devoted daughter, Emma also certainly lives through the lives of others, and she truly believes her

responsibility, outside of her family, is to help others through matchmaking. In that sense, like Austen, Emma is creating, dictating, and governing stories for her own amusement. Austen, instead of mocking, is rather hinting at Emma's lack of independence and her desire to be in control of society since she has little of it in her own life; Emma hides her dependence through a feigned appearance of power.

Emma's dependence on her father is furthered near the end of the novel when Emma realizes her affection toward Knightley: "Marriage, in fact, would not do for her. It would be incompatible with what she owed her father, and with what she felt for him. Nothing should separate her from her father. She would not marry, even if she were asked by Mr. Knightley" (*Emma* 356). Having declared more than once her decision not to marry, Emma reveals her true reasons in the choice: her need to accommodate her father's dependency on her. Without actually reliving the conversation from earlier in the novel, Austen reminds readers of the promise Emma made her father. In this instance, however, Emma has changed in that she recognizes and accepts her dependence rather than attempting to claim control as mistress of the house and her society. After Knightley's proposal, Emma and Knightley agree on "the impossibility of her quitting her father" (*Emma* 379), solidifying that Emma does not actually "reign alone," but for and through her father. On top of that, rather than break the promise she made to Mr. Woodhouse, Emma and Knightley conclude that Knightley "should be received at Hartfield; that so long as her father's happiness—in other words his life—required Hartfield to continue her home, it should be his likewise" (*Emma* 379). Emma is attached to remaining with her father. Not only does Knightley assist Emma in remaining a dutiful daughter, he secures her as a dutiful wife. The heroine, who previously claimed she would never marry, transforms into

two roles of womanhood, relinquishing any assumed power she had at Hartfield to her husband, Mr. Knightley.

Harriet Smith and Matchmaking

In the character of Emma, Austen designed an author much like herself, controlling characters for her own enjoyment. Gilbert and Gubar point to the likeness between Emma and her creator, Austen: “Like Austen, Emma has at her disposal worn-out, hackneyed stories of romance that she is smart enough to resist in her own life” (Gilbert and Gubar 158). Both Austen and Emma design their own marriage plots; yet, since Emma is merely a character created by someone else she still has little control of her life and her actions, and the outcomes of Emma’s life are inevitably decided by Austen. In this case, Emma parallels Austen’s desire to create happy marriages, even if she should not end up in one herself. More than that, like Austen controls her characters, Emma attempts to govern those around her: “If Emma is an artist who manipulates people as if they were characters in her own stories, Austen emphasizes not only the immorality of this activity, but it’s cause or motivation: except for placating her father, Emma has nothing to do” (Gilbert and Gubar 158). Enter Harriet Smith. Just as she believes to have control over her father, Emma, too, desires to influence Harriet, “the natural daughter of somebody” (*Emma* 68).

At the first introduction of Miss Smith, readers are almost instantly provided Emma’s opinions of the girl:

She was not struck by any thing remarkably clever in Miss Smith’s conversation, but she found her altogether engaging [...] Encouragement should be given [...] *She* would notice her; she would improve her; she would detach her from her opinions and manners. It would be an interesting, and certainly very kind undertaking. (*Emma* 69)

From the first moments of meeting Harriet, Emma begins to govern Miss Smith. Projecting her own ideals and prejudices on Harriet, Emma begins to manipulate and control Miss Smith for her own amusement under the guise of “teaching” Harriet a certain way, a proper way, of life. With Miss Taylor gone, and Mr. Woodhouse a faulty companion, Harriet provides Emma with a friend and fulfills Emma’s goals in both control and matchmaking.

Beyond matching her new friend with various men, which I will discuss in a later section, Emma’s initial exercise of control over Miss Smith is motivated by Harriet’s connection with the Martins and Emma having deemed their acquaintance with her as “unworthy” (*Emma* 69). Early in Harriet’s visits to Hartfield, Emma notices Harriet’s attachment to the Martins, and initially “encourage[s]” Harriet to share stories of them, “amused by such a picture of another set of beings” (*Emma* 72). Emma’s encouragement for Harriet to speak of the Martin stems from Emma’s need to be amused by those in a different position in life, and fulfills her desire to influence Harriet: in Emma’s mind, Harriet is only continuing to speak of the Martins because she is indulging and allowing her “student” to do so. However, once Emma realizes Mr. Martin is single, she worries her friend will “sink herself forever” (*Emma* 72) should Harriet indulge in the affections of the farmer. In response to her concerns, Emma begins insulting Mr. Martin, stating he is the last person she’d be curious about and suggesting Harriet sever ties with him, reminding her young friend, “There can be no doubt of your being a gentleman’s daughter” (*Emma* 73). Emma’s influence over Harriet is strong, and the heroine uses it to her advantage as she inserts her own fanciful thoughts into Harriet’s head. Emma’s desire to control is propelled by her own fancy: “Driving Emma’s imaginings, at least initially, is a vision of the world as it should and perhaps can be, where women, who have already enjoyed a modicum of

security, can be confident of retaining it indefinitely” (Galperin 183). In her own life, Emma has retained a great deal of independence as mistress of the house in which there is no mother, no older sibling, and a valetudinarian father, and while Emma’s choices are subconsciously dictated by others around her, her forefront thought is to control her society. In this case, Emma wants to impart the security she has experienced in her social position onto Harriet, who essentially has none, as a way for Miss Woodhouse to maintain her own security, independence, and autonomy. Galperin makes Emma’s intentions sound gallant; however, she errs in the fact that Emma and Harriet come from different worlds, so the knowledge she is trying to force upon Harriet is faulty; as a result, Emma’s desire to help Miss Smith is simply grown out of selfishness within herself and her lifestyle of seemingly always getting her way. Should Harriet remain in acquaintance with the Martins, and should she and Mr. Martin ever marry, Emma wouldn’t only lose someone she can govern as well as her need to be in control; Emma would also fail at making a match for Harriet on her terms and, therefore, be unable to claim further success in matchmaking.

Emma’s influence over Harriet is undeniable, especially when considering Harriet’s relationship with Mr. Martin. By the time the two women encounter Mr. Martin during a walk, Harriet is quick to want Emma’s opinion of the man, inquiring of Emma if Mr. Martin is at all what she thought, what she thinks of him, and if she believes he is plain. Embracing the opportunity, Emma destroys Mr. Martin’s character:

“He is very plain [...] remarkably plain:—but that is nothing compared to his entire want of gentility [...] I had no idea that he could be so very clownish, so totally without air [...] At Hartfield you have had very good specimens of well educated, well bred men. I should be surprised if, after seeing them, you could be in company with Mr. Martin again without perceiving him to be a very inferior creature—and rather wondering at yourself for having ever thought him at all agreeable before. Do you not begin to feel that now? [...] I am sure you must have been struck by his

awkward look and abrupt manner [...] What say you to Mr. Weston and Mr. Elton? Compare Mr. Martin to either of *them* [...] You must see the difference.” (*Emma* 76)

Emma’s observation of Mr. Martin, whether she believed her stated opinion or not, is mostly used to obliterate any romantic feelings Harriet may have toward the farmer. As Bruce Stovel notes, Emma “knows very well, but at the same time cannot admit to herself, that Harriet Smith is in love with Robert Martin. She keeps herself from acknowledging this obvious fact by thinking that Harriet must be kept ‘safe’ [...] kept away from the ‘danger’ of contamination [...] kept under Emma’s control” (Stovel 5). No matter what she is doing, Emma believes she is helping Harriet. When prompted by Harriet, Emma begins by providing her biased opinion, ensuring Harriet is aware that Emma thinks Mr. Martin is lacking the qualities of a gentleman. At first, Emma strictly uses the word “I” in her observations; since Emma has the more dominant personality, and because Harriet is susceptible to the thoughts of Miss Woodhouse’s, who is of a higher social class, these “I” observations allow Emma to gain control over Harriet. After being welcomed into Emma’s home and gaining her friendship, it would be unlikely that Harriet would disagree with Emma; Harriet, regardless of her feelings toward Mr. Martin, is humiliated by Emma’s opinions of the man, and is forced to agree that Mr. Martin “is not so genteel as real gentlemen” (*Emma* 76). Harriet has a tendency to appease Emma. Once Emma gets Harriet to agree with her opinions, Emma switches from “I” observations to “you” observations: “Do you not begin to feel that now? [...] I am sure you must have been struck by his awkward look and abrupt manner [...] You must see the difference” (*Emma* 76). These “you” observations allow Emma to establish Harriet as the initiator of the judgments toward Mr. Martin rather than intimidating Harriet to agree with Emma’s sentiments. Emma has not only successfully manipulated Harriet into agreeing that Mr. Martin is lesser than the other

men she has become accustomed to, but she has also led Harriet into second guessing her own opinions.

Directly after manipulating Harriet's feelings toward Mr. Martin, Emma works on increasing Harriet's affection toward Mr. Elton in order to fulfill her new matchmaking scheme of finding a wife for the vicar. Unlike her feelings toward Mr. Martin, Emma respects and values the social status of Mr. Elton, and uses his gentility to her advantage in influencing Harriet: "In one respect, perhaps, Mr. Elton's manners are superior to Mr. Knightley's or Mr. Weston's" (*Emma* 77). Successfully diverting Harriet's attention from Mr. Martin to Mr. Elton, Emma proceeds to tell Harriet "some warm personal praise which she had drawn from Mr. Elton" (*Emma* 78). Throughout all of this, Emma is exercising her dominance over her new friend. It has been suggested by Ivor Morris that despite Emma depicting herself as neutral through all of her manipulations of Harriet, Emma is unaware that she reacts on impulse, as well, and that this impulsion is revealed through Emma deciding how to show her own social superiority (Morris 3). While I agree that much of what Emma does is a result of her trying to obtain, and maintain, authority in her social position, I argue Emma also believes her schemes are for the best; to Emma, it is her superiority within society that proves she knows what is best for those around her. This is demonstrated in her influence of Harriet's feelings as Emma manipulates Miss Smith to adopt Emma's opinions. It is in the early stages of her friendship with Harriet in which Emma most shows her autonomy, since Emma will only listen to her own opinions and inner beliefs. By taking it upon herself to guide Miss Smith through love to marriage, instead of finding love herself, Emma indicates she doesn't need or want the same outcome

for her own life, even if these feelings are merely a deception that allow her to maintain her independence.

Furthermore, Austen shows Emma's complete misjudgment of other characters in Emma's reaction to Mr. Martin's proposal to Harriet: "She read, and was surprized. The style of the letter was much above her expectation. There were not merely no grammatical errors, but as a composition it would not have disgraced a gentleman" (*Emma* 89). Yet, despite her altering ideas of Mr. Martin, Emma continues to misguide Harriet away from him. After much begging from Harriet, dependent on Emma's opinion, Emma insists she cannot help Harriet make a decision. Inevitably, though, through veiled biases and misguided words of wisdom, Miss Woodhouse once again influences Harriet's actions, "and though Emma continued to protest against any assistance being wanted, it was in fact given in the formation of every sentence" (*Emma* 92). Having successfully separated Harriet and Mr. Martin in a written rejection from Harriet, Emma refocuses her manipulation to create a match between Miss Smith and Mr. Elton.

By Volume 2 of *Emma*, Harriet is incapable of making her own choices, not as a result of her indecisiveness but as a response to not trusting her initial ideas. After Emma's failed attempt at uniting Harriet with Mr. Elton, Emma begins showing a slight change in character: "she was sorry for Harriet" (*Emma* 182). However, after Harriet has an encounter with the Martins, Emma takes pains in keeping Mr. Martin from Harriet's thoughts; this is done more for Emma's comfort than for Harriet's. Emma's response to Harriet's tale of running into the Martins is delivered differently than her first biases against them:

Very sincerely did Emma wish [to make Harriet comfortable]; but it was not

immediately in her power. She was obliged to stop and think. [...] [Emma] did try to make [Harriet] comfortable, by considering all that had passed as a mere trifle, and quite unworthy of being dwelt on [...] Emma, at last, in order to put the Martins out of [Harriet's] head, was obliged to hurry on the news, which she had meant to give with so much tender caution. (*Emma* 183-184)

Earlier, Emma readily gave her opinions of the Martins, whereas now she stops and thinks of how to respond to Harriet's story, careful not to be too harsh. Instead of demeaning the Martins' characters, Emma merely suggests that Harriet's encounter was not of great importance in the larger sense. Regardless of Emma's final action, she still shows restraint in her initial response. Still, after being unsuccessful in quieting Harriet's thoughts, Emma quickly diverts her ramblings and feelings by delivering the news that Mr. Elton has currently left Highbury and is uninterested in Harriet. Emma had little power over Harriet's thoughts of the Martins in this moment; and, while Emma initially tries to subdue her friend's anxiety and misery, she inevitably increases it to ease her own mind and ears from stories of Mr. Martin, temporarily regaining control over Harriet and pushing the Martins far from her friend's mind.

Yan Liu notes, "Emma never saw Harriet as a person but as a blank page to be filled in" (Liu 649). As Emma continues "teaching" Harriet, the influence of Emma becomes more prevalent. In every aspect of Harriet's life, Emma is in charge. Even as Emma sketches her friend, Harriet's likeness and individuality becomes skewed to mirror what Emma envisions: "a little improvements to the figure, to give a little more height, and considerable more elegance" (*Emma* 87). As Yan Liu indicates, Miss Woodhouse makes "her greatest effort to refine Harriet's manners and cultivate her taste" (Liu 639). To add to Liu's argument, I suggest Emma also refines Harriet's physical appearance. The fact that Emma's sketches are inaccurate portrayals of her subject parallels how Emma does not see others

true selves; rather, Emma sees only what she chooses to see—what she believes is best. Furthermore, while Emma “was not much deceived as to her own skill [...] as an artist” (*Emma* 85), Emma is actually deceived by her own opinionated perceptions of those around her. Austen’s portrayal of Emma in this scene is enlightening to who Emma is as a character. Even though Emma recognizes her errors in her drawings, she still cannot see her errors in understanding others. Consumed with wanting to maintain control, Emma cannot allow Harriet, in this case, to be presented as she is, just as she could not allow Harriet to determine her own opinions on Mr. Martin. Emma believes her perspective on Harriet to be not only most accurate, but also the only one that should exist. Emma’s control over the sketch mirrors her desired control over the subject, and Emma’s desire to mold Harriet to her liking. Emma must manipulate others—Mr. Elton—in seeing Harriet in the best way possible, even if it means physically altering Harriet.

Emma’s tight watch over Harriet continues throughout the volume as Harriet becomes incapable of making even the smallest decisions (*Emma* 222-224). According to P.J.M. Scott, “Emma’s endeavors in respect of Harriet Smith are self-indulgence. Harriet is the vehicle through which her own timidity and snobbery express themselves [...] Emma’s snobbery is equally a matter of asserting her Queenship” (Scott 70). I agree that Emma’s interferences in Harriet’s life are self-indulgent, and though Emma’s actions show a bit of arrogance, they point toward ignorance. Emma truly believes she is trying to help Harriet. She believes she can use her love of matchmaking to find Harriet a man and comfortable life. This isn’t necessarily an intentional act of asserting her own “Queenship,” but rather an attempt of Emma’s to remain “the teacher” and in control of her surroundings because of

the subconscious fear of dependence. The longer Emma can guide others in their lives, the more her life has meaning.

It isn't until Volume 3 in which Emma gives up—or loses—control of Harriet. After Harriet is saved by Frank Churchill from a band of gypsies and arrives at Hartfield, Emma believes Harriet and Frank Churchill are at the beginning of a romantic relationship, but she does not insist on their match: “She would not stir a step, nor drop a hint. No, she had had enough of interference. There could be no harm in a scheme, a mere passive scheme. It was no more than a wish. Beyond it she would on no account proceed” (*Emma* 296). Emma, though suspicious of the interaction between Harriet and Frank Churchill, matures just enough to only imagine a scheme between them but not act upon it. By the next chapter, Harriet calls again to Hartfield to share with Emma her parcel of “*Most precious treasures*” (*Emma* 297). As Harriet relives the meaning behind each piece of memorabilia related to her non-relationship with Mr. Elton, Emma grows more ashamed of her actions and ridden with guilt. By the end of the show and tell, Harriet rejects all pieces and destroys them in the fire. Harriet and Emma switch roles, for as Harriet is reliving her experiences she is teaching Emma humility. Harriet has learned from her past and knows to move on by this point. By throwing her keepsakes into the fire, Harriet erases the influence Mr. Elton—and therefore, Emma—has on her. By the end of the visit, Emma gives advice to Harriet, whom she assumes is in love with Mr. Churchill, rather than dictate her friend through another matchmaking scheme. While she once again makes a connection for Harriet in her head, Emma shows a change within herself. No longer does she automatically jump into matchmaking. Emma never even mentions her assumption to Harriet. Emma's change is for

the better, but mostly for Harriet's sake. The relinquishing of control hints toward Emma's loss of dominance. As Harriet gains her own autonomy, Emma loses some of hers.

Mr. Knightley

Readers first meet Mr. Knightley shortly after Miss Taylor marries, leaving Mr. Woodhouse lamenting her departure and foreshadowing Emma's both current and final place in life. The trajectory of Emma's relationship with Mr. Knightley throughout the novel plots her change as a character. When asked why it takes Emma so long to acknowledge her love for Mr. Knightley, Stovel notes, "The answer seems to be that she finds love threatens her sovereignty, her independence, and her self-control" (Stovel 5). Stovel's argument is easily proven through Emma's transformation throughout the novel. She begins the novel with independent thought and autonomy, and is willing to disagree, tease, and contradict Mr. Knightley; by the middle of the story, Emma becomes more likely to acknowledge Mr. Knightley's generally correct views and opinions, though she remains relatively stubborn in disagreement as an attempt to maintain her control and independence; still, it is clear Emma begins to lean more on Mr. Knightley's thoughts and opinions of her, and is frequently depicted as thinking of him. By the third volume, Emma is able to recognize her love for Knightley, and inevitably loses her independence to his governing. As Stovel argues, Emma is afraid of losing her independence, but it must be noted that Mr. Knightley is the only character to see through Emma from the beginning, and Emma is aware of his ability to do so: "Mr. Knightley, in fact, was one of the few people who could see faults in Emma Woodhouse, and the only one who ever told her of them" (*Emma* 59). Considering this, Emma isn't only afraid of falling in love, she is also afraid of Mr. Knightley revealing her character to others. In fact, it is amidst Mr. Woodhouse's continuous sorrows over Miss

Taylor marrying that Mr. Knightley replies, “I have great regard for you and Emma; but when it comes to the questions of dependence or independence!—At any rate, it must be better to have only one to please, than two” (*Emma* 59), foreshadowing Emma’s inevitable outcome. Not only does Emma lose her presumed independence, but also she loses it to a man who blatantly informs her of her faulty ways; on top of that, despite what she believes, Emma is already governed by the persistent melancholy of her father. The fact that one man, Mr. Knightley, is the reason Emma finds love and marries, and is the reason she recognizes faults in herself to generate a change, further points to Emma’s transformation from a woman with individual opinions and self-sufficiency to a wife who relies on, believes, and agrees with the two men—Mr. Woodhouse and Mr. Knightley—in her life.

Beginning Emma’s journey toward becoming Mr. Knightley’s wife, readers see Emma believing herself to be independent and self-governing, and she is willing to argue her way to prove she exhibits those qualities. In the first disagreement between Emma and Mr. Knightley over Emma’s “success” in matchmaking, Mr. Knightley confronts the heroine on whether she actually offers any skill in the art. As Mr. Knightley argues that simply wishing for something doesn’t equate to skill, and questions Emma’s merit and work in bringing Miss Taylor and Mr. Weston together, Emma counteracts, “a lucky guess is never merely luck. There is always some talent in it [...] a something between the do-nothing and the do-all” (*Emma* 61). The initial set up of Mr. Knightley and Emma’s relationship shows her unwilling to relent to his claims. As Mr. Knightley tries to derail Emma’s assumption that she brought the newlyweds together, or at the very least tries to have her recognize she should not take credit for the match, Emma refuses to admit her lack of control over the situation, redirecting Mr. Knightley’s argument to better suit her needs. Readers see Emma

not admitting her faults, errors and misunderstandings throughout the first volume.

Unfortunately for Emma, Knightley knows her better than she knows herself. For example, in drawing Harriet's portrait, Emma is told by Mr. Knightley that she had drawn the figure too tall compared to the subject, to which the narrator explains, "Emma knew that she had, but would not own to it" (*Emma* 87). In another dispute over Harriet, Mr. Knightley correctly accuses Emma of writing Harriet's rejection letter to Mr. Martin. In response, Emma neither admits she had or hadn't, but rather reasserts her belief that she had done no wrong. Still holding onto her power and superiority, Emma steadfastly denies, ignores, and refuses to believe she's in the wrong.

Nancy Armstrong suggests "The novelist grants Knightley authority to read the human character—authority that is nearly equal to her own—on grounds that he" can see fault in Emma (Armstrong 152). Armstrong is right in that Mr. Knightley has a unique ability to read those around him, including Emma, who tries to disguise herself in her superiority, and should he be compared to anyone with such omniscience, he parallels Austen's knowledge of her own characters. In this sense, Austen is portrayed in both primary characters: Knightley inherited her insight, whereas Emma inherited Austen's desire and ability to govern her characters. The separation of the personalities poses more problems for Emma than her eventual suitor; despite wanting to play the matchmaker and believing herself to know what everyone wants, Emma exists only within her own mind, manipulating the world to her liking rather than what it is. It is only Mr. Knightley who attempts to right Emma's wrongs; and in doing so exposes Emma's errors to herself.

By Volume 2, Emma starts showing subtle changes in her characters signifying the start of her transformation. On the first page of the volume, the narrator informs the reader

“[Emma] had had many a hint from Mr. Knightley and some from her own heart, as to her deficiency” (*Emma* 165). Even though this is merely referring to Emma’s negligence in giving attention to Mrs. and Miss Bates, the narrator addresses Emma’s transformation; prior, Emma would never admit to herself any potential deficiency. Should she not be the best company for the Bates, Emma would have been more likely to blame the older women for her lack of attention. Yet now, readers are given a glimpse of Emma’s recognition that she is not fully superior, and as this recognition develops, Emma will more readily admit her faults and inwardly agree with Mr. Knightley’s opinions, exerting any defiance only to stubbornly attempt to maintain control. This is further shown with Jane Fairfax’s storyline. When having to “pay civilities to a person she did not like” (*Emma* 174), Emma is once again thinking about Mr. Knightley’s opinions of herself:

Why she might not like Jane Fairfax might be difficult to answer; Mr. Knightley had once told her it was because she saw in her the really accomplished young woman, which she wanted to be thought herself; and though the accusation had been eagerly refuted at the time, there were moments of self-examination in which her conscience could not quite acquit her. (*Emma* 179)

Austen drives Emma's transformation with both tension in Emma due to Jane Fairfax's arrival, and with Emma agreeing to Mr. Knightley's analysis of herself. While Volume 1 offers little competition for Emma, at least in her mind, Volume 2 sees Emma's insecurities as she tries to remain superior. The reason Emma dislikes Jane Fairfax is simply that she feels inferior to Jane's accomplishments. As the narrator explains, Emma wanted to be as accomplished, though most likely *more* accomplished, than her perceived competitor. The fact that it is Knightley who first accuses Emma of her inferiorities furthers her transformation to giving up control and becoming a wife. Though she attempts to maintain her autonomy by refuting Mr. Knightley, Emma eventually finds herself looking inward as a

result of his claims. She can maintain a façade in outward appearance through disagreement; however, Emma can no longer hide from herself—or in this case, the self Mr. Knightley makes her recognize.

Claire Tomalin notes, “Emma is blind to everything she cannot see, and is enlightened only when her mistakes are shown up” (Tomalin 249). Taking Tomalin’s argument further, Emma is only enlightened when Mr. Knightley brings her faults and errors to light, suggesting he has more control over the heroine than she originally wanted to give. By the third volume of the novel, Emma is desperate to show her dominance over her society. The more Emma takes into account Mr. Knightley’s opinions of her, the further her transformation. As P.J.M Scott points out, “Emma’s snobbery is equally a matter of her asserting her Queenship” (Scott 70), which leads to her eventual defeat when her quick yet impolite wit backfires. During a visit to Box Hill, Emma takes advantage of the moment and insults and embarrasses Miss Bates. However, Emma finds no fault in her actions or words until she’s leaving the gathering and is confronted by Mr. Knightley: “I cannot see you act wrong, without a remonstrance. How could you be so unfeeling to Miss Bates?” (*Emma* 325). Emma’s response shows her own inner struggle in recognizing her faults but still wanting to maintain control: “Emma recollected, blushed, was sorry, but tried to laugh it off” (*Emma* 325); Emma recognizes her error more quickly than ever before, and though she knows she was in the wrong, Emma still struggles to admit her mistakes. Still, while Emma can see her faults, it is only due to Mr. Knightley’s disappointment that Emma is ashamed of her actions. Had the gentleman not addressed her bad manners, Emma would not necessarily have thought them to be improper. It is Mr. Knightley who propels Emma further into her transformation at this point, and by the end of their discussion Emma is

remorseful and, unlike every other time previously in the novel, she is no longer adamantly arguing that she was not in the wrong. Emma has lost her ability to be the “teacher” as she is now the student of Mr. Knightley’s reprimand. More than that, Mr. Knightley’s disapproval causes Emma to visit with Miss Bates as a way to apologize. In this sense, Mr. Knightley now controls Emma’s thoughts and actions; though Emma genuinely feels sorry for her rudeness toward Miss Bates, she is primarily apologizing due to Mr. Knightley’s disapproval of herself.

After her apology to Miss Bates, Emma consistently considers her actions with regard to Mr. Knightley’s opinion of herself. In a moment of reflection, Emma realizes that her behavior toward Jane Fairfax has caused Jane to believe Emma will never be kind toward her. Unlike earlier in the novel, when Emma unwaveringly disliked Jane, now

She was sorry [...] Her heart was grieved for a state which seemed but the more pitiable from this sort of irritation of spirits, inconsistency of action, and inequality of powers [...] but she had the consolation of knowing that her intentions were good, and of being able to say to herself, that could Mr. Knightley have been privy to all her attempts of assisting Jane Fairfax, could he have seen into her heart, he would not, on this occasion, have found any thing to reprove. (*Emma* 338)

As Emma changes, her thoughts consistently revert back to Mr. Knightley’s opinion of her. She seeks his approval, and her actions and feelings are altered as a result of Mr. Knightley’s control over her self-reflection. Inevitably, these self-reflections lead Emma to recognize her dependency on Mr. Knightley, and she questions, “When had his influence, such influence begun? [...] She saw that there never had been a time when she did not consider Mr. Knightley as infinitely the superior, or when his regard for her had not been infinitely the most dear” (*Emma* 353). Emma fully succumbs to needing Mr. Knightley in her life, recognizing his authority over herself and, in a sense, admitting herself capable of being influenced.

By the end of her story, Emma no longer relies on maintaining authority. However, she still claims she should not marry “even if she were asked by Mr. Knightley” due to being a dutiful daughter and allowing her father’s needs to dictate her actions (*Emma* 356). Yet the moment Mr. Knightley offers to reside at Hartfield so Emma can remain with her father, Emma fully surrenders any independence she may have had. Though she was considered mistress of Hartfield all along, her father’s jurisdiction and needs always influenced her decisions. Now, as a result of her engagement and impending marriage to Mr. Knightley, Emma is under the control and influence of two men. This brings to mind Mr. Knightley’s opinions of Miss Taylor’s marriage at the beginning of the story: “when it comes to the questions of dependence or independence!—At any rate, it must be better to have only one to please, than two” (*Emma* 59). Emma now finds herself in the situation of having to please two, rather than one. When she only had to please her father, Emma retained a sense of independence. She was capable of making decisions, sticking to her opinions, and carrying on a façade of authority and autonomy. Now, residing with both father and husband, Emma loses any authority and control she may have had. Her dependence is now doubled as she plays daughter to her father and wife to Mr. Knightley.

Conclusion

While Emma became a better, kinder person, she lost parts of herself she proudly exhibited early in the novel. Emma began the novel believing in her superiority and control over her society, unapologetic for her actions. She imagined herself independent with her presumed power over her father and influence of Harriet Smith. Yet, as the story moves forward, Emma’s authority begins to diminish and she begins to recognize her own faults. She is shown to be reliant on her father’s needs and is incapable of maintaining governance

over Harriet. As Mr. Knightley's opinions of her become more influential, Emma becomes more dependent on his sentiments and her actions are altered to present a woman with more propriety and less stubborn uniqueness. As the novel wraps up, Emma has budged from her assertion that she shall never marry; and in the end, she finds herself appeasing both father and husband. Emma transforms from a strong, stubborn, relatively independent woman into a kinder, more thoughtful woman who inevitably fills the role of a subordinate as she changes herself to play the roles of dutiful daughter and wife.

Chapter Five

The Other Heroines

Unlike the aforementioned heroines, Fanny Price and Anne Elliot do not transform. Rather, both Fanny and Anne epitomize the idea of “wife material” in their static roles from the beginning of *Mansfield Park* and *Persuasion*, respectively. With the exception of a maturation that comes with age, Fanny and Anne never have to transform or regress in order to marry as they are already devoted to their future husbands from the start. Though these two heroines don’t follow the same transformative trajectory, their stories still confirm Austen’s approval of the marriage plot and support the changes Austen’s other heroines had to make to become wives.

Fanny Price

The narrator of *Mansfield Park* describes a young Fanny as “exceedingly timid and shy, and shrinking from notice; but her air, though awkward, was not vulgar, her voice was sweet, and when she spoke, her countenance was pretty” (*Mansfield Park* 43), setting Fanny Price’s unfaltering personality. By the time she becomes an adult, readers learn Fanny is still shy and passive, does not share in festivities, and continues to live by her strong moral code. However, though Fanny does not go through a significant change as Catherine, Marianne, Elizabeth or Emma, her lack of transformation solidifies that Austen wrote her novels and her heroines as a representation of women of her time, portraying their roles romantically and encouraging women to idealize the role of wife in marriage.

In their conduct book, *Correspondence Between a Mother and Her Daughter at School*, Mrs. Taylor and Jane Taylor use a series of letters revolving around the invented character,

Laura, to impart advice and instruction. In letter XXIV, Laura's mother imparts one last piece of advice on female character and subordination to Laura before she leaves school for home:

But you, my dear Laura, have been trained from your childhood in the habits of proper subordination: and I should deem such observations altogether superfluous, were it not sometimes seen, that young persons at this period undergo a sudden revolution; and from the engaging, meek, and tractable child, start, all at once, into the pert, self-willed young lady. You are returning home,—I was going to say, not for the purpose of enjoying yourself and taking your pleasure,—but, to a well-regulated mind, the daily routine of duty *is* enjoyment;—to live a life of usefulness, is a perpetual pleasure. (Taylor and Taylor, 141-142)

Jacqueline Reid-Walsh fittingly parallels this advice literature with *Mansfield Park*, arguing, “Notably, the Taylor’s stipulation of a well brought-up young woman being trained in proper subordination aptly describes Fanny’s upbringing, while at the same time providing a clue to how she will successfully navigate the system” (Reid-Walsh 130). Reid-Walsh’s comparison builds to describe how Fanny slowly becomes more important in increasingly larger circles within her society (Reid-Walsh); yet, while her importance to others changes, her personality remains constant. Put simply, Fanny Price characterizes female propriety and subordination. I agree with Reid-Walsh, but would like to add that it isn’t merely Fanny’s upbringing that has trained her for subordination but also her desire to be and pleasure in being subordinate to others in part due to her “tractable disposition” (*Mansfield Park* 48): “Fanny had no share in the festivities of the season; but she enjoyed being avowedly useful as her aunt’s companion” (*Mansfield Park* 64). Compared to other women in *Mansfield Park*, Fanny’s training befits her better as a wife: her “moral and spiritual development is emphasized over her surface development [...] Fanny thereby genuinely acquires the conduct book ideals of modesty, prudence, and self-control, rather than simply gaining surface mannerisms” (Reid-Walsh 132). Though I disagree with Reid-Walsh’s use of

the word “development,” I agree that Fanny’s personality exhibits moral and spiritual aspects over surface desires. Her ability to listen to others, her timidity, and her strong moral code demonstrate how she is the ideal wife, especially for Edmund. Though she retains her own opinions throughout *Mansfield Park*, Fanny’s autonomy is a result of her love for Edmund. In fact, much of what Fanny does is in relation to her future husband, his reactions, and his care for her. Fanny found kindness in Edmund from the moment he brought her paper to write a letter and offered to mail it for her: Fanny “felt that she had a friend” (*Mansfield Park* 47). In this moment, Fanny dedicated her life and feelings to Edmund, and though she struggled understanding how she felt, her actions and thoughts continued to revolve around him; throughout the story, readers are reminded of her dedication to Edmund: after her arrival to Mansfield Park, “she loved him better than any body in the world except William” (52); as Edmund began courting Mary Crawford, “Fanny could not wonder that Edmund was at the parsonage every morning; she would gladly have been there too” (92); and as Edmund relays his story of Mary Crawford’s faults and the end of his acquaintance with her, “such was Fanny’s dependence on his words” (456). Whereas Marianne Dashwood found Colonel Brandon too old at the start, Elizabeth Bennet found Darcy insufferable during the first ball, and Emma Woodhouse never imaged marrying Mr. Knightley until she was worried enough that he might marry someone else, Fanny’s love for Edmund was unwavering from the moment she first interacted with her future husband. Fanny exemplifies the roll of a woman dedicated to a man and her propriety only further propels her into the role of a wife. Whereas the other heroines had to change into more subordinate versions of themselves in order to become wives, Fanny regulated herself

from the start, found enjoyment in helping and pleasing others, and seized her role as being dutiful to others.

Gilbert and Gubar assert, "With purity that seems prudish and reserve bordering on hypocrisy, Fanny is far less likeable than Austen's other heroines (Gilbert and Gubar 165). This is no truer than when examining the flirty, teasing nature of Austen's heroines. Unlike other heroines and secondary female characters in Austen's novels, Fanny is certainly not a flirt; and while, in examining their flirtatious personalities, Austen's heroines would range in their coquettish ways, Fanny exists primarily at the end of spectrum that is lacking overt flirtatiousness. According to Theresa Braunschneider, who studied the act of flirtation of the eighteenth-century female, "coquette discourse in this period functions not only as a means of defining and interrogating standards of female virtue but also a signifier of the newness of a series of social relations [...] creating a cultural common sense about women, courtship, marriage" (Hultquist 122). Heroine Marianne Dashwood is a perfect example of the coquette when viewing her actions around Willoughby. Marianne begins her relationship with Willoughby dramatically, becomes flirtatious and unaware of her impropriety, and continues on that course until her pseudo-hero departs. Hultquist explains, "the coquette is vain; light or airy; technically virtuous, but careless about her reputation" (Hultquist 122). In this sense, the character of Lydia Bennet exemplifies the idea of the coquette. Lydia's priority in life revolves around flirting with soldiers in order to find a husband. One main difference between Marianne and Lydia is in Marianne's ability to change her actions. While Braunschneider did not analyze any Austen novels in her work, she picks works in with the coquette, or heroine, reforms "as she adjusts her desires to be in line with cultural expectations" (Hultquist 123). While Marianne eventually overcomes

her playful ways and marries Colonel Brandon, Lydia is so careless in her efforts that she ends up running away with Wickham, destroying her reputation. In this sense, Marianne becomes a heroine because of her ability to transform where as Lydia remains secondary. Other Austen heroines, too, exhibit coquettish qualities, though not to the same degree. In believing she should find Frank Churchill desirable, Emma Woodhouse adopts questionable behaviors in flirting with the man. Even Elizabeth Bennet finds herself flirting with Willoughby, though with more subtlety and wit than other heroines, before acknowledging his improprieties. Each of these heroines—Lydia excluded—is forced out of their coquettish behaviors as a need to reform and conform to societal expectations, and when each one successfully reforms, she becomes suitable wife material. And yet, Fanny Price never engages in flirtatious behavior. Her propriety highlights her lack of coquettishness. She lives by her moral code, she is the voice of proper decisions, and she tries her best in guiding others to make good moral decisions, particularly in respect to putting on that questionable play: “Fanny is the only one who has judged rightly throughout, who has been consistent” (*Mansfield Park* 204). Living by such high standards for herself, Fanny is a character who does not require transformation because she exemplifies what the other heroines eventually become.

Anne Elliot

The narrator in *Persuasion* describes Anne Elliot as having “an elegance of mind and sweetness of character [...] her word had no weight; her convenience was always to give away;—she was only Anne” (*Persuasion* 48). Though not as shy or passive as Fanny, at 28, Anne’s personality is, too, sweet; whereas Fanny exhibits a strong moral code, Anne offers elegance of mind; and, like Fanny, “Anne does quietly and attentively watch and listen and

judge the members of her world” (Gilbert and Gubar 178). Furthermore, Anne Elliot, too, exhibits propriety; and, like Fanny, though Anne matures, her story ends the way it began: with Captain Wentworth. Though not as modest or as extremely moral as Fanny, Anne hardly falters in her love for Captain Wentworth. Anne’s only waver in autonomy occurs not as a result of Captain Wentworth, but of her ability to be persuaded by others, in particular, Lady Russell; and, as a result of this waver, Anne spends the remaining parts of her story as “the ghost of her own self” (Gilbert and Gubar 175) until her relationship with Captain Wentworth begins again.

Of *Persuasion*, Claudia Johnson notes, “Anne’s autumn and Austen’s are complementary—in other words, that *Persuasion*, like the other novels, indeed like all novels by women, is the author’s own love story” (Johnson 144). In fact, there are paralleling events between Austen’s life and Anne’s story. For a second time in her novels, Jane Austen writes of her heroine having to leave her home when her father sells it: “Sir Walter would quit Kellynch-hall [...]” for a home in Bath (*Persuasion* 55). Just as she had in *Sense and Sensibility*, Austen rips her heroine from her childhood home as she, herself, had been ripped from hers at age 25. However, unlike Elinor and Marianne, Anne is forced to move to Bath with her family, the same exile Austen was faced with in her own life. I argue that Austen revisited this event in order to give her heroine the outcome she desired. Parallels can be seen between Marianne’s love life and Anne’s love life. Both heroines fell in love and both heroines experienced the men they loved leaving. However, when Marianne reencounters Willoughby in London at a ball he is already engaged to another woman, sending Marianne into a bout of illness, and triggering her transformation. In a similar experience, when Anne reencounters Captain Wentworth, “a thousand feelings rushed on

Anne [...] Her eyes half met Captain Wentworth's; a bow, a curtsy passed; she heard his voice [...] but a few minutes ended it" (*Persuasion* 94). However, Anne continues to encounter Captain Wentworth after that night, unlike Marianne who seeks out Willoughby without success. The treatment of the heroines' love lives can be analyzed in their personalities and the time in which the novels were written. According to Gilbert and Gubar, "Authorship for Austen is an escape from the very restraints she imposes on her female characters" (Gilbert and Gubar (168); in other words, Austen lives vicariously through her characters—she uses her novels as a way to give her characters the ending she did not have. Austen wrote *Sense and Sensibility* between 1795 and 1796, with final revisions to the work just over a decade later. Likewise, Austen, at a more mature age, wrote and completed *Persuasion* between 1815 and 1816. In the time Austen wrote and revised *Sense and Sensibility*, she had a brief romance with Tom Lefroy and received a proposal from Harris Bigg-Wither, which, like Anne, she accepted and then withdrew. In this sense, Johnson's argument holds up. I have already paralleled Austen's relationship with Lefroy to that of Marianne's relationship with Willoughby in Chapter 2. In both cases, neither woman married the man. Instead, Austen allows Marianne to regress and become Colonel Brandon's wife, and Austen herself never married. However, when setting Anne Elliot up for a similar outcome, Austen instead gives Anne her happy ending—the happy ending neither Marianne nor Austen ever got. Anne Elliot does not get the same restraints put upon her as other heroines. The restraints that inevitably lead to Marianne's—and other heroines'—transformation are not relevant in Anne's story because she already exhibits the qualities the other heroines have to develop. Anne's loss of autonomy occurred temporarily before the start of her story: "She was persuaded to believe the engagement a

wrong thing—indiscreet, improper, hardly capable of success, and not deserving it” (*Persuasion* 67). By the time readers meet Anne, she has matured and come to understand and accept her regrets. Anne’s static character supports the other heroines’ transformation as they change to become the perfect wives. What readers experience with other heroines within their stories—making mistakes, losing hope, and making changes to themselves—readers see retrospectively in Anne’s story. Therefore, Anne does not have to regress in order to marry; her love story is only fulfilled when it reverts itself to what it could have been eight years prior and she marries Captain Wentworth.

Coda

Catherine Morland's regression from a tomboy unaffected by social expectations into a heroine dependent on the teachings of Henry Tilney creates a more socially adept woman able to read the world around her at the expense of losing her unrestricted self. Still, by using the marriage plot, Austen endorses that women seek love and marriage in spite of the loss of individuality. This is again seen in *Sense and Sensibility* in which Austen uses her heroines, sisters Elinor and Marianne, to balance how she herself wishes to act and how society expects her to act. Proper Elinor gets her happy ending with Edward while the taming of Marianne gives the younger heroine a more realistic version of what she sought from the start of the novel. In writing *Pride and Prejudice*, Austen takes independent, outspoken Elizabeth Bennet through a slow transformation in which Elizabeth finds herself frequently speechless and in a position to evaluate her own character after so wrongly judging Darcy. As a result, Elizabeth subdues—and wishes to forget—her overt personality to become Darcy's wife. Furthermore, though she is the most privileged of all Austen's heroines, Emma Woodhouse goes through the most severe transformation in that her independence is slowly overshadowed by the men in her life and their control over her. Despite persistent claims of never wanting to marry and consistent attempts at maintaining control, Emma ends her story dependent on both her father and her husband, relinquishing any autonomous ideals she once held. Finally, writing the characters of Fanny Price and Anne Elliot, whose stories lack character transformation, allows Austen to establish "wife material" and explain the transformative trajectories of the other heroines.

Austen's portrayal of her heroines suggests the author wrote supporting the role of marriage and, more specifically, the conforming of independent women into the roles of

wives. Many of Austen's heroines exhibit agency and autonomy at the beginning of their stories only to transform during courtship into limited and subordinate, but accepted, women in their societies. With her idealistic marriage plots, Austen uses quixotic, romantic notions to provide hope for a "happily ever after" and encourage women to not only seek wifedom, but willingly transform themselves as needed to achieve the role of wife.

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