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The Abuser and the Abused:
Impropriety in Selected Texts by Jane Austen

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Résumé

Le thème de cette thèse est le droit des femmes à la fin du dix-huitième siècle dans les romans de l'auteure britannique Jane Austen. L'abus psychologique (et parfois physique) entre femmes est omniprésent au moment où le sujet de l'égalité entre hommes et femmes est à son apogée. Depuis la publication du volume *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas* de Marilyn Butler, on ne limite plus nos interprétations aux significations littéraires des romans, au contraire, elles se multiplient dans les champs culturels, sociaux, économiques… Ceci permet de mieux comprendre l'époque reflétée dans ses oeuvres. Les interactions humaines se compliquent: les mères essayent à tout prix de « vendre » leurs filles à l'homme le plus riche. Pour ce faire, ces mères résistent aux normes patriarcales. De plus, les femmes veuves sont problématiques car leur statut social ne peut pas être défini. Austen peint et critique les veuves autonomes qui essayent vigoureusement d'exercer leurs pouvoirs à travers leur sexualité et en manipulant leur vocabulaire dans le but de monter dans l'échelon social. En fait, les femmes de tous âges et toutes classes essayent de manipuler les autres pour leurs gains personnels. L'obtention de pouvoir fait en sorte que ces femmes compétitives ne créent pas une société inclusive: elles se marginalisent encore plus. Ce combat interne permet d'autant plus aux hommes d'injurier les femmes. Finalement, avec la montée du cinéma de nos jours, les oeuvres d'Austen sont traduites pour atteindre un grand nombre de spectateurs. Parmi la panoplie de films, l'abus est traduit et interprété à différents degrés.

Mots clés: femmes; pouvoir; veuves; Susan, Prejudice, Mansfield, Emma, Northanger, film, flirt.

Abstract

The focus of this study is women's rights in Jane Austen's novels. Despite the increasing awareness of individuality and human rights, psychological (and often physical) abuse exists. After Marilyn Butler's seminal study *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas*, Austen is better understood within the contexts of her time. Human relationships are much more complicated as mothers try to "sell-off" their daughters to the highest bidder. These women attempt to secure their own financial future regardless of their children's wishes or patriarchal norms. Moreover, widows who once exercised power through their husbands see this power relinquished, as society tries to identify their social status. Austen criticizes independent widows who try to obtain power by using their sexuality and manipulative language. The need for control spreads to all females no matter their social standing. This develops a competitive nature amongst them that limits the growth of society. This lack of unity allows men to abuse women themselves. Finally, with the advent of film studies, it is important to look at Austen novels translated into this media. Directors interpret abuse in various degrees, but most acknowledge its presence.

Key words: women; power; widows; Susan, Prejudice, Mansfield, Emma, Northanger, film, flirt

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Abbreviations

All references to Jane Austen's novels are taken from *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Jane Austen*, general editor Janet Todd, 9 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005-8).

J	*Juvenilia*
LS	*Lady Susan*
NA	*Northanger Abbey*
SS	*Sense and Sensibility*
PP	*Pride and Prejudice*
MP	*Mansfield Park*
E	*Emma*
P	*Persuasion*
LM	*Later Manuscripts*

For Loukas

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It is certainly difficult to limit the number of people you would like to acknowledge when you have encountered suggestions and comments from various sources over several years. Therefore, I want to begin by expressing my gratitude to all those I have come into contact with, whose brains I have picked, and for the pleasant conversations that sometimes strayed away from anything eighteenth-century or Romantic. These diversions gave me the energy, and confidence to carry on with my thesis. I would also like to thank Dr. Michael Eberle-Sinatra for guiding and challenging my ideas, but also for introducing me to different facets of the centuries by giving me the opportunity to work as his research assistant. Furthermore, I would like to express appreciation to my parents, Christos and Matina Dimakis, for their love and support and for their encouragement (though my mom, much like many eighteenth-century women, wondered when it was I would marry!). I am also lucky to have an encouraging brother, Nick, who always asked “are you done, yet?” and thus keeping me on my feet. But, above all, I want to thank my husband, Loukas Toliopoulos, for his patience, encouragement, and love.

Introduction

> [I]n all her novels Austen examines the female powerlessness that underlies monetary pressure to marry, the injustice of inheritance laws, the ignorance of women denied formal education, the psychological vulnerability of the heiress or widow, the exploited dependency of the spinster, the boredom of the lady provided with vocation.
>
> (Gilbert and Gubar 136)

> [T]he early woman writer was very far from the modest and amateur lady of letters most histories would have her be. She was rather a prostitute of the pen, trafficking in desire for profit and, in this respect, no different from her male contemporaries.
>
> (Ballaster 29)

Politics, rights, education, individuality are among the prominent issues that preoccupied eighteenth-century English citizens. These topics were constantly debated amongst men and women alike. Thomas Paine, Edmund Burke, and Mary Wollstonecraft heatedly argued the pros and cons of revolutionary change and preserving traditional heritage. The fear of war and of (non)reform is recorded in various literary forms throughout the period. Jane Austen, a social novelist, is herself an astute observer and commentator of her time. Because her writing is discreet and reveals little directly, Austen's position has for many been ambiguous.[1] Marilyn Butler's pivotal study *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas* (1975) was the first work to connect Austen to her time: to show how Austen engages with the world around her. But while Butler contains Austen within the limits of conservatism, Claudia L. Johnson in *Jane Austen: Women, Politics, and*

[1] For an interesting take on Austen's inclinations see, for instance, Mary A. Favret's "Reading Jane Austen in Wartime," or Gary Kelly's "Education and accomplishments" in the latest Cambridge UP series on Jane Austen. See also Warren Roberts' precursive study *Jane Austen and the French Revolution.* Moreover, Peter Sabor's latest article "Jane Austen: satirical historian" points to Austen's partisanship, but primarily how she "found [Goldsmith's] pretensions of impartiality bogus" (220).

the Novel (1988) eliminates the borders, and groups Austen with progressive novelists like Mary Wollstonecraft, William Godwin, and Mary Hays, and shows the influence female political writers had on her.[2] Gary Kelly addresses this inconsistency:

> [s]ome see her as a political 'conservative' because she seems to defend the established social order. Others see her as sympathetic to 'radical' politics that challenged the established order, especially in the form of patriarchy […]. Thus some critics see Austen's novels as […] complex, criticizing aspects of the social order but supporting stability and an open class hierarchy. ("Religion" 156)

Austen's ambiguous stance only attests to her success as a writer because readers and critics alike are given so much room for individual interpretation.

This dissertation borrows from previous studies and expands on the idea of female relationships in Austen's novels. Whether single, married or widowed, women were often hostile to each other regardless of the intimidating patriarchal society they lived in. Thus understanding eighteenth-century English society provides insight into the reasons why women are pitted against each other.

Mary Lascelles's *Jane Austen and her Art* (1939) is among the first works of literary criticism of Austen's novels. In it, Lascelles shows Samuel Johnson's influence on Austen, and focuses on Austen's use of morality in her novels. Indeed, Austen echoes several arguments of the political economist and philosopher Adam Smith, set forth in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759).[3] He

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[2] In "'Instruction a Torment'? Jane Austen's Early Writing and Conflicting Versions of Female Education in Romantic-Era 'Conservative' British Women's Novels," Barnita Bagchi shows how Austen's works fit into both these statements.

[3] In her article "Austen's Powers: Engaging With Adam Smith in Debates About Wealth and Virtue," Elsie B. Michie shows how Austen incorporates Smith's views in her novels. Furthermore, for a study of Austen basing vanity and pride on Smith's opinions see Kenneth L. Moler's "The Bennet Girls and Adam Smith on Vanity and Pride." See also Mudrick's argument on morality:

states that morality "cannot be the object of reason, but of immediate sense and feeling" (Smith 377). He also believes that a person has an innate sense of what is good or bad. Morality and sympathy are therefore products of nature, not reason. Together they ensure the proper functioning of society. Furthermore, Adam Smith and philosophers such as the Third Earl of Shaftsbury promoted the natural affection between family members, another important theme found in Austen's novels. The late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries also saw a growing respect for individuality reflected through an increasing demand for marriages based on love (Stone 217, Trumbach, *Rise* 3). Daughters were now encouraged to either accept or refuse their life partners themselves, something that Austen promoted in *Pride and Prejudice*, for example.

In addition to her socio-political and cultural involvement, Austen astutely uses human behaviour and interaction to depict a society that is imperfect: a society that needs to be re-evaluated and re-constituted. Austen portrays society's imperfections through a young girl's courtship to marriage. While some, like Emerson, condemn this theme of marriage, it serves Austen's limited purpose to depict "3 or 4 families" (Chapman, *Letters* 401). Such a small concentration of individuals can allow for a better depiction of human ties between members of a society that make new, wise friendships. Austen argues in her novels that such sensible relationships, however, must begin at home.

> In *Pride and Prejudice*, as in the previous novels, Jane Austen deals with the distinction between false moral values and true; but she is also dealing here with a distinction antecedent to the moral judgment – the distinction between the simple personality, unequipped with that self-awareness which alone makes choice seem possible, and the complex personality, whose most crucial complexity is its awareness, of self and others. (Mudrick 107)

For Mudrick, Austen combines both morality and personality in order to complete the individual.

Family and relationships are at the core of cultural and social development. Ruth Perry highlights the importance of family in eighteenth-century literature:

> Sometimes the narratives of families lost and families found are tragic; sometimes they are pure, triumphant wish-fulfillment. Some imagine powerful bonds between the protagonist and his or her rediscovered consanguineal family, while others portray the relationship between the protagonist and his or her newly constructed conjugal family. What is common to these fantasies, whether consoling or disturbing, is intense anxiety about family membership, represented variously as extreme loneliness, longing, or long-deferred but finally perfect happiness. Belonging to a family is never taken for granted or quietly subsumed as background for other adventures; being cast out of a family or taken into a family *is* the adventure in eighteenth-century novels. (*Novel Relations* 8)

With an increasing awareness of consanguineal and conjugal family ties, one's allegiance is crucial. In her study, Perry concludes that as the eighteenth century comes to a close, conjugal family ties become progressively more important.

Philippe Ariès's pre-eminent work on the history of childhood entitled *Centuries of Childhood* (1962) reveals that it is in the seventeenth century that the concept of childhood is created and those children's roles in the family unit change. The relationship between parents and children develops as a result of the decline of apprenticeship, and the establishment of schools that bring a "more liberal and solicitous attitude to children" (Grylls 20-22). In eighteenth-century literature, romantic period writers and poets turn to the child for its purity and recognize its individuality. Indeed, with autobiographical writings becoming more prominent, authors returned to their pasts, to a more natural and pure state. William Stroup argues that "the interest in childhood in the Romantic period

emerged not out of a self-indulgent desire to tell one's own story, but from the wider project of investigating 'nature' in all its meanings" (1). Similarly, Linda Austin argues "[a]t the break of the nineteenth century, that most romantic desire the longing for childhood, produced one of the most romantic images, the innocent child of nature" (75). For Stroup and Austin, the late eighteenth-century child is connected with the purity of nature. While some writers looked for an understanding of human growth and how experiences influenced and shaped their lives, others observed and criticized behaviours. Grylls claims that children in Austen's work are "seen as long-term financial drainage" (115), and provide "social diversion" (115). For him, Austen is a "pre-Romantic. She reveals in her fiction little belief in the wisdom or innocence of children and what she prizes most in young people is obedience and respect" (130). Grylls provides a much more Marxist approach to contemporary perceptions of children. Austen is aware of their manipulative nature, which is why their parents should teach them manners. On the other hand, Jacqueline Banerjee disagrees with Grylls and claims that "[c]hildren do play some significant roles in Austen's fiction, and where they do so, her interest in them produces profound perceptions" (22). In fact, she believes that Austen "often champions the children at the expense of those adults (like Lady Susan) who exploit and underestimate them" (22). Unlike Grylls, Banerjee believes Austen compares older women, such as Lady Susan or Aunt Norris to their charges, Frederica and Fanny, respectively, in order to show the virtues and defects of each.

Despite the political diversity of the novels of the period,

> they tend to share at least one narrative similarity: either the mother figure is missing or the mother and daughter are separated. […] Whether she is dead, missing, emotionally detached, or present without the daughter's realizing it, the mother is conspicuous in her absence. (Greenfield 18)[4]

In *Mothering Daughters: Novels and the Politics of Family Romance, Frances Burney to Jane Austen*, Susan C. Greenfield points to the absent mother motif in eighteenth-century literature. Austen does not favourably portray mothers and fathers in her novels. In fact, those who are praised are the deceased family members (Anne Elliot's, and Eleonor Tilney's mothers, for instance). The only reformed father is Sir Bertram, who acknowledges his errors in entrusting his children's moral and intellectual education to the incapable hands of Aunt Norris, his sister-in-law. Austen's mothers never change because they never learn from the trouble their families' experience. It would be a reductive response, though, to say that Austen blames maternal failure on individual mothers alone, for Austen recognizes the need for family support and involvement. While Austen negatively depicts mothers as stunted figures who prevent her heroines from learning and growing on their own, she nevertheless criticizes all guardians for selfishly choosing individual gain instead of the collective good of the family.

Furthermore, feminist criticism of Austen's works began with the pioneering work of Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979). As focus fell on women's rights, scholars tried to understand and contextualize the behaviour of Austen's characters. Feminist and psychoanalytical

[4] Among the political issues Greenfield discusses is a chapter on Frances Burney's *Evelina* and other novels, where she shows the importance of mother-daughter resemblance to prove paternity. Another interesting article on the absent mother is Susan Peck MacDonald's "Jane Austen and the Tradition of the Absent Mother."

theory provide additional understanding of human relations. In the late twentieth century, psychoanalytic feminist theorist Nancy Chodorow, and psychiatrist Judith Lewis Herman, among others, also centered their attention on the family. Chodorow's interest lies with family interactions and her groundbreaking work on mother-daughter relationships *The Reproduction of Mothering* (1978) "has toppled the primacy of the Freudian notions of self" (Poston 88). This relationship is a hotbed for discussion in which Lewis Herman and Helen Block Lewis also participate with their article "Anger in the Mother-Daughter Relationship." These women writers remain pioneers in feminist studies in their own right.

Interestingly, however, these mother-daughter issues are not limited to the family circle, but to society at large. Characters like Marianne Dashwood, Lucy Steele, Emma Woodhouse, and Isabella Thorpe complicate their relationships with other women to whom they have no filial bond. Austen's novels show that there is a matriarchal society implemented alongside the patriarchal one. In it, women reign over other women. These "rulers" are sometimes women of class or at other times, they are older (presumably wiser) role models; overall, they are mothers, guardians, and acquaintances that challenge the status quo for power. Married, widowed and single women all strive for security, power, and attention in the novels. Austen cleverly reveals these women's aspirations through her use of language and subtle free indirect discourse.

Language is used on many levels: the language of the novelist, that of the narrator and that of the characters.[5] Austen's praiseworthy narrative technique is

[5] See for instance, Norman Page's interesting look at Austen's stylistic use of language in *The Language of Jane Austen.*

crucial in understanding character behaviour, and identity. In *Jane Austen: Irony as Defense and Discovery* (1952), Marvin Mudrick sees Austen as a critic of society who uses irony to point to the discrepancy between what the reality is and what she thought it should be. Indeed, she uses language instrumentally since it "is the most important distinguishing mark of the human" (Tanner 6). *The Talk in Jane Austen* (ed. Bruce Stovel and Lynn Weinlos Gregg) is one of the many works dedicated to Austen's use of language and what it can reveal. Anthony Mandal judiciously observes that "Austen's concern with constructing appropriate linguistic models to reflect social and moral conventions manifests itself in the use and refinement of various stylistic techniques" (28). Placing the onus on conversation, since "a woman's sphere of action was considerably restricted in the nineteenth-century gentry world," Mandal contends that "*[s]peaking* in the novels often correlates with *doing*" (28, original emphasis). Talking gives the talker power to control, praise, and abuse those listening. Sarah E. Brown and Mary Jane Curry contend that for Jane Austen, like Henry Fielding, "most important to the cohesion of community is the linguistic sophistication of those holding power over others" (49). Brown and Curry suggest that wielding such power has an important impact on the proper functioning of society.[6] The proper use of language creates a positive, fruitful environment for progress; abusive, misleading language, on the other hand, causes stagnation, as miscommunication impedes the growth of a society. Unfortunately, Tony Tanner informs us, language "is everywhere abused, often to cruel and terrible ends. Jane Austen enacts and

[6] In his *Theory of Communicative Action* (1981) Jürgen Habermas argues that debating matters of public importance helps democratic public life thrive. Acknowledging another's capacity of discourse as equal to one's own brings social equality.

dramatizes the difficulties, as well as the necessity of using language to proper ends" (6). Male and female characters, such as Wickham, Willoughby, Isabella Thorpe, and Fanny Dashwood, are some of Austen's characters who manipulate language for their own ends. Tanner, however, also points to Austen's positive use of language: "Just as thoughtless or perverse use of language can be the most insidious destroyer of the human, so the most responsible employment of language (and at time silence) not only makes for the dignity of the human but has powers and strengths of salvation" (6). Tanner examines the consequences of using language for either destructive or genuine purposes. All three of these critics point to the power of words to shape, and change one's life, and social standing. Words also influence one's interaction with others in the community, but the community also shapes dealings with the individual. The abusive language of such characters as Lady Susan, Mrs. Bennet, Aunt Norris, and Emma impedes their relationships with family members as well as friends and strangers of their respective villages.

In his theory of Gemeinschaft (community), the "closeness of blood relationship and mixture of blood; … physical proximity; and, … intellectual proximity" (48), and Gesellschaft (society) that "deals with the artificial construction of an aggregate of human beings which superficially resembles the Gemeinschaft in so far as the individuals live and dwell together peacefully" (Tönnies 64-5), Ferdinand Tönnies focuses on the distinction between community and society. The word *Gemeinschaft* implies human bonding experiences whereas

the word *Gesellschaft* deals with impersonal transactions. For Tönnies an individual's power shapes both these domains:

> The greater satisfaction of the stronger individuals is partly the feeling of superiority itself, of power and command; whereas, on the contrary, being led and protected and having to obey – the feeling of inferiority – is always felt with some displeasure as a kind of pressure and constraint even though it may be alleviated by affection, habit, and gratitude…All superiority carries with it the danger of haughtiness and cruelty and, therefore, of a hostile, coercive treatment if, accompanying increasing superiority, the tendency to benefit those dominated is not greater or does not also increase. (41)

Tönnies points to a person's sense of superiority and power: the person who leads and takes control has an inflated ego, and is hostile, thus, making others feel inferior and unhappy. Characters like Lady Catherine De Burgh, Mrs. Jennings, and Mrs. Churchill, to name a few, do not promote *Gemeinschaft*, rather they advance *Gesellschaft* since in this category

> everybody is by himself and isolated, and there exists a condition of tension against all others. … Such a negative attitude toward one another becomes the normal and always underlying relation of these power-endowed individuals, and it characterizes the Gesellschaft in the condition of rest; nobody wants to grant and produce anything for another individual, nor will he be inclined to give ungrudgingly to another individual, if it be not in exchange for a gift or labor equivalent that he considers at least equal to what he has given. (Tönnies 65)

Despite the blood ties that would normally create a Gemeischaft community, the negative and selfish attitude of its members (Emma, for instance, refuses to acknowledge Jane Fairfax, and the *nouveaux riches* Coles into her circle of acquaintances) creates a society of opportunity and unrespectable attitude.

Further developing the notion of communal effort, Jürgen Habermas in his 1962 *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Enquiry into a*

Category of Bourgeois Society develops the concept of the public sphere. He contends that the conjugal family – the bourgeois nuclear family – is the first important structure of the public sphere. The public sphere includes members of the private realm who use reason when socializing in the outside world. A family, like the Bertrams, for instance, derives its autonomy from its property. Owning land provides them with a certain degree of independence. When the instability in Antigua threatens the strength of Mansfield Park, this independence is endangered. Furthermore, because the bourgeois nuclear family is a patriarchal one, it grants family members access into society by providing the economic qualifications and emotional training required in order to participate in public. Sir Bertram's children are all trained in proper etiquette and educated in the fields appropriate to their gender. Yet, Habermas also testifies to the complexity of functioning within the private sphere:

> The ambivalence of the family as an agent of society yet simultaneously as the anticipated emancipation from society manifested itself in the situation of family members: on the one hand, they were held together by patriarchal authority; on the other, they were bound to one another by human closeness. As a privatized individual, the bourgeois was two things in one: owner of goods and persons and one human being among others, i.e., *bourgeois* and *homme*. (54)

Habermas emphasizes the relationship people have with the family's emotional life. Responsibility lies on the father of the household to provide both emotional and social integration.[7] Sir Thomas does not fulfill Habermas's directive because

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[7] On similar lines, Ferdinand Tönnies claims that authority of age, authority of force, and authority of wisdom or spirit

> are united in the authority of the father who is engaged in protecting, assisting, and guiding his family. The danger inherent in such power causes fear in the weaker ones, and this by itself would mean nothing but negation and repudiation

"though a truly anxious father, he was not outwardly affectionate, and the reserve of his manner repressed all the flow of [his children's] spirits before him" (*MP* 19). Unwilling or unable to externalize his affection, Sir Thomas trains his children to reciprocate his coolness. He projects an unkind persona and is therefore disrespected and even feared (by Fanny). His standoffish attitude does not encourage teamwork and as a result, all other family members behave autonomously. Moreover, Habermas contends that the family is the source of individuality and privacy. Members are taught how to feel as part of a family, and this subjectivity is an important part of the structure of the private man in public:

> In general, the two forms of public sphere blended with each other in a peculiar fashion. In both, there formed a public consisting of private persons whose autonomy based on ownership of private property wanted to see itself represented as such in the sphere of bourgeois family and actualized inside the person as love, freedom, and cultivation – in a word, as humanity. (55)

Being a man of business does not suffice; showing compassion, however, erases the rigidity believed inherent in men. Habermas further stresses the importance of the emotional experience of the conjugal family: "The sphere of the market we call 'private'; the sphere of the family, as the core of the private sphere, we call

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> (except in so far as mingled with admiration). Beneficence and good will, however, bring forth the will to honor; and the sentiment of reverence is born in a situation where will to honor predominates. Thus, as a result of this difference in power, tenderness corresponds to reverence or, in a lesser degree of intensity, benevolence to respect; they represent the two poles of sentiment on which Gemeinschaft is based, in case there exists a definite difference of power. The existence of such motives makes possible and probable a kind of Gemeinschaft even between master and servant, and this is the rule especially if it is supported and fostered, as in the case of kinship, by an intimate, lasting, and secluded common life in the home. (41-2)

Tönnies, like Habermas, emphasizes the necessity of paternal involvement for proper social functioning. But, this must be done in a positive atmosphere. A patriarch should not produce fear. This only causes denial and rebellion. Instead a kind and good father is respected and loved, which encourages family collaboration.

the 'intimate sphere.' The latter was believed to be independent of the former, whereas in truth it was profoundly caught up in the requirements of the market" (55). Habermas presents the delicate balance between being a *bourgeois* and a family man. A successful man can balance business and family, and must control the relationships within his household.[8] Sir Thomas although "affectionate at a distance," as Gilbert Ryle puts it (96), has had little influence over his children and toward the end of the novel, he realizes he should have played a greater role in their upbringing. Habermas's study is important, however, as he relates the family to the economic realm, a concept particularly relevant to Fanny's entrance into this new world.

In order to produce a good family life, women must also be treated well. However, a woman's status was problematic in the late eighteenth century. Legally, as *feme-covert*, whereby

> [b]y marriage, the husband and wife are one person in law: that is the very being or legal existence of the woman is suspended during the marriage, or at least is incorporated and consolidated into that of the husband: under whose wing protection, and cover, she performs every thing. (Blackstone I. 430)

Once married, women ceased to have an independent existence; everything they owned, including their children now belonged to their husbands. Single women, *feme sole*, were more problematic, since they had no male protection and participated in public life in order to gain their subsistence. A woman's movement should be contained within the private sphere of the home. A single woman's involvement in the public sphere only makes her prone to disrespect and subject

[8] Nancy Chodorow argues that because the public sphere overlaps into the private: "culturally and politically, the public sphere dominates the domestic, and hence men dominate women" (*The Reproduction of Mothering* 10).

to male sexual desire. Mary Poovey reminds us that valued male property is kept at home: "a woman who is not 'private property' is implicitly available for public use" (20). Thus women's status may be mistaken, much as Frances Burney's Evelina is in the eponymous novel.

While it is recommended that women do not venture out alone but in each other's company, the threat of losing independence also exists when women join together. The definition of toad-eater, a common eighteenth-century term, a "humble friend or dependant; spec. a female companion or attendant" (*OED* def. 2b), points to the subservient nature of the word. Although Austen never uses this derogatory expression, she nonetheless illustrates the threat of female companionship in *Mansfield Park*. At a time when the reality of her spinsterhood was becoming all the more certain, Austen lived with her mother and sister Cassandra, and was later joined by Martha Lloyd (Todd, *Cambridge* 9). Finances being an issue, single women gathered together and joined their incomes for a better life. Betty Rizzo's study *Companions Without Vows: Relationships Among Eighteenth-Century British Women* (1994) depicts the unsafe world for single women with little income. Her study sheds new light on the nature of female relationships. One of these is depicted through Fanny Burney's experiences. Indeed, when Burney learns she is to be a toady[9] to Mrs. Schwellenberg, the first keeper of the Queen, she exclaims:

> 'I saw myself expected by Mrs. Schwellenberg, not to be her colleague but her dependent deputy! not to be her visitor at my own option, but her companion, her humble companion, at her command! This has given so new a character to the place I had

[9] A toady as a "servile parasite; a sycophant, an interested flatterer; also, a humble dependant" (*OED* def. 2). This definition emphasizes the negative connotation of the word.

> accepted under such different auspices that nothing but my horror of disappointing, perhaps displeasing, my dearest father, has deterred me … from soliciting his leave to resign.' (Burney 3:9-10)[10]

Burney loses her independence and unwilling and embarrassingly succumbs to the orders of Mrs. Schwellenberg. In fact, Burney compares their relationship to marriage: "'I am *married*, my dearest Susan. … What then now remains but to make the best wife in my power?' But even after five years of battering at court, Burney had enough strength to extricate herself when she realized that otherwise she would soon die in service" (Rizzo 103). Burney's abuse at the hands of Mrs. Schwellenberg is translated into physical pain and illness. Her restraint in the relationship leads Burney to equate it to marriage, since a woman is deemed inferior to man and a wife is subservient to her husband.

Poovey claims that women's identity and existence is determined by men and sexuality no matter what their status was. She writes, "As a daughter, a wife, a mother, a widow, as a virgin or a whore, every woman was defined by relationship – explicitly to a man, implicitly to sexuality itself" (x). In her groundbreaking *The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer* (1984), Poovey pinpoints women's ambiguousness. Scholars like Roy Porter, Paul-Gabriel Boucé, and Tim Hitchcock, to name a few, have convincingly attested to the sexual knowledge of contemporary individuals, women and men alike. The first English edition of Dr. Jean Astruc's *Treatise On All The Diseases Incident to Women*

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[10] Frances Burney suffered similar abuse with her stepmother Elizabeth Burney. Their relationship could be reflected in France's Burney *Cecilia* (1782). According to Rizzo

> Miss Bennet, the sycophantic companion of Lady Margaret Monkton, may reflect Burney's fears for her father's character and her own but in some ways – in her frightening lack of true sensibility, her hypocrisy, her lack of regard for truth – a psychological portrait of her stepmother. (97)

claims that "female sexual desire […] caused hysterical fits," believing that "women with delicate nerves could be overwhelmed or driven into hysteria by too much sex or even just too much sexual desire" (Decker 4). Society's increasing awareness of sex leads to the necessity to control it, placing boundaries and restraints.

Conduct manuals attempted to contain female sexuality by providing marriageable girls with a set of guidelines for proper wifely behaviour. Instructions for dressing, manners, entertaining, and accomplishments all revolve around making the wife dutiful to her husband and pull away from society. Women had to especially suppress any sexual desire. Poovey's investigation into women's problematic status as mothers, wives and writers (but particularly the need for a woman to be perpetually childlike in order to erase all traces of sexuality) reveal how sensitive the issue was. This makes its way into literature, as Nancy Armstrong, in *The Ideology of Conduct: Essays on Literature and the History of Sexuality* (1987) contends, since the dangerously dichotomous representations of women created in these books instigated these authors to portray

> aristocratic women along with those who harboured aristocratic pretensions as the very embodiments of corrupted desire, namely desire that sought its gratification in economic and political terms. The books all took care to explain how this form of desire destroyed the very virtues essential to a wife and mother. (97)

Armstrong's desire is much more inclusive, encompassing achievement, power, profit and, sexuality. Armstrong and Leonard Tennenhouse define desire as "a form of political power in their own right" (2). Authors manipulate the women

depicted in conduct manuals as ones who are powerful, who seek economic gain, security and status. The literature pointed to the dangers of woman's strife for achievement and benefit, since the threat of women demanding equal rights, or male privileges endangered the status quo.

Austen, herself, participates in this tradition. She is neither blind to this stereotype increasingly appearing in the novels of her favourite authors nor to the debates about female sexuality, as Jill Heydt-Stevenson has controversially argued in *Austen's Unbecoming Conjunctions: Subversive Laughter, Embodied History* (2005).[11] Indeed, the rise of evangelical conduct books is an indication of the wish to restrain women's sexuality. According to Josephine McDonagh in *Child Murder and British Culture 1720-1900*,

> The charge that the French Revolution had incited English women to sexual profligacy was given certain credence by the fact that it had indeed spurred feminists in England to formulate their own case for equal rights in a spate of feminist writings that appeared in the 1790s. (84)

Those who saw an opportunity for change in women's intellectual and social status supported the French Revolution. One was Mary Wollstonecraft who in 1792 published *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. William Godwin published details of Wollstonecraft's life in his *Memoirs of the Author of A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* hoping to share his admiration and love for her with the public. Instead, Godwin's honest intentions had an adverse effect, and the public, shocked by Wollstonecraft's love affairs and illegitimate children, manipulated her sincere desire for female equality. As a result, people believed in women's

[11] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's very contentious "Jane Austen and the Masturbating Girl" (1989) part of this article compares Marianne's symptoms to those of an onanist.

sexual licentiousness. The French Revolution seems to be an outlet for this sexuality. Austen demonstrates the influence the French Revolution has on her with her character Lady Susan, who is a sexual libertine, disrupting the social order.[12]

Married women believe themselves superior to their daughters, and try to test their power over their husbands. Mrs. Bennet relentlessly obsesses about finding rich suitors for her daughters. Eagerly promoting these matches, that are nothing less than business transactions for her, Mrs. Bennet must secure her own future, since she has no male heir of her own, whose duty it would have been to see that the parents are taken care of. She uses her nervous headaches as a way of getting everybody's attention and cooperation. She exploits her "illness" to control her children, and to be acknowledged by her husband. Similarly, Lady Susan, Austen's most manipulative character, lies to get what she wants which is to get ahead in society.

Single, or widowed older women, like Lady Susan and Aunt Norris evade patriarchal control. Society does not know what to do with them. Lady Susan's use of manipulative language and her status as a widow make her a threat to society because she does not abide by any rules. With a panoply of conduct manuals circulating women faced severe scrutiny. Their clothing, behaviour, speech had to be maintained within the boundaries of acceptable female behaviour. Lady Susan's shameless flirting and Mrs. Norris's incessant talk are

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[12] Paula Buck emphasizes Austen's characters' self-centered choices:

> Austen crafts her text so that each character makes choices that prevent any final judgment: acting in what they see as their own best interest, they all transgress the rights of others, all contribute to their own diminution, all go on as best they can, creating a way to live in a world that is far more hostile than they know – or will admit. (212)

examples that young ladies should avoid. These two characters are the Other, as Bridget Hill contends "women who did not marry were regarded as at best 'failed women' to be pitied or derided, at worst, ruined women whose presence 'contaminated society'" (1). "Just because they were outside marriage and so outside the control of husbands," Hill continues, "single women were seen as an anomalous minority and were resented by the men whose control they had escaped" (2). These are women who could neither fulfil their assigned roles as wives, nor have any social worth. And though it is not the position young women look forward to, it is a position of power. Poverty, economic dependence, and scorn are to be avoided. Indeed, as Hufton observes, "All women lived in societies in which marriage and motherhood were regarded as the norm, spinsterhood and infertility as a blight, and in which the notion of the family economy, of the family as a composite working unit permitting the sustenance of the whole, was axiomatic" (122). Family is the model, and older single women, with no children, lack the knowledge of family experience, economic stability and of belonging to a complete unit. Aunt Norris, for instance, takes what she can and what she should not. She takes saving to severe extremes as she practices it for herself and not to help the Bertram family. Mrs. Norris thus separates the family even further from the original schism she has created by pitting the Bertram girls against Fanny. Gilbert and Gubar reveal that "the figure of the bad Aunt Norris implies that female strength, exertion, and passion are necessary for survival and pleasure" (171). Much like the advice from conduct books that warned women to control and erase their passions and desires, Austen shows the dangers of being an

independent, strong minded and willed woman. Men ultimately have the power to re-instate order in the community by ostracizing women who do as they please and live outside the laws of patriarchal society.

In a letter, Austen advises her niece Fanny to marry since "[s]ingle women, have a dreadful propensity for being poor" (*L* 483). Although Austen, no doubt, refers to specific financial difficulties she experiences herself, she also refers to the general difficulties women who are not married and not under a husband's jointure face daily. She thus underlines the weakness of single women and the danger of being preyed upon by men and richer women equally. Austen had personal knowledge of the dangers of being single because she herself remained unmarried. Knowing the hardships, celibacy is not what she chooses for her protagonists. Emma, who affirms at the beginning of the story that she will never marry, in the end does. Anne Elliot lets love slip through her fingers but becomes re-acquainted with her loved one at the end. Austen cannot be held responsible for making her much-loved heroines marry the men of their choice since the eighteenth century "sees the emergence in literature of the spinster as a stereotype – one to be despised, pitied and avoided as a sempiternal spoilsport in the orgy of life" (Hufton 123). Indeed as a negative typecast for the spinster is created, Dr. John Gregory in his 1809 conduct book *A Father's Legacy to his Daughter* further points to the dangers of the old single woman's inappropriate behaviour:

> I see some unmarried women, of active, vigorous minds, and great vivacity of spirits, degrading themselves; sometimes by entering into a dissipated course of life, unsuitable to their years, and exposing themselves to the ridicule of girls, who might have been

> their grandchildren; sometimes by oppressing their acquaintances by impertinent intrusions into their private affairs; and sometimes by being the propagators of scandal and defamation. All this is owing to an exuberant activity of spirit; which, if it had found employment at home, would have rendered them respectable and useful members of society. (57-8)

Gregory describes what meddling older single women do when they do not find useful "employment at home." He criticizes their "exuberant activity of spirit" which is most often expressed through their shameless and aggressive pursuit of men. Similarly, Cindy McCreery focuses on engraved caricatures, primarily those of William Hogarth, that reveal contemporary attitudes to such women, and she contends that the "older the woman, the less likely it was that her unorthodox behaviour would be tolerated" (113). McCreery's study of Augustan art reveals the concerns that the early eighteenth century inherited. In fact, McCreery contends that "single women's insatiable sexual desire was probably the most common theme of caricatures of unmarried women, both old and young" (115). McCreery's study reveals the prominence of the older single woman, as well as society's impressions of them.

The purpose of this Ph.D. dissertation is to understand the behaviour of women in Austen's work, whether these women are found inside or outside the family unit. At a time when conduct manuals had been giving marriageable women detailed behavioural advice, should not older, more experienced women, be exemplary? There must be more to the tension between Mrs. Bennet and Elizabeth other than the traditional mother-daughter differences. How must readers understand Lady Susan's behaviour towards her daughter? The characters discussed in this dissertation are single or married women who manoeuvre

patriarchal codes of behaviour for their own gain. Single young women compete against others for male preference (and thus power), for selfish satisfaction (for a sense of superiority over others). Lucy Steele lies to Elinor Dashwood in an attempt to define what is hers (i.e. Edward Ferrars), as she attempts to ensure her ascent in the social ladder. Because Lucy suspects an attachment between Elinor and Edward Ferrars, she eagerly, and despite proper female conduct, tells Elinor about her engagement to the latter. Lucy, thus, exerts egoistic satisfaction, by being originally attached to Edward and preventing the union between him and Elinor. Moreover, Lucy averts a union that would eventually give another woman power because of Edward's social standing. Thus, I have decided to restrict myself to the novels in which abuse between women is most obvious. I have chosen to discuss Austen's published novels (including *Northanger Abbey*, which had been intended for publication). However, I could not allow myself to ignore the posthumously published novella *Lady Susan*, in which abuse is paramount.

Various schools of literary theory will be used to develop the premise of this dissertation in order to provide a complete understanding of the literature, the author's intentions, and meanings. New historicism will provide historical information in order to understand the cultural history of Austen's novels. Feminist theory is applied twofold: to better understand women's position in eighteenth-century England, and in conjunction with psychoanalytical theory to better explain power positions and struggles. Theorists and critics named above and others are used to explain the obvious and implicit relationships between women. I have divided the first chapter "Mothers and Daughters: Abuse Within

the Nuclear Family" into two sections in order to give each its respective focus: they both aim at understanding the relationship between parent and child. It is crucial to understand women's roles, status, and behaviour within an eighteenth-century context. In "Chapter 1, Part 1: Lady Susan," I will look at the mother-daughter relationship between Lady Susan and her daughter Frederica, and in "Chapter 2, Part 2: The Witted and the Half-Witted: Elizabeth and Mrs. Bennet" I focus on this mother-daughter relationship in *Pride and Prejudice*. Marriage is an important event in a young lady's life; she is educated almost exclusively for this goal. But what does a mother have to gain from promoting a daughter and ensuring she marries well? At a time when conjugal family ties become increasingly more important, Austen portrays mothers who use their offspring for economic security. This is a popular topic with Austen, from her *Juvenilia* to *The Watsons*, mothers, or maternal figures, encourage their charges to make financially sound unions. In chapter three, "'*Wherever you are, you must be the lowest and last*': Abuse within the Extended Family in *Mansfield Park,*" Austen proves that abuse also takes place in extended families. Aunt Norris restlessly attacks Fanny Price (*Mansfield Park*) without an ounce of guilt (or morals). Austen ridicules this needy and unsympathetic character in order to condemn the selfish pursuit for power and authority. Chapter four shows how abuse that cannot be contained within the household gradually grows from a family problem into a social one. In "Appropriate Decorum: Abuse within the Public Sphere," Lady Catherine de Bourgh in *Pride and Prejudice*, Marianne Dashwood in *Sense and Sensibility*, Isabella Thorpe in *Northanger Abbey*, and Emma in the novel of the

same name, are characters through whom Austen depicts the need to reform the lack of respect and morality. As members of society they use their survival instincts only to impede on community growth. In the final chapter, "Dirty Old Men," I show that, despite my interest in matriarchal relationships, I am not blind to the patriarchal abuse present in Austen's novels. While much criticism has focused on the incestuous relationship between Fanny and Edmund, my primary focus is Fanny's involvement in the Bertram household. From her slave-like status to her awareness of her adult body, Fanny, at every stage, faces challenges. Moreover, sometimes the abuse suffered between women makes allowance for the abuse caused by men. Sir John's abuse, in *Sense and Sensibility*, for instance, ensues from Mrs Jennings's encouragement. Other times, and most of the time, it is the inverse. Women, like Elizabeth Elliot, of *Persuasion*, share in their father's cruelty in an attempt to share his power. Finally, the Epilogue will focus on some film adaptations of Austen's novels in order to reflect on the ways directors have interpreted the abusive relationship this dissertation focuses on. As an increasingly popular medium, many films have translated Austenian plots and ideals into their fabric, which also attests to the lasting legacy and universality of Austen's texts.[13] This is a medium of visual impact that allows for a variety of interpretations of abusive behaviour between women.

[13] Biographer Claire Harman's latest publication, *Jane's Fame: How Jane Austen Conquered the World*, testifies to Austen's continuing popularity.

Chapter one

Mothers and Daughters: Abuse Within the Nuclear Family Part 1: *Lady Susan*

> [I]t is evident that the mothering that women do is not something that can be taught simply by giving a girl dolls or telling her that she ought to mother. It is not something that a girl can learn by behavioral imitation, or by deciding that she wants to do what girls do. Nor can men's power over women explain women's mothering. Whether or not men in particular or society at large – through media, income distribution, welfare policies, and schools – enforce women's mothering, and expect or require a woman to care for her child, they cannot require or force her to provide adequate parenting unless she, *to some degree* and *on some unconscious or conscious level*, has the capacity and sense of self as maternal to do so.
>
> (Chodorow 33)

Jane Austen's astute observations of her society bring to the forefront the often-neglected relationships between women in eighteenth-century England. Women faced increasing demands to conform to conduct manuals that instructed women on virtuous behaviour, dress, and conversation. Respecting patriarchal conventions of address and modesty, women remained within the private sphere of the home. Their roles were limited to running their houses, and raising and educating their children. There are women, however, who ventured into the public sphere, reserved exclusively to men. Women, like Austen's Lady Susan, from the novella of the same name, risk their reputation by fighting for status, recognition, and better circumstances. In *Pride and Prejudice*, Mrs. Bennet's desire to have her daughters marry better than Lady Lucas's depicts the existing competitive nature of women. Living in an increasingly capitalist society, women felt they needed financial security. Mothers like Mrs. Bennet and Lady Susan want

financial security and wealthy suitors for their daughters. Their behaviour, however, leaves much to be desired, since both manipulate patriarchal conventions for self-fulfillment. Austen did not look far for models for these women; these abusive caregivers can be traced back to Augustan literature, where cruel and unnatural mothers proliferate.

In Europe, the epistolary genre reached its pinnacle in the eighteenth century. Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* (1740) and *Clarissa* (1748), Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Julie, ou la nouvelle Héloïse* (1761), Chaderlos de Laclos's *Les Liaisons dangereuses* (1782) are known examples of the genre. While male authors preferred this genre, letter writing had a greater significance for women writers because it gave them access to the public sphere. Writing complicated a woman's position in society and blurred the lines between the private and public spheres. The only way for women to express themselves was to manipulate this genre, making epistolarity the accepted medium amongst women.[14] Actually,

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[14] Deborah Knuth argues that

> Austen's earliest writings are no doubt in dialogue with and satirical of the cult of friendship in popular novels of the late eighteenth century. Characteristic sentimental excesses between friends recur in the juvenilia and find place in her later fiction whenever such hypocrites as Isabella Thorpe, Lucy Steele, or Mary Crawford profess instant 'affection' for the heroines of *Northanger Abbey*, *Sense and Sensibility*, and *Mansfield Park* with motives that range from opportunism to malice and envy to creating a false persona. But this easy dismissal of one kind of 'friendship' in her work need not mean that Austen sees women's friendship as unimportant, or even secondary, in comparison with marriage. (96)

In fact, Knuth also contends that Lady Susan's friendship with Mrs. Johnson "suggests that even the hardhearted Lady Susan has some emotional needs that can be met neither by the devotion of men – suitors, husbands, lovers – nor even by her abundant self admiration" (102-3). Moreover, Mary Poovey astutely observes that Austen's novella presents a "society [that] fails to provide any power adequate to Lady Susan. Even in this patriarchal society there are simply no men strong enough either to engage or resist her irrepressible energy. The novel is consistently dominated by women, despite Susan's preoccupation with men" (177).

For more on Austen as a political writer, see also Anne K Mellor's *Mothers of the Nation: Women's Political Writing in England, 1780-1830*.

many of them used the epistle style to mask their participation in public debate. In fact, "the most important works by women of the Romantic period take the form of critique" (Fay 4). Social critique and social correction permeate the letters of female writers. During the French Revolution, women took letter writing to another level by publishing their letters as pamphlets which allowed the female voice to enter politics. It was a safe crossover from private to public life that female writers like Jane Austen used. Long believed to be an active silent observer of her time, her ironic take on social institutions underscores all her works. And with her older brothers directly involved in the war against France, political connotations pervade her writings.[15] The subtle political indications and the social context allow for a better positioning of *Lady Susan*, Austen's own epistolary novella, within the Austen canon.

The composition date for *Lady Susan* is uncertain and problematic. Scholars are split between Austen Leigh's comment that the novella is "an early production" (60), a meeting between her "childish effusions and the composition of her living works" (60), and R. W. Chapman's suggestion that 1805, the watermarked date on the only existing manuscript, is the composition date (*Facts* 49-50, 178)[16]. Moreover, scholars like Jan Fergus and Marilyn Butler go beyond 1805. Fergus claims that Maria Edgeworth's epistolary novel *Leonora* (1806) likely influenced Austen's *Lady Susan*, whereas Butler believes Edgeworth's

[15] For more on Austen's knowledge of the war see, for instance, Warren Robert's *Jane Austen and the French Revolution*.

[16] Q. D. Leavis additionally contends that "[b]efore 1805, probably in the interval between the two versions of *Susan*, *Lady Susan*, an epistolary *nouvelle*, was written. It is untitled; its paper is water-marked 1805, but what we have is 'not a draft but a fair copy' and judging by Jane Austen's habits of composition we can assume that this is a rewrite after a period of years" (63).

"Manoeuvring" (1809) also contributed to Austen's novella which was composed between 1810-12 while Austen lived in Chawton (*ODNB*)[17]. Like Austen Leigh, Brian C. Southam in *Jane Austen's Literary Manuscripts: A Study of the Novelist's Development Through the Surviving Papers* (1964), believes that Jane Austen wrote *Lady Susan* between 1793-94 while she was experimenting with the epistle form during her adolescence. Some of her *Juvenilia* as well as the early version of *Sense and Sensibility – Elinor and Marianne –* were written in the same form. Her earlier writing, which began in 1788-89, was experimental and since the novels published during her lifetime adopt a third person narrator, rejecting epistolarity, it would not make sense for her to revert to this form in 1805. Similarly, the editors of the latest Cambridge edition of Austen's works believe that she wrote *Lady Susan* after writing her last item in her *Juvenilia* in June 1793 (*J* xvii)[18]. Furthermore, the vitality and cynicism found in Austen's *Juvenilia* culminate in the much more mature work of *Lady Susan*. Lady Susan's drive could be traced back to the character of Lucy in *Jack and Alice* and her sexuality to Louisa in *Lesley Castle*. In the first letter from *Lesley Castle: an unfinished Novel in Letters*, Margaret's correspondence tells the reader that Louisa "had so wantonly disgraced the Maternal character and so openly violated the conjugal Duties" (*J* 143). Despite Louisa's unnatural and indiscreet behaviour, Margaret's letter continues to describe Louisa: "[n]ever was there a sweeter face,

[17] Bonnie Nelson believes Elizabeth Inchbald's protagonist Lady Stanley in *Emily Herbert; or, Perfidy Punished*, is Lady Susan's predecessor.

[18] For Q. D. Leavis, *Lady Susan* "was founded on events of the years 1795-1797, and was certainly written before the end of 1797" (116). A writer for *The Times* (March 24, 1952) announces a theatrical adaptation of Lady Susan: "The precise date of the composition is unknown, but from internal evidence it is clear that it must have been written before 1812."

a finer form, or a less amiable Heart than Louisa owned" (*J* 143). "Her child," the letter's author laments, "already possesses the personal Charms of her unhappy Mother! May she inherit from her Father all his mental ones!" (*J* 143). Similarly, these are some of the characteristics attributed to the appearance of Lady Susan whom Mrs. Vernon describes as "excessively pretty;" "I have seldom seen so lovely a woman as Lady Susan;" "I cannot help but feeling that she possesses an uncommon union of Symmetry, Brilliancy & Grace. —Her address to me was so gentle, frank & even affectionate" (*LM* 11). Both Louisa and Lady Susan share qualities that point to a similar creation date, and they are both deceptive because they exert the qualities society requires of them, but they do not embody them.

In the *Proper Lady and the Woman Writer*, Mary Poovey claims that Austen is concerned "with the complex relationship between a woman's desires and the imperatives of propriety" (172). In fact, Poovey stresses the difficulty of maintaining a balance when

> even modesty perpetuates the paradoxical formulation of female sexuality. For a modest demeanor served not only to assure the world that a woman's appetites were under control; it also indicated that female sexuality was still assertive enough to *require* control. That is, even as modesty was proclaimed to be the most reliable guardian of a woman's chastity – and hence the external sign of her internal integrity – it was also declared to be an advertisement for – and hence an attraction to – her sexuality. (21)

On the one hand, Poovey emphasizes the necessity for a woman to look and be virtuous; Sarah Emsley, on the other hand, asserts that "within the confines of the novella, [Lady Susan] is one Austen heroine who does not learn anything, least of

all about virtue" (47).[19] While Lady Susan might not know much about virtue, she knows how to pretend that she does. Austen astutely sets up Lady Susan against Mrs. Vernon. The latter's sexual appetite is seemingly under control: she appears to abide by the social standards of decorum. The narrator reports that Lady Susan disapproved the marriage of Mr. and Mrs. Vernon on the grounds that "Lady Susan had heard something so materially to the disadvantage of my Sister," (*LM* 25) as Reginald's letter to his father reveals. Whatever this might be, it is neither refuted nor confirmed, and the subject is dropped altogether. Though this might likely be one of Lady Susan's manipulations, readers can question Mrs. Vernon's purity. This leads to closer analysis of Mrs. Vernon's every word and action. In fact, Mrs. Vernon is no different from Lady Susan, since the former also schemes with her mother in order to arrange a union between Frederica and Reginald (Brown, *Bits of Ivory* 309-10).[20] Ultimately, however, it is the *way* in which Mrs. Vernon goes about achieving this. Both women demonstrate an understanding of contemporary conduct books. Austen depicts the degree in which both Lady Susan and Mrs. Vernon manipulate conduct manuals to appear as "the proper lady."[21]

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[19] Marvin Mudrick, on the contrary, believes Lady Susan to be the "ultimate, tragic victim […]. The world defeats Lady Susan, not because it recognizes her vices, but because her virtues have no room in it" (138).

[20] Mary Poovey underlines Mrs. Vernon's lack of objectivity when it comes to Lady Susan. Poovey claims that the epistolary form allows readers to

> engage […] with Lady's Susan's intellect [and] to sympathize with her conflicting feelings as well. Even though the letters Mrs. Vernon writes supply another perspective on Susan's schemes, her judgments are no more 'objective' or authoritative than Susan's whims – especially given her personal grudge against Susan. (178)

[21] Even Frederica is tinged with the possibility of being insincere:

> Contemplating [Frederica's escape from school] Lady Susan muses that 'I had not a notion of her being such a little Devil before; she seemed to have all the Vernon Milkiness' […]. It is clear that she is thinking of Frederica inheriting her devilishness,

Barbara Horwitz, in "Lady Susan: The Wicked Mother in Jane Austen's Work," demonstrates how Lady Susan is very much aware of the social requirements and how she craftily manipulates her conduct according to the demands of conduct manuals. Horwitz shows how Lady Susan

> does not simply behave in a matter directly contrary to the way the books say she should. Instead, she attempts appearing to behave exactly as they recommend by using their very words to justify her behavior. She paints a false picture of herself with the language of the conduct books. (184)

Lady Susan skilfully uses conduct manuals toward her own personal gain. Kathryn Kirkpatrick, in "The Limits of Liberal Feminism in Maria Edgeworth's *Belinda*," describes how these books link correct gender and class behaviour and even turn them into something that cannot be transgressed. On the one hand, the authors of conduct books promote propriety; on the other, they restrict it in order to control class change. Lady Susan re-enacts the required behaviour despite the fact that she "not only brings up her daughter improperly and cruelly, obviously ignoring the spirit of the conduct book; she uses their precepts, and even their own language, to justify her misconduct" (Horwitz 85). Lady Susan's manipulations emphasize the double standards that can result from such books. The hypocrisy of manners becomes an important topic after the beginning of the French Revolution, where male and female writers alike (Godwin, Hannah More, Maria Edgeworth), participate in this debate. Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man* (1791) launches a crucial confrontational exchange between Edmund Burke and Mary Wollstonecraft, over the political, moral, as well as, the manners of the

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> despite her daughter's appearance of innocence – thus she implicitly acknowledges her own devilishness. (Emsley 44)

French Revolution. Burke is a conservative promoting the ideals of the past, including modesty, chivalry, and politeness. Wollstonecraft, on the other hand, wants the relationship between men and women to change. She calls for a "revolution in female manners" (45), as a way to counter Burke's chivalry (or inherited manners). Wollstonecraft is concerned with the duplicity of modesty where women deceive others by adhering to conduct book behaviour, exemplified by Lady Susan. By creating such a character as Lady Susan, Austen not only parodies conduct books, but also shows the hypocrisy and duplicity that they could entail. Even the good Mrs. Vernon is not so good, and though she is presented in opposition to Lady Susan, Mrs. Vernon, to a lesser degree, is also duplicitous.

The epistolary exchange between the De Courcy family uses such words as "artful" (*LM* 7, 20, 32), "deep art" (*LM* 22), "calculated" (*LM* 16), "duped" (*LM* 17), "deceit" (sic) (*LM* 11, 23, 54), "deceive" (*LM* 9), "deceived" (*LM* 12), to describe Lady Susan. Despite Lady Susan's attempts to manipulate her family and society, her reputation precedes her. She is astutely clever in convincing Reginald not to believe any gossip about her person; even after she has seduced a married man, and prevented the union of another couple. While

> Lady Susan's manipulation of eighteenth-century patriarchal female behaviour shows her to be serene and polite, her actions show her raging desires. Her body is a source of profound cultural unease: because she signifies a disjunction between seeming and being [Lady Susan] represents a dangerous artifice that masks a threatening tension between her own desires and the self-disciplined rejection of those desires advocated by the culture at large. (Hunt 94)[22]

[22] Elizabeth Hunt explains that "According to Jürgen Habermas, this form of polite behaviour increasingly marked the eighteenth-century public sphere, whereby, 'politeness' became both the ends of and the means to the creation of a public sphere. Other scholars, however, have suggested

Elizabeth Hunt addresses Lady Susan's misleading behaviour in her article "A Carnival of Mirrors: The Grotesque Body of the Eighteenth-Century British Masquerade," whereby, Lady Susan's body expresses her ambiguous status. In fact, Lady Susan continuously and painstakingly tries to defend herself from the gossip surrounding her conduct. She knows the game well: "Those women are inexcusable who forget what is due to themselves and the opinion of the World" (*LM* 31). Toward the end of the novella, once Reginald learns of Lady Susan's transgressions, she reveals that she abhors the necessity to keep her passions quiet: "I am tired of submitting my will to the Caprices of others — of resigning my own Judgement in deference to those, to whom I owe no Duty, & for whom I feel no respect" (*LM* 72). Lady Susan reveals her dissatisfaction with having to explain, cover, and excuse her behaviour to society. Instead, she would like to act freely, her conduct released from scrutiny and consequences.

Lady Susan, thus, becomes a "bad girl" because she does not stay quiet, or behave. Indeed, Regina Barreca observes that "[b]eing a Good Girl requires inaction. Being Bad … depends on action, doing something – almost on doing *anything*, since passivity was the single most important requirement for being Good" (41). Flirtation is the means Lady Susan employs to convince and seduce the male characters in the novella. The words "flirt" (*LM* 8, 14, 66), "flirtation" (*LM* 4, 8, 19, 63), "coquette" (*LM* 8, 17, 18), "coquetry" (*LM* 11, 20) pervade the

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that this view overlooks widespread cultural ambivalence concerning the project of politeness – precisely the ambivalence that likewise marks the grotesque female body" (108). For Habermas, politeness forms the ground of the public sphere—one that is arguably built on duplicity. Based on this assumption, Lady Susan successfully integrates in this male dominated realm.

text.[23] The *OED* traces the verb "to flirt" as early as 1777.[24] Johnson, however, declined to enter "terms that had not appeared in print" into his dictionary (Kaye 21). When flirtation does show up, however, it has no erotic implications because Johnson wanted his dictionary "to shew that the end of learning is piety," and refused entering fashionable words (qtd. in Kaye 22).[25] However, the sexual undertones and transgressions this word implies are clearly evident in the late eighteenth century. The dangers of flirting are noted by Corin Throsby who astutely observes that "[i]n a male-dominated order, in which marriage was prized as a satisfying resolution, flirting represents a 'reckless adventurism' that potentially undermined the status quo" (2). This adventurism translates itself into power, whereby a woman disrespects patriarchal set boundaries. One such transcendence occurs when a woman has no regard for rank. Sociologist Georg

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[23] Biographer David Nokes speculates that Mr. Austen purchased Jane a writing table for her nineteenth birthday, in 1794 because he

> had noted with some disquiet Jane's recent fondness for flirting in a most immoderate fashion at recent balls. And, whilst he would have not the least objection to her making a sensible match, he considered it highly desirable that what he called her 'effusions of fancy' (which tended invariably to elopements and similar reckless adventures) should be confined to the pages of her manuscript book, and not acted out in real life. (151)

Mr. Austen's gift had the desired effect, Nokes claims:

> Jane's reaction to this gift was a spirited piece of literary defiance. The first thing that she wrote at her new desk only confirmed her fascination with the disruptive powers of flirtation. Lady Susan Vernon, the heroine of her next and most ambitious work so far, was to be an incorrigible flirt, a cheerful home-wrecker and an unashamed adulteress, who boasted of her reputation as 'the most accomplished coquette in England.' (151)

Whether Austen's own sexual desire was expressed through the character of Lady Susan, or whether she was influenced by the socio-political, cultural and literary developments of her time, like all of the works published in her lifetime, Austen's novella *Lady Susan* continues to raise questions. What astonishes the reader most is seeing Austen's mind at work. She never published *Lady Susan* in her lifetime, yet she kept a neat copy suggesting at once her attachment to the novel and its impropriety.

[24] To flirt is defined as "To play at courtship; to practise coquetry; to make love without serious intentions. Often, to flirt with (a person); also in indirect pass" (def. 7), while flirtation, which appears as early as 1718, is "The action or behaviour of a flirt; flighty or giddy behaviour, frivolity; the action of playing at courtship" (def. 2).

[25] Johnson's pious definitions of the verb, "To jeer; to gibe at one" (def.1), and "To run about perpetually; to be unsteady and fluttering" (def. 2), could be used on both sexes. The noun, on the other hand, is reserved exclusively to women: "A quick sprightly motion; a cant word among women" (*Johnson's Dictionary: A Modern Selection*, 184-185).

Simmel concurs that "the motive responsible for [flirtation] on the part of the woman is the fascination of freedom and power" (141). He explains that because a woman merely has "one or two occasions on which [she] is in a position to decide the fundamental questions of her life […] flirtation [serves a] sense in which she chronically takes on this decision, even if only in a symbolic and approximate fashion" (Simmel 141). Flirtation becomes a woman's way to gain control rather than be controlled by others.[26] Moreover, "[t]hose indulging in flirtatious language […] are likely to be far more conscious of the coded nature of language" (Kaye 34). Richard Kaye's observation points to Lady Susan's manipulative behaviour. She is a particularly apt speaker and uses language as a means to scheme and misbehave, but to also conceal these actions. She has been able to break the rules of conduct and only when her reputation suffers most, does she resort to marrying Sir James, the man she had seduced for Frederica.[27] Anne Ruderman believes that Austen's

> highest art is an imitation of nature. Lady Susan can be seen as a satire on Rousseau's thesis that 'to be a woman means to be coquettish, but her coquetry changes its form and its object according to her views,' […] Rousseau would require the woman to be truly, and not just seemingly, virtuous; nevertheless, Austen

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[26] Throsby points to the difficulty of controlling such an abstract notion as flirting. Created in the individual's mind, society cannot regulate flirting, thus, giving women, in particular, autonomy:

> Although flirting necessarily takes place in the public sphere, it nevertheless occurs largely in the individual's imagination, and therefore cannot be monitored by others. At a time when women were, for the first time, claiming 'the right to active sexual desire,' flirtatiousness – which initially was almost solely attributed to women – was a relatively safe way in which women could exercise this newly-emerging freedom. (Throsby 2)

[27] In this specific case, marriage is the only possible solution. Lady Susan must be controlled and re-assimilated within the norms of patriarchal society. As Kaye asserts:

> In Austen's [pre-Victorian] epistolary novel *Lady Susan* […], Charlotte Brontë's *Villette*, Charles Dickens's *David Copperfield*, and Eliot's *The Mill and the Floss*, characters flirt across authorized boundaries and with forms of desire often deemed outside the scope of the nineteenth-century British novel. In all these works 'rebel' erotic impulses are depicted and then withdrawn, fleetingly proffered but then tucked back under more pronounced narratives of courtship and marriage. (15-16)

> makes fun of the way in which a coquette obscures the difference. (163)

Looking at the dichotomous nature of the term *coquette*, Ruderman stresses the difference between the behaviours represented by the conduct manuals created by Rousseau and Austen's character representation. By playing on the word and its various denotations over the century,[28] Austen, herself, manipulates the always fluctuating definition of what a woman should be. Elizabeth Bennet explains it best:

> [Lydia's] character will be fixed, and she will, at sixteen, be the most determined flirt that ever made herself and her family ridiculous. A flirt too, in the worst and meanest degree of flirtation; without any attraction beyond youth and a tolerable person; and from the ignorance and emptiness of her mind, wholly unable to ward off any portion of that universal contempt which her rage for admiration will excite. […] Vain, ignorant, idle and absolutely uncontrouled! Oh! my dear father, can you suppose it possible that [Lydia and Kitty] will not be censured and despised wherever they are known, and that their sisters will not be often involved in the disgrace? (*PP* 256-7)

Elizabeth's words depict a flirt's desire for admiration, attention and power, but also, the danger and severity of flirting, as well as its consequences for the other members of the family. The power a flirting woman bestows on herself is primarily evident in the way she moves freely from the private to the public sphere and into the higher class.

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[28]Johnson defines a "coquette" as a "gay, airy girl; a girl who endeavours to attract notice" (*Johnson's Dictionary*). The *OED* defines the term as early as 1611 as a "woman (more or less young), who uses arts to gain the admiration and affection of men, merely for the gratification of vanity or from a desire of conquest, and without any intention of responding to the feelings aroused; a woman who habitually trifles with the affections of men; a flirt" (def. 1). Both definitions focus a woman's need for attention; however, the *OED* concentrates on the egotistical part of the term, whereby this type of women does not intend on reciprocating any emotions. The *OED* also points to the youthfulness of such a woman whose aim is to exercise power.

In Bakhtinian theory of the carnivalesque, "all were considered equal during carnival. Here, in the town square, a special form of free and familiar contact reigned among people who were usually divided by the barriers of caste, property, profession, and age" (Bakhtin 10). In other words, one ceases to be him/herself when taking part in a carnival. Similarly, Lady Susan makes herself part of the group, the patriarchal society, in which she adopts their behaviour, manners and disregards genteel female behaviour. Hunt stresses Bakhtin's notion by emphasizing that "the masquerade represented an even more threatening possibility when it allowed women a sexual freedom not permitted elsewhere" (94). Lady Susan's sexual misdeeds are likened to carnival activities, since she makes her own rules and, thus, suspends all sense of order. Her selfish pursuit for power and equality make her the threat conduct manuals try to eradicate.

Between 1793 and 1794, at the age of eighteen or nineteen, Austen can no longer hide behind her age. She is a mature woman whose writings can no longer be explicitly cynical. Indeed, her critique becomes more subdued in her published novels, though the character of Lady Susan is to resurface in later works: her command of language reappears in Elizabeth Bennet, and Lady Susan's passion in Mary Crawford. While Q. D. Leavis believes that Austen recycles her characters (135), and that Lady Susan is reincarnated in Mary Crawford (127-28), B.C. Southam points to the "possibility of endless cross-relationships" ("Mrs. Leavis" 30) that make Mrs. Leavis lose "sense of what must be the criteria of relevance and significance" ("Mrs. Leavis" 30). Whether or not characters share similar

characteristics, they are all separate entities with ultimately distinct identities and traits.

Opinions of the influences for Austen's character Lady Susan differ amongst scholars almost as much as the composition date does. Though both recent biographers David Nokes and Claire Tomalin agree on Eliza de Feuillide's influence on Austen, they make different arguments. On the one hand, Nokes contends that the

> seductive language of worldly intrigue suggests the influence of the Countess de Feuillide. It was from Eliza that Jane had learnt the racy idioms of society flirtation. It was from Eliza that she heard of the dangerous excitement of sexual deceit. The language of Lady Susan is the language of Eliza. (152)

The well-traveled Eliza was married to Jean Capot de Feuillide, a French aristocrat, for twelve years. He was guillotined in 1794 leaving Eliza a widow, incidentally, at the same age as Lady Susan. However, Eliza's own glamorous life influenced Austen more than Nokes suggests. Eliza is Austen's cousin; Philadelphia, Eliza's mother, and Mr. Austen are siblings, yet share very different opinions on marriage. Philadelphia assures Eliza that "there was no disgrace…for a young lady of a pleasing disposition to seize her earliest opportunity for securing a wealthy mate" (Nokes 68). Mr. Austen, however, disapproves of Eliza's prospects of happiness when he learns that the marriage is "merely to satisfy the vanity of the mother who loved nothing more than the flourish of an aristocratic title" (Nokes 71). Eliza's marriage is no doubt discussed amongst the family members, and as Elizabeth Brophy contends that marriage "was not only the natural destiny of every eighteenth-century daughter, but also the single most

important determinant of her future happiness" (95). In this respect, Eliza's marriage is no different from Elizabeth Bennet's or Charlotte Lucas's.

The editors of the Cambridge edition (2008), Janet Todd and Linda Bree, agree with the family that *Lady Susan* was originally composed between 1794-95 "during the height of [Eliza's] flirtatious behaviour with both of Jane Austen's brothers and before any flirtation became serious. It would be much less appropriate once Henry and Eliza were going to marry or had married (lii-liii). However, Southam disqualifies this possibility because he rightly observes that Henry Austen would not expose private family events: "It is curious … [that] Henry Austen, who survived his sister by 33 years, should allow such damaging account of his own intimate affairs to remain in existence, especially as his own wife is represented so unfavorably" ("Mrs. Leavis" 28). Southam, instead, like Jay Arnold Levine, believes that the inspiration for Lady Susan's character is a literary one (Levine 24).[29] Southam contends that *Lady Susan* involves the "types and situations which abound in eighteenth-century novels and comedies: the sophisticated and charming flirt, the tyrannical mother, the daughter to be sacrificed in a profitable marriage…" (*Literary* 47). Therefore, what Austen is presenting is not new since "[s]entimental fiction is full of tyrannical parents, persecuted children, and forced marriages…" (Southam, *Literary* 47).[30] This is also corroborated by the editors of Cambridge edition who believe *Lady Susan* "is

[29] Levine argues that literature provides Austen with "a complete gallery of unscrupulous widows," thus, finding a human inspiration to Lady Susan is not necessary (28).

[30] Mary Gaither Marshall believes that Austen

> did not close the books of juvenilia during her eighteenth year, never to open them again; instead she returned to these volumes when she was working on her novels. Some of the same ideas, themes, characters, and names in the initial writings later appeared in her mature works. Jane's concern about manners, a major theme in her novels, is apparent in the Juvenilia. (109)

undoubtedly eighteenth-century English epistolary and first-person fiction" (lv). In fact, Tomalin, takes Eliza's influence beyond the family ties Nokes puts forward, and agrees with the suggestion that "Austen was influenced by Laclos' 1782 novel, *Les Liaison Dangereuses*" (82).[31] In Jane Austen's entourage, Eliza alone, with her French ties, could have owned a copy. Though it would have been inappropriate for Eliza to lend it to the unmarried Austen, there are similarities between the texts, which suggest that Eliza may have talked about *Les Liaisons*. According to Tomalin,

> both stories, while maintaining a strictly moral framework, subvert it by giving the evil characters all the enterprise and charm. Lady Susan is a bad mother who is also a dazzling female Don Juan; she uses her charm very much as Madame Merteuil does, to manipulate, betray and abuse her victims, whether lovers, friends or family. For both women, power is pleasure. (82)

Tomalin astutely observes the similarities between the two works, and rightly refers to Lady Susan as a female Don Juan. Moreover, if sentimental fiction and Laclos's novel were among the instigators for Austen's novelette then 1793-94 are the most fitting years in which to locate its creation. For Simon Davies, Eliza

> a initié Jane Austen à la vie française et on peut se demander si elle lui à parlé du chef-d'oeuvre de Laclos. Bien sûr, on ne saurait trancher la question d'une façon trop catégorique. Néanmoins j'estime bien probable que Jane Austen connaissait *Les Liaisons dangereuses* – elle qui, comme Laclos, appréciait les romans de Fanny Burney –, conclusion d'autant plus alléchante pour quiconque a lu *Lady Susan*. (256)

[31] Although Tomalin makes no mention about who made the suggestion, Warren Roberts in *Jane Austen and the French Revolution*, claims that it is "the type of novel Eliza would have been attracted to, and one can well imagine her taking a copy to Steventon, either a French edition or the English translation, knowing that the Austen were 'great novel readers' and that her cousin was a aspiring authoress" (129).

Although sharing interest in the same author is not reason enough to conclude that Austen was familiar with Laclos, sentimental fiction derived its interest in the widow character from French literature: "the actual or spiritual home of the Merry Widow is often France" (Levine 26), but also Augustan literature and art, as well as Restoration comedy. "[T]hus emphasizing," Levine continues, "even further the intrusion of an alien, sophisticated manner into the quiet English countryside" (26). Levine, without a doubt, alludes to the threat of a French invasion into England. Though of English descent, Lady Susan is no less a threat to her community.

In a society that emphasizes modesty and virtue, a widow could not hide her sexual experience. Lady Susan's explicit and shameless flirting complicates the existing dichotomy of virtue and modesty. Her sexual experience cannot be ignored, and therefore makes her position in society all the more complicated. Widows represent a challenge to eighteenth-century social customs. Marjo Buitelaar points out that *widow* derives from the Latin *vidua* related to a root meaning "to place apart" (1). Indeed, a woman who is no longer married does not fit into the existing norms of marriage as established by patriarchal society. A widow's sexual knowledge threatens social order because these women have rights that single women and spinsters do not. Economy, coupled with sensibility, are among the factors that define a widow's social involvement. Karen Bloom's perceptive study of widowhood in the late eighteenth-century novel relates the widow to the "age's anxieties about emerging capitalism" (27). Bloom argues that eighteenth-century thinkers re-defined gender in order to limit "women's

participation in capitalist enterprise" (27), so as to ensure the stability of the "social network" (27). The widow is an economic threat because, after her husband's death, she takes charge of the home and business. Her role is no longer limited to the private, but also includes the public sphere. Scholars such as Karen Bloom (Gervitz) and Cheryl L. Nixon, consider how financial influences shape the widow. They both distinguish between two types of dowagers that contribute to the economic realm in different ways: the virtuous (Clara Reeve's Mrs. Darnford and Mrs. Strictland) and the wicked widows (Fanny Burney's Madame Duval, and Ann Radcliffe's Madame Cheron). Bloom draws on the affluent widow as a model "for defining virtuous femininity as femininity removed from commercial endeavor and its values" (27). This type of widow "possessed the education, social power, and economic means to be autonomous and maintain that independence" (27). Nixon looks at widowhood through motherhood. She points to the changing ideology of motherhood that, ironically, excludes a mother's legal custody of her children after her husband's death. Both Bloom and Nixon agree that the virtuous widow is selfless and serves an archetype of the virtuous mother in the economic scene. While the *good* widow puts the well being of others before her own, a *bad* widow seeks self-fulfilment. *Lady Susan* shares in the latter tradition. Since her husband's death, Lady Susan travels within the homes of high society acquaintances with the pretence of searching for a suitable husband for her daughter, Frederica. While Lady Susan's intentions would normally be considered noble, the widow forces her daughter to marry the man she prefers. For Lady Susan, matters of the heart are irrelevant; the only crucial criterion is the suitor's

economic situation. According to Lawrence Stone, this practice became increasingly frowned upon (149). Women were no longer obligated to consent to their parent's choice of suitor. Instead, children were expected to marry a person they thought they could live with. We presume that Lady Susan's financial concern lies in her own advantageous results to such a marriage since she drove her late husband into bankruptcy (*LM* 9-10).

Moreover, Lady Susan's dishonesty extends to her financial status. Though she claims to be "not at present in want of money" (*LM* 18), other characters' affirmations, and even suggestions from Lady Susan herself, show her to be economically strained. Charles Vernon accepts Lady Susan's self-imposed invitation because "as his Brother's widow & in narrow circumstances it was proper to render her pecuniary assistance" (*LM* 7). Sir Reginald De Courcy, writing to his son, warns him that Lady Susan "is poor, & may naturally seek an alliance which must be advantageous to herself" (*LM* 22). Lady Susan herself refers to a match between Reginald and herself as "a connection so imprudent" (*LM* 64), but not before she confides in her friend Mrs. Johnson that the price of the schools Frederica attends "is immense, and much beyond what I can ever attempt to pay" (*LM* 6).[32] Lady Susan lives beyond her means, and takes unfair advantage of her family.

[32] Mrs. Johnson's comportment is slightly better than Lady Susan's. However, Mrs. Johnson's role is duplicitous. She professes great friendship and loyalty to Lady Susan, but at the same time shows her own selfish nature. Mrs. Johnson abandons Lady Susan whenever it is convenient for her. In the first of these instances, Mr. Johnson does not condone Mrs. Johnson's relationship with Lady Susan and asks his wife to "promise never to invite [Lady Susan] to my house." (LM 60). Mrs. Johnson thus betrays her friend because "[n]othing but my being in the outmost distress for Money, could have extorted it from me" (*LM* 60). Money is the reason Mrs. Johnson turns out her "friend." Mrs. Johnson betrays her friend a second time when she is asked to cease all contact with Lady Susan: "Mr. Johnson vows that if I persist in the connection, he will settle in the country for

Lady Susan's maternal behaviour is all the more striking. As a wicked widow, Lady Susan cares for her personal advantages. She is cruel to her daughter Frederica, and while she never overtly chastises or controls her, Lady Susan uses discreet manipulation that she hopes will force Frederica to obey her mother's wishes. Lady Susan reveals her artful skills to Mrs. Johnson: "instead of adopting so harsh a measure, merely propose to make it [Frederica's] own choice by rendering her thoroughly uncomfortable till she does accept [Sir James]" (*LM* 14). This quotation reveals that Lady Susan is familiar with growing eighteenth-century demands for a child's freedom to choose a spouse. She cannot force her own will on Frederica, but Lady Susan can trick her into accepting the man her mother intends for her. Lady Susan uses her parental role to obtain compassion. She

> explicitly rejects the period's developing concept of motherhood, especially its asexuality; part of the wicked widow's threat is therefore greediness for sexual gratification. She appears in the maternal role only to demonstrate how self-interest, especially sexual self-interest, can overwhelm maternal feeling to the detriment of sentimental heroines and all they represent. (Bloom 37)

Lady Susan uses the virtuous connotation of motherhood to conceal her flagrant behaviour. Austen juxtaposes Lady Susan's wickedness against Frederica and Mrs

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the rest of his life —& you know it is impossible to submit to such an extremity while any other alternative remains" (*LM* 71). There is nothing worse for Mrs. Johnson than moving to the country (incidentally, a symbol of order, and purity). Furthermore, Miss Summers refuses to allow Frederica to stay at the school because Lady Susan suspects the former to "be governed by the fear of never getting her money" (*LM* 36). Indeed, the letter addressed to Mrs. Johnson reveals her intention of not paying the amount. Furthermore, Lady Susan wants to protect her reputation, without her brother and sister-in-law knowing anything about her intentions of having Frederica marry Sir James: "I should not chuse to have the business brought forward here, and canvassed by the wise heads of Mr. and Mrs. Vernon (*LM* 37). Despite (or because of) Lady Susan's expressed desire to avoid any conflict, she (almost purposefully) must face and explain her "Diabolical scheme" to Mrs. Vernon once Sir James appears uninvited at Churchill.

Vernon's sweetness. The author, while having fun with the character of Lady Susan,[33] emphasizes, at once, the need for order, but also offers a better way to assimilate widows. Lady Susan's hypocrisy is problematic: she actively tries at every turn to undermine authority. Ultimately, Lady Susan refuses to abide by the established conditions.

When Reginald eagerly looks forward to meeting this lady he has heard so much about, we learn that he too has been forthcoming in his behaviour towards her. Lady Susan takes offence to his "familiarity which I shall teach him to correct" (*LM* 14) and his "insolent spirit" (*LM* 14). For Reginald, a woman who has seduced a married man, and an intended one, no less in the same household, is a prostitute. He does not meet her with the same etiquette he would a respectable woman: "he considered her as one entitled neither to delicacy nor respect, and that she would be delighted with the attentions of any Man inclined to flirt with her" (*LM* 16). Reginald believes his encounter with Lady Susan will be a fun game with a woman who has no sexual scruples, but instead their meeting becomes entertainment for Lady Susan: "[i]t has been delightful to me to watch his advances towards intimacy, especially to observe his altered manner in consequence of my repressing by the calm dignity of my deportment, his insolent approach to direct familiarity" (*LM* 18). Lady Susan refuses to disrespected; she demands to be treated like a lady, such as stipulated in conduct manuals.

[33] For more on how women use humour to unassumingly express their dissatisfaction, see for instance, Eileen Gillooly's *Smile of Discontent: Humour, Gender, and Nineteenth-Century British Fiction*, or Audrey Bilger's *Laughing Feminism: Subversive Comedy in Frances Burney, Maria Edgeworth, and Jane Austen*.

Lady Susan's otherness is not marked by her nationality; in fact, if anything, her status as a lady gives her more privileges. Her manipulative nature and her emotionless actions are, on the other hand, what make her a threat. Beatrice Anderson uses clinical terminology to explain Lady Susan's behaviour. For her, "Jane Austen, a brilliant observer of the human personality in all its variations, was ahead of her time in documenting so accurately the psychopathic (or sociopathic) personality which we see in Lady Susan" (193). Anderson continues by listing "the chief character traits of the psychopath" as identified by Dr. H. M. Cleckley: "superficial charm, adequate intelligence, absence of anxiety, insincerity, lack of remorse or shame, antisocial behavior, poor judgment, selfishness and egocentricity, lack of capacity for love, unemotional sexual behavior, lack of long-term life plans, and rarely, if ever, suicidal attempts" (194). These are a befitting characterization of Lady Susan. Additionally, Anderson insists that Lady Susan fits Benjamin B. Wolman's description of a sociopath:

> 'All [sociopaths] are exceedingly selfish, over-demanding, manipulative, and exploitative.' Sociopaths have no superego, remorse or guilt feelings, leaving them free to lie, cheat, and take advantage of those around them without self-retribution. Always ready to justify their dishonest behavior, sociopaths are sensitive to their own pain but not to the pain of others, and never blame themselves but, instead, tend to be hostile and to believe themselves innocent victims. 'every sociopath,' says, Professor Wolman, 'is selfish and manipulative. They care only for themselves and use others as tools for their own satisfactions. … They are bent on immediate gratification of their needs and exercise very little, if any, self-criticism.' (Anderson 194)

Dr. Wolman's diagnosis of a sociopath can be applied to Lady Susan. After all, Lady Susan looks out only for herself, and everyone, including her daughter, is easily betrayed, without a second thought.[34]

Levine also places *Lady Susan* in Austen's *Juvenilia* and, much like Southam, believes that "in respect to narrative critique, *Lesley Castle* resembles the epistolary manner of *Lady Susan*" (Levine 30). Even the "incidents […] of *Lady Susan* point far more directly to the earlier satires than to the mature novels" (Levine 30). Austen's representation and interaction of the characters lead Levine to compare the novella to other works of the eighteenth century:

> In her numerous appearances in the eighteenth-century novel, the Merry Widow is often to be found in precisely this situation in respect to a younger woman [the role of procuress], although with several possible variations in motive and circumstance, and often with the relationship partially concealed. The widow, that is, may be an aunt, guardian, landlady, or housekeeper – all mother-surrogates. (27)

Levine points to the relationship of a widow to a younger woman: one that threatens the widow and increases the latter's antagonism. Moreover, Levine adds that the "particular situation in which the Merry Widow fully rises to her bad eminence – the one in which Lady Susan is exhibited – is that of rivalry with her protégée, whom she invariably seeks to remove from competition by encouraging a distasteful liaison between the ward and another man" (27). Indeed, Lady Susan locks her daughter up in a boarding school while she controls, plans, and prepares

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[34] Emsley also concurs: "Lady Susan is unmoved by guilt, unaffected by conscience, and deaf to the voices of other human beings" (46). In footnote #5 of that same chapter Emsley accentuates Lady Susan's evilness by situating her in Dante's schema of Hell:

> In the terms Dante uses in *Hell*, Lady Susan is guilty not only of selfish desires of the flesh, which harm only herself, but of the desire to injure others, and ultimately of deception, hypocrisy, and fraud. According to Dante's system of classification, she therefore would belong in one of the lowest circles of hell. (175)

Frederica's life. Though she claims to have her daughter's best interest at heart, Frederica is the pretence behind which Lady Susan hides. It is therefore ironic that during the same period, maternal affection is encouraged. Beth Fowkes Tobin argues that the *Lady's Magazine* (1770-1837) with "a circulation of 15,000 to 16,000 a month" (205) shifted its focus in the late 1780s, no longer representing women as ornaments but as caring mothers (209), making "tenderness and anxiety […] natural, spontaneous, and instinctive. Mothers are shown fussing over their children, worried about their health and happiness" (209). This change in focus moves away from external appearance to emotional wealth. It also emphasizes the need for women to be more caring and less vain and conceited. Lady Susan is clearly not interested in her daughter's happiness, or else she would not use social requirements instrumentally to obtain her goal. Austen shows how easy it is to abuse and manipulate social and cultural demands: the author's Lady Susan mocks the established system of conduct manuals that stem from the patriarchal society's need to control women's sexuality.

Using her child for her own motivated indiscretions, Lady Susan is one of many Austen characters who claim to be looking out for the(ir) children's best interest. Mrs. Bennet, Lady Catherine de Bourgh, Mrs. Norris, Lady Russell, all claim to put their ward's welfare first. Laura Fairchild Brodie contends that

> characters such as Mrs. Norris and Lady Susan cannot be written off as an author's tithes to social realism. Rather, Austen's widows serve as her primary agents for exploring feminine energies not channeled toward marriage. As wealthy dowagers spar with young brides-to-be, they remind us that money, not sexuality, often proves to be the more permanent source of women's power. (699)

Austen uses widows to show how they must re-define themselves as women once marriage is no longer a possibility. When a woman passes her marriageable age, she still exists and must make her presence felt. What Brodie seems to conclude is that women are not defined by their sexuality, but by their (lack of) wealth. The sole means for widows, like Lady Susan, Mrs. Norris, Lady Russell, to compete with and control younger girls, is through status and wealth, since these older women risk being marginalized and forgotten.[35] Indeed Brodie elaborates: "[Austen's] rich dowagers – Lady Catherine de Bourgh, Mrs. Churchill, Lady Denham – exploit their control of private property to exercise authority over the younger generation, while her poorer widows – Mrs. Norris, Mrs. Smith – often resort to subterfuge to overcome financial and social constraints" (699). With no husband to validate them as women, they must struggle for a respectable position in society. The only way Lady Susan can rid herself of her daughter is through marriage, and marrying Frederica off to a wealthy man ensures that Lady Susan will also profit from that marriage. While Mrs. Bennet is not a widow, it is the thought of becoming one that motivates her selfishness, since she also attempts to marry her daughters to wealthy men.

[35] Brodie considers

> Austen's widows in terms of their development, from the stereotype of the Merry Widow to the psychological complexity of Anne Elliot. … [and] the widow's recurrent urge to resist her designation as a superfluous female, both in her society and in Austen's narrative. (700)

Chapter two

Mothers and Daughters: Abuse Within the Nuclear Family Part 2: The Witted and the Half-Witted: Elizabeth and Mrs. Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice*

> [*Pride and Prejudice*] enacts in the boldest and most persuasive form the young adult's desire for differentiation and separation from the parent of the same sex.
> (Wiltshire, "Mrs. Bennet" 186)

In *Pride and Prejudice,* Jane Austen explores how patriarchal society simultaneously disrupts and establishes order within the family unit with her portrait of the relationship between Elizabeth Bennet and her parents. Austen challenges the limits of the public and the private spheres, as defined by Habermas, the former being commonly associated with men and work, and the latter with women and home. Her novel thus presents a comedy of manners of middle-class English life, in which language reveals Elizabeth's intelligence and her mother's lack of it. Elizabeth's journey to self-discovery, from humiliation to self-awareness, and repentance from her pre-conceived irrational opinions on the way from love to marriage, is done with conversational ease. Mrs. Bennet, on the other hand, repeatedly proves to be a nuisance with her narcissistic promotion, and continual involvement in her daughters' lives.

Interested in how education helps shape a woman's personality, Austen uses Mrs. Bennet and Elizabeth as a means of participating in contemporary debate. Mrs. Bennet represents the ignorant woman whose future Wollstonecraft attempted to change nearly two decades earlier. Accordingly, in *A Vindication of*

the Rights of Woman, Wollstonecraft emphasizes the extent to which conduct manuals by James Fordyce or John Gregory, among others, have trained women to be inferior to men, permanently childlike, innocent in nature, and to make their search for a husband their sole priority:

> It is acknowledged that they spend many of the first years of their lives in acquiring a smattering of accomplishments; meanwhile strength of body and mind are sacrificed to libertine notions of beauty, to the desire of establishing themselves, – the only way women can rise in the world, – by marriage. (10)

Mastering these accomplishments for herself, Mrs. Bennet fulfils the requirements detailed in such books by marrying Mr. Bennet. Ignorant of the new cultural developments that promote a "rather more equal partnership between spouses" and "much warmer affective relations between husband and wife and between parents and children" (Stone 149), Mrs. Bennet blindly does what she was educated to do. In fact, Miriam Ascarelli confirms "[m]iddle- and upper-class women could not work, so marriage was truly a meal ticket for women – economic security is one reason why Mrs. Bennet was anxious to see her five daughters married."[36] Mrs. Bennet whose only prerogative was to marry well now invests her time in promoting her daughters. Indeed, as Marvin Mudrick notes, Mrs. Bennet's sole motive is "to fortify her own security by getting her daughters settled in prudent marriage, that condition symbolic of material well-being (99). Thus, with her training in husband hunting, Mrs. Bennet becomes the "business woman disposing of her two most 'deserving' (marketable) commodities in the

[36] Judith Lowder Newton observes further that "for all its reference to money and money matters, for all its consciousness of economic fact and economic influence, *Pride and Prejudice* is devoted not to establishing but to denying the force of economics to human life. In the reading of the novel the real force of economics simply melts away" (61).

business of marriage" (Brown, "The Business" 39). This is especially important for the Bennet family since there is no male heir and the family inheritance has been settled on Mr. Collins. Toni Bowers expands Lloyd Brown's argument in her discussion of the novels of Daniel Defoe. She contends that in

> *Moll Flanders* and *Roxanna*, maternal relations are 'unnatural' not only because of the protagonists' peculiar psychological states, but also, and not separately, because Augustan representations of motherhood are imbedded in larger relations that create contradictions between ideals for motherhood and the behaviours required for particular mothers' survival. ("'I wou'd not murder my child'" 176)

Indeed, Bowers points to the contradictory nature of a mother who must behave herself, but also sometimes struggle to survive. She further maintains that "[g]ood motherhood and economic autonomy are pitted against one another as if they really were mutually exclusive possibilities – and so, increasingly, they become so" ("'I wou'd not murder my child'" 182). Bowers perceptively stresses the dichotomy of motherhood and financial independence that already exists in the early eighteenth century.[37] Throughout the century, and despite increasing conduct book demands that called for maternal affection, many writers, namely Samuel Richardson (*Pamela* Part 2 (1741)), Samuel Johnson (*Life of Richard Savage* (1744)), and Tobias Smollett (*The Adventures of Peregrine Pickle* (1751)), portray unnatural and cruel mothers. Similarly, Austen includes her own

[37] According to John Beattie, the "women stole for the same reason that men stole in this period—largely as a means of survival, as a way of supplementing inadequate wages or of supplying the most basic wants" (106). For single women and widows, he contends, London

> offered a greater degree of independence and privacy—a certain freedom from the surveillance and controls of patriarchal and paternalistic social relationships. At the same time, however, and as an inevitable consequence, the urban world forced on them a greater need for self-reliance. […] [I]t is hardly surprising that not only were larger numbers of women drawn into theft in London, but that fully eighty percent of the women before the Old Bailey on property charges in this period were unmarried. (106-7)

interpretation of maternal feelings and economic situation. Mrs. Bennet fiercely tries to find suitable spouses for her daughters, even at the cost of being ridiculed, because as Bowers quite rightly states in "*Moll Flanders*, virtuous motherhood begins to look impossible except for women with their leisure and means to 'give themselves up' to the care of their children" ("'I wou'd not murder my child'" 182). Especially looking to the male heir of the family to support the parents, – Mrs. Austen, Cassandra and Jane were dependent on the family men – the Bennet family consists only of daughters, thus the onus falls on the husbands of these daughters who would be rich enough as to generously provide an annuity to their in-laws. With no male heir of their own, Mrs. Bennet has an additional pressure to secure her future, especially since, as the narrator informs us "Mr. Bennet had very often wished, before this period of his life, instead of spending his whole income, he had laid by an annual sum, for the better provision of his children, and of his wife, if she survived him" (*PP* 340).[38] Expecting Mrs. Bennet to provide him with a male heir, Mr. Bennet exercised little economy, thus, securing only a small dowry for his daughters. Mr. Bennet acknowledges his improper spending, all the while revealing the family's looming financial threat, as well as his own financial concerns.[39] This additionally explains "Mrs. Bennet's obsession with the

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[38] Lionel Trilling confirms that

> a man's profession was of peculiar importance to Jane Austen. It weighs heavily against Mr. Bennet that, his estate being entailed, he has made no effort to secure his family against his death, and by reason of his otiosity he is impotent to protect his family's good name from the consequences of Lydia's sexual escapade. He is represented as being not only less a man but also as less a gentleman than his brother-in-law Gardiner, who is in trade in London. (Trilling 47)

[39] H. J. Jackson claims that

> The possession of a library—of a dedicated space, as well as of a private collection of books—is a clear indicator of status in the novel […]. One of the things Mr. Bennet must have been doing in his library was adding to the collection. What did he buy, and how did

entailment of the Longbourn estate" (Brown, "The Business" 34). Jane Nardin astutely observes that

> [h]ad cutting off the entail been the Bennets' only way of securing their unmarried daughters' prosperity, we could indeed sympathize with Mrs. Bennet's obsession – but this is not the case. Had the Bennets saved only one quarter of their income for the twenty-four or so years of their marriage, Mr. Bennet would have had a satisfactory £16,000 to leave his heirs by the time the novel opens. His decision to trust the future of his daughters to so chancy a course as trying to end the entail is like Lydia's decision to spend her lunch money on a bonnet: a thoughtless disregard for the future, based on the hope that someone else will foot the bill. (footnote 6, 87)

Nardin's estimate and observation show the devastating influence Mr. Bennet's reckless spending has had on his daughters.[40]

Moreover, prestige is an added important factor when we consider Leroy W. Smith's claim that "patriarchal education prepares young women only to carry out their limited function, which is to add lustre to a family while a part of it and to add to its greatness when they leave it by marriage" (146). In *Pride and Prejudice* these factors are fused in Mr. Darcy whose title accompanies wealth, whereas in Mr. Bingley, a nouveau-riche, it is finances alone that matter.[41] In fact, Bingley's income becomes part of his identity: he is introduced as a "single man of large fortune; four of five thousand a year" (*PP* 4). Bingley's income precedes him and is very much public information.

> he do it? He has an income of £2000 a year from an entailed estate. […] Some of that money goes for books—apparently, serious books suitable for a 'family library,' as opposed to novels and light reading which could be borrowed from the circulating library and did not represent a sensible long-term investment. (para. 3-4)

[40] In this argument, Nardin shows Mr. Bennet's unconscious influence on his daughters: there is no worry about money. For more on the value of money, see for instance Edward Copeland's *Women Writing About Money*.

[41] Along with the probable financial security Mrs. Bennet hopes to acquire in marrying her daughters off to wealthy gentlemen, she could claim ties to them, assuring her additional connections and respect.

Morality is also pertinent to forming character in Austen's novel for she "follows in the tradition of other eighteenth-century writers, from Locke to Richardson, in placing a high value on the development of morality" (Benson n. pag.). In *Pride and Prejudice*, Austen echoes several arguments of the political economist Adam Smith. Among them are the need for morality and sympathy for a society's development, and since "Smith was perhaps the single most famous advocate for the expansion of commerce, he was also extremely troubled by the effects on the individual of a culture where money was increasingly becoming the dominant social power" (Michie n. pag.). Smith's concern about the increasing value of money is portrayed in the character of Mrs. Bennet, whose interest in finances has corrupted her character. She seems to make selective use of her conduct manual education and thus lacks both morality and sympathy. Her bragging and unwelcome behaviour not only make her a nuisance to her society, but a danger to her country as well. Indeed, according to Mary Margaret Benson,

> [t]hat [Austen] sees moral education as important, and defines it in terms of the mother/daughter relationship, is demonstrated in such characters as Emma and Catherine, whose early education is neglected, and who, before reaching maturity, must rectify their mothers' lacks. The Austen heroine must, to be a heroine, have her own personal sense of morality well established – even if it is separate from that of her family – before she can grow up and become a mother herself. (n. pag.)

Hence, in differing from her mother, Elizabeth does not merely accept contemporary decorum, but ensures future stability, growth, and cultural values.[42]

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[42] As Laura Mooneyham White notes, Mary Poovey argues convincingly for

> the split between public and private spheres in Austen and shows with force and clarity the central contradiction between the idea, one Austen endorses, that romantic love exerts moral authority, particularly beyond the private sphere, and the realities of bourgeois society. (75)

It is through her lack of intelligence that Mrs. Bennet constricts Elizabeth in social affairs. Intelligence, as Austen seems to set up in *Pride and Prejudice* according to her Johnsonian inheritance, is the ability to perceive and comprehend meanings ("Understanding [and] skill;" Johnson def. 4). It is, as the *OED* would have it, the "quickness of mental apprehension [and] sagacity" (def. 2). It further entails sensitivity, feelings and even love, where an importance is granted to marriage of mutual affection. Elizabeth's parents cannot serve her as role models. In relating the reason of the present status of Mr. and Mrs. Bennet's relationship, the narrator informs the reader that

> [h]ad Elizabeth's opinion been all drawn from her own family, she could not have formed a very pleasing picture of conjugal felicity or domestic comfort. Her father captivated by youth and beauty, and that appearance of good humour, which youth and beauty generally give, had married a woman whose weak understanding and illiberal mind, had very early in their marriage put an end to all real affection for her. Respect, esteem, and confidence, had vanished for ever; and all his views of domestic happiness were overthrown. […] To his wife he was very little otherwise indebted, than as her ignorance and folly had contributed to his amusement. This is not the sort of happiness which a man would in general wish to owe to his wife; but where other powers of entertainment are wanting, the true philosopher will derive benefit from such as are given. (*PP* 262)

Unable to grow in his relationship, Mr Bennet, who is prevented from feeling the fundamentals of marriage, resorts to using his wife as entertainment.

Additionally, intelligence has a broader meaning within a late eighteenth-century context in which it also means individualism. Lawrence Stone defines this concept both as "a growing introspection and interest in the individual personality" and as

> a demand for personal autonomy and a corresponding respect for the individual's right to privacy, to self-expression and to the free exercise of his will within limits set by the need for social cohesion: a recognition that it is morally wrong to make exaggerated demands for obedience or to manipulate or coerce the individual beyond a certain point in order to achieve social and political ends. (151)

Stone describes the growing importance of self, a person's independent feeling, thought, and action. Clearly, Mrs. Bennet is not familiar with any of these definitions of individualism. Her ignorance makes her seem barbaric since the novel is a constant tug-and-pull toward wealthy matrimony. Elizabeth, as a fully developed person, expresses herself with fluidity and clarity, while possessing psychological strength. Furthermore, she faces the moral and social codes set up by patriarchal society, and thus always tries to restrain her curiosity. She is eager to discover what Wickham has to say about Darcy, for instance, but at the same time, she is very well aware that it is improper to intrude in other people's business. The narrator confirms that "Mr. Wickham was […] at leisure to talk to Elizabeth, and she was very willing to hear him, though what she chiefly wished to hear she could not hope to be told, the history of his acquaintance with Mr. Darcy. She dared not even mention that gentleman" (*PP* 86). Proper decorum prevents Elizabeth from inquiring about Wickham's relationship to Darcy. Later, on looking back at various displays of her attitude, however, Elizabeth realizes that she has not been faultless:

> 'How despicably have I acted!' she cried. —'I, who have prided myself on my discernment! —I, who have valued myself on my abilities! who have often disdained the generous candour of my sister, and gratified my vanity, in useless or blameable distrust. —

> How humiliating is this discovery! —Yet, how just a humiliation!' (*PP* 230)[43]

Elizabeth's self-criticism reveals that she is conscious of her faults. From this point forward, she is no longer proud or prejudiced. It is crucial to note, however, as Mooneyham (White) astutely does, that "[n]owhere in Elizabeth's careful articulation to herself of her own feelings does irony intrude, and this absence of wit in itself marks maturity of thought. In Austen's view, wit is not an appropriate idiom for the highest level of moral and personal inquiry" (51). Learning from one's own mistakes is of a serious nature since it is through experience that one builds character. It is through their respective repentance and growth that Elizabeth and Darcy are able to eventually marry.[44] Despite her error in judgment, which she truly regrets and learns from, Elizabeth's genuine desire to know what is happening around her differs from that of Mrs. Bennet, who is merely motivated by gossip.[45]

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[43] In "Children and Their Families in Jane Austen's Novels," Jane Nardin observes that Elizabeth "resemble[s] her mother in one important trait. Each woman tends to judge people unfairly, on the basis of the way they affect her own ego or interests, though Mrs. Bennet's crude misjudgements are mere parodies of Elizabeth's clever perversities" (75).

[44] According to Anne K. Mellor,

> Elizabeth Bennet must overcome both her proud confidence in her own ability to distinguish simple and intricate human characters and her prejudiced and inaccurate reading of Mr. Darcy, through a process of painful mortification, self-analysis, and learning, before she can recognize that Mr. Darcy is the man best suited to be her husband. Elizabeth Bennet's marriage to Fitzwilliam Darcy in *Pride and Prejudice* exemplifies Mary Wollstonecraft's ideal marriage, a marriage based on rational love, mutual understanding, and respect. ("Why Women" 279)

[45] Nancy Armstrong points to a particular difference in Austen's writing from that of her Augustan influences:

> Austen's fiction plays out the Richardsonian thematics in which a female discourse struggles with that of the male for the power to represent individual identity. The heroine once again posits a notion of identity that is founded on gender differences rather than on the political distinctions to which men adhere and on which they base their authority. […] But in Austen […] traditional status signs have been detached from their referent in some chain of economic dependency by a local communication system – gossip – which automatically converts this information into the stuff of subjective experience. (*Desire* 138-39)

Speech is a fundamental instrument for Elizabeth because she is able to dominate social codes rather than be dominated by them. She is smart, strong, witty, and possesses good judgment skills which she masters as she adapts to the social environment she is part of, while simultaneously expressing her individuality. In her various speeches, Elizabeth demonstrates a command of ideas, alertness, as well as an amusing witticism. In fact, Mr. Bennet, in the opening chapter separates Elizabeth from the rest of his daughters and declares "Lizzy has something more of quickness than her sisters" (*PP* 5). In acknowledging Elizabeth's selective use of irony,[46] Carole Moses contends that Elizabeth does not employ irony with her mother or Lydia because they "are so silly that irony would be wasted on them" (160). Furthermore, Moses makes a point to distinguish Elizabeth's irony from Mr. Bennet's: "Elizabeth's irony differs from that of her father, whose ironic gibes – whether to his wife or daughters – only serve to reinforce his own sense of superiority and distance him still further from his family" (160). Elizabeth's wit has no effect on her mother and sister, and it is in nature different from her father's: hers is not meant to be insulting while his generally is.

In *Wit and Its Relation to the Unconscious*, Sigmund Freud acknowledges the entertainment value of wit as "an activity whose purpose is to derive pleasure – be it intellectual or otherwise – from the psychic process" (137). However, Freud is also interested in the reasons for its use. Among the many types of wit, he identifies "*hostile* wit serving as an aggression, satire, or defense… [and] *obscene* wit serving as a sexual exhibition" (138). Using men as his primary

[46] For more on the role of irony in judgment see Mudrick's *Pride and Prejudice* (94-126).

focus, Freud claims that obscene wit "serves to initiate the sexual act" (142), and manifests itself in speech for two reason: "First, in order to make itself known to the woman; and secondly, because the awakening of the imagination through speech puts the woman herself in a corresponding excitement and awakens in her the desire to passive exhibitionism" (142). Although Freud develops his argument into "sexual aggression" (143), I would like to concentrate on the first stage of obscene wit. Since Elizabeth is the instigator, and initially uses hostile wit to hide her hurt feelings and show she is unaffected by Darcy's rude comment at the ball, is not it possible to think of Freud's earlier comment in reverse? Mooneyham believes that

> Darcy misreads Elizabeth's attacks as sexual, not moral, antagonism – as the insolence of growing affection, not disapprobation. […] Darcy takes her verbal abuse as expressive of interest. […] Darcy is right that Elizabeth's punishing speeches indicate her attraction to him, but he is wrong to suppose that Elizabeth herself is aware of this attraction. (48-49)

Austen, therefore, uses the playfulness of the wit as a means to develop romantic feelings between Elizabeth and Darcy.[47]

In his 1766 *Sermons for Young Women*, James Fordyce, whom Austen mocks in the novel (*PP* 76),[48] claims, "men of the best sense have been usually averse to the thought of marrying a witty female" (192).[49] Indeed,

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[47] Q. D. Leavis, on the other hand, believes the wit in *Pride and Prejudice* to be "too uniform, especially in the dialogue which is never without point" (287). In *Mansfield Park*, *Emma*, and *Persuasion*, Austen forgoes

> the immediate effect of witty rejoinder and humourous character to analyze motive and to build up total effects; in this new manner the human heart is investigated in a new way, every impulse noted and considered with respect, instead of inspiring the easy comments of the earlier automatic and rather unfeeling sprightliness. (Leavis 287)

[48] Writing about Austen's *Juvenilia*, Jillian Heydt-Stevenson contends that Austen

> laughs at all of it: the advice from conduct books, philosophical tracts, sermons, and medical manuals; at the idea that women's sexuality should be closely guarded; that

> Men who understand the science of domestic happiness, know that its very first principle is ease. […]. But we cannot be easy, were we are not safe. We are never safe in the company of a critic; and almost every wit is a critic by profession. In such company we are not at liberty to unbend ourselves. All must be the straining of study, or the anxiety of apprehension: how painful! Where the heart may expand and open itself with freedom, farewell to real friendship, farewell to convivial delight! (Fordyce 192-93)

Fordyce stresses the uneasiness and self-consciousness a receiver of wit experiences. Austen in turn argues against Fordyce and suggests that wit is entertaining, and that it furthermore allows for hidden meanings to be expressed.[50] It is a way for a woman like Elizabeth, restrained by conventions, to communicate her opinions and concerns in an amusing manner: society cannot punish her for something she does not say in seriousness. To be sure, there are limits to using wit as Elizabeth acknowledges: "She remembered that he had yet to learn to be laughed at, and it was rather too early to begin" (*PP* 412).[51] While Darcy, the ultimate representation of patriarch in the novel, has proven to be open-minded, he still remains self-conscious and lacks control and power when Elizabeth wittingly plays with him. As Sarah Emsley perceptively points out, "Austen's best

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> private pleasures should be controlled; that gender should dictate behavior; and that any conceivable appetite – sexual, criminal, alimentary, and liquid – should be governed. Austen's published novels laugh at all that too, but not with quite the same abandon as her Juvenilia, which, I argue, investigates excessive repressive constraints on women and, in turn, the heroines' excessive responses to those regulations. ("'Pleasure is now'" para. 1)

[49] Maaja A. Stewart observes that

> [o]nly in the eighteenth century, […], did the potentially subversive energies of female wit become unacceptable in the discourses of properties and proprieties. Functioning like the enclosures of agrarian capitalism, the denial of wit to women concentrates the powers of language on privileged men. (7)

Refusing women the use of wit allows for men to solely hold power and exert control over women.

[50] Freud's famous subconscious slip also applies to wit (156).

[51] For Regina Barreca, the most "unnerving" (25) yet acceptable form for women's humour is the self-deprecating joke where "it's okay to be hostile as long as you make yourself into the object of the hostility" (25).

heroines combine the virtues with ready wit, which Aristotle identifies as one of the virtues of social life" (12).[52] Fusing virtue and wit, Austen creates characters that are more complete. What is more, Elizabeth becomes a role model to Georgiana, whose attachment "was exactly what Darcy had hoped to see" (*PP* 430). Finding the right balance and treating the other with respect, and young women as rational creatures is a relationship that Wollstonecraft promotes: one where a wife could prove a suitable companion to her husband.

Though initially Georgiana "often listened with an astonishment bordering on alarm, at [Elizabeth's] lively, sportive, manner of talking to her brother" (*PP* 430), with time, by "Elizabeth's instructions [Georgiana] began to comprehend that a woman may take liberties with her husband, which a brother will not always allow in a sister more than ten years younger than himself" (*PP* 430). Here Austen comes to invalidate contemporary conduct manuals that never depicted a woman who was "a mirror-image of real life" (Todd, "Introduction" vii). In fact, male conduct book writers described a "woman whom a man would find desirable. In many ways she is a fantasy to which women, eager to please men and find husbands, tried to conform" (Todd, "Introduction" vii).[53] Austen

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[52] Emsley distinguishes Austen's work from her contemporaries. She observes that "for many of the virtuous heroines in contemporary novels by writers such as Ann Radcliffe, Eliza Fenwick, Elizabeth Inchbald, and Samuel Richardson, virtue and wit are mutually exclusive, as female virtue is defined primarily as sexual purity" (12). Emsley also acknowledges the sexual layer of the wit.

[53] Fullerton, addressing women's reality, argues that

> Jane Austen as a teenager already saw the absurdity in the laws of compensation for cases of adultery. Courts treated women as chattels, pieces of property transferred from a father to a husband. If the property was damaged or stolen, then an appropriate fee must be paid by the man who had done the damage. The original owner of that property should then regard himself as duly compensated and feel satisfied. To the young Jane Austen this was ridiculous. Marriage out, she felt, to be treated as a business (although some of the characters in her mature novels, notably Charlotte Lucas, marry purely for business

underlines Georgiana's misconceptions about proper female behaviour promoted by conduct manuals, and has Elizabeth educate her into a more fitting female role. This attests to the influence Elizabeth has on Georgiana and the near equal relationship Elizabeth has with Darcy.

Mrs. Bennet, on the other hand, whom Austen repeatedly describes as "unable to contain herself" (*PP* 6), is motivated by selfish concerns. In the definition of individualism mentioned above, Stone stresses that it is unacceptable to coerce someone for personal benefit (236). Mrs. Bennet, however, clearly disregards other people's privacy, and she shows no recognition of the moral and social codes that surround her. Her pretended interest in her daughters' happiness is, in fact, motivated by her own future security. Thus, in Mrs. Bennet's case intelligence is conceived of as an individual's self concern and advancement: she places "the selfish pursuit of pleasure in this world at the centre of human psychological motivation" (Stone 236). In fact, the narrator gives an account of her character very early on in the novel: "*Her* mind was less difficult to develope. She was a woman of mean understanding, little information, and uncertain temper. When she was discontented she fancied herself nervous. The business of her life was to get her daughters married; its solace was visiting and news" (*PP* 5).[54] With this information found at the end of the first chapter, the reader might legitimately expect little of Mrs. Bennet, and by underlining her love of gossip, the narrator consequently further infers her lack of respect of people's privacy.

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reasons) and no amount of money should satisfy a husband whose wife has left him for another man. (70)

[54] For more on gossip in Austen's novels see, Elaine Bander's "Gossip as Pleasure, Pursuit, Power, and Plot Device in Jane Austen's Novels," and Bruce Stovel and Weinlos Gregg's collection of essays *The Talk in Jane Austen*.

Austen uses Mrs. Bennet's motivated insensitivity to better asses Elizabeth's personality by comparing her to her mother. The latter is stupid and silly, and cannot understand that she does more harm than good when she advocates Jane's beauty and intelligence. Though she undoubtedly humiliates her daughters, she also endangers her own future at the same time. In fact, there is no mention of Mrs. Bennet visiting Elizabeth at Pemberley. On the contrary, we learn that Mr. Bingley and Jane move out of Netherfield and closer to Pemberley because so "near a vicinity to her mother and Meryton relations was not desirable even to *his* easy temper, or *her* affectionate heart" (*PP* 427). Mrs. Bennet succeeds in driving away even the people with the most goodness and patience in the novel. Unlike Elizabeth, Mrs. Bennet has no code of discretion: she does not believe in, or know what constitutes individualism and remains ignorant of the reality of the people around her. If Mrs. Bennet's behaviour was more rational and less driven by personal interest,[55] she would not have sent Jane to Netherfield, hoping for her daughter to get sick so as to remain there for some time, and consequently facilitating a union between Jane and Bingley.[56]

The importance of the sisters' marriages affects the future security of the other siblings. Morris reminds the reader that

> In [Elizabeth's] situation as the second of five almost dowerless sisters, family affairs are components of her destiny, and the mother presiding over them a force – erratic, and often perverse – to be reckoned with. Mrs. Bennet's excesses cause Elizabeth not only embarrassment but anxiety. (n. pag.)

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[55] In "'Manoeuvring' in Jane Austen," Brian Southam interestingly calls Mrs. Bennet an "arch-manoeuvrer" (469).

[56] In the end, however, as Nina Auerbach states, "Jane's illness at Netherfield does further her marriage as Mrs. Bennet had planned" ("Pride" 366).

Therefore, the danger of a mother aggressively and publicly trying to promote one daughter risks endangering the marriage of the other sisters. Austen uses Mrs. Bennet's silliness to underline Elizabeth's decorum and wittiness. By endlessly advocating Jane's attractiveness, she is solely interested in getting her daughter engaged. Elizabeth, however, is quick on her feet and tries to influence her mother, as the following exchange demonstrates:

> 'Oh! dear, yes; – but you must own [Charlotte Lucas] is very plain. Lady Lucas herself has often said so, and envied me Jane's beauty. I do not like to boast of my own child, but to be sure, Jane – one does not often see any body better looking. It is what every body says. I do not trust my own partiality. When she was only fifteen, there was a gentleman at my brother Gardiner's in town, so much in love with her, that my sister-in-law was sure he would make her an offer before we came away. But however did not. Perhaps he thought her too young. However, he wrote some verses on her, and very pretty they were.'
> 'And so ended his affection,' said Elizabeth impatiently. 'There has been many a one, I fancy, overcome in the same way. I wonder who first discovered the efficacy of poetry in driving away love!' (*PP* 48-49)

By intervening in such a way, Elizabeth hopes to limit the damage her mother's incessant bragging is bound to cause. Mrs. Bennet, whose sole belief is that famous opening statement that "a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife" (*PP* 3), gives herself permission to denigrate every other eligible woman in their town because she is eager to advance her daughters' status – and ultimately her own.

Elizabeth tries to hint to her mother to stop matchmaking, but Mrs. Bennet is determined to continue.[57] Her irredeemable vulgarity and garrulous foolishness

[57] John Wiltshire reminds readers that despite the comedy that Mrs. Bennet creates, the mortification Elizabeth feels is poignant and very serious: "If the reader feels both amusement and contempt at this figure's mindless inanities he or she must also reflect that despising one's mother

expose her elder daughters to repeated social ridicule. In failing to display a proper sense of etiquette, Mrs. Bennet humiliates herself and others, and in doing so becomes a major impediment for her children's future. The passage quoted above underscores Elizabeth's perceptive mind: she understands the danger her mother represents for her sisters and herself, but she knows as well that her mother ignores it. Elizabeth's active intellect and her wit are obvious in her response to her mother. She understands and respects the social conventions, which eventually lead her to defend Darcy to her mother.

In the Bennet family a woman has one important decision to make: marrying a suitable man.[58] This decision is, of course, not simply a woman's personal prerogative since this commitment has major consequences on the rest of her family. According to Mary Poovey, marriage for Austen embodies "the ideal union of individual desire and social responsibility; if a woman could legitimately express herself *only* by choosing to marry and then by sustaining her marriage, Austen suggests, she *could*, through her marriage, not only satisfy her own needs but also influence society" (203). A woman exercises her right by accepting or refusing a proposal. Thus, Poovey points to a woman's indirect access to social and political power. William Blackstone contends that by "marriage, the husband and wife are one person in law: that is, the very being or legal existence of the woman is suspended during the marriage, or at least is incorporated and

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is a far from comfortable position for a daughter, especially an extremely intelligent daughter, to be in" ("Mrs. Bennet" 182).

[58] Elizabeth Bergen Brophy extends this to include all women in the eighteenth century: "It was generally agreed in the eighteenth century that marriage was a woman's natural vocation. It was, in fact, regarded as the best road to happiness for both sexes" (94). For a recent study on Austen and marriage see Hazel Jones's *Jane Austen and Marriage*.

consolidated into that of the husband: under whose wing, protection, and cover, she performs everything" (430). Under the auspices of her husband, a woman can change her fate and that of her family. In "Power, Fantasy, and Subversion in Jane Austen," Judith Lowder Newton contends that Elizabeth,

> as a power fantasy, is in some ways astoundingly modest. The remarkable thing, perhaps, is that her rebelliousness, undercut and qualified as it is, still maintains a quality of force, still strikes as a power. It does so in part because of its juxtaposition with Miss Bingley's ineffective machinations and Jane's well-intentioned passivity, both reminders of what it means to be traditionally feminine. But most importantly, Elizabeth's rebel energies retain a quality of force because […] they really act upon her world; they change Darcy, change the way he responds to his economic and social privilege, change something basic to the power relation between him and Elizabeth. (38)

Newton contends that Elizabeth's power becomes evident not only because her femininity and proper female behaviour are set up against other women like Mrs. Bingley and Jane, but because she can change Darcy's set patriarchal beliefs and standards. The power Newton rightly identifies in Elizabeth is consistent with that of participating in the public sphere because of her capacity to learn from experience, and change.

In the same manner, on occasion, Mrs. Bennet exercises power through Mr. Bennet. She is familiar with the code of ethics regarding visits and tries to convince her husband to attend to Mr. Bingley: "'But consider your daughters. Only think what an establishment it would be for them […] indeed you must go, for it will be impossible for *us* to visit him, if you do not'" (*PP* 4).[59] Mrs. Bennet,

[59] Nardin addresses Mrs. Bennet's calculating behaviour:

> Good manners to Mrs. Bennet are just one more way of getting what she really wants, and she has failed to teach her daughters Kitty and Lydia, 'always unguarded and often uncivil' […], anything at all about the importance or function of decorous behaviour. (52)

thus, knows how to manipulate situations at times in order to get what she wants. Using her daughters as bait, she succeeds in getting Mr. Bennet to visit Bingley. Nancy Armstrong contends that "although certainly subject to political force, [the domestic woman] exercised a form of power that appeared to have no political force at all because it seemed forceful only when it was desired. It was the power of domestic surveillance" (*Desire* 19). Being able to control what happens under her roof is a woman's prerogative. Through the influence she exercises within her own home, a woman might affect changes outside it.

Indeed, for Lloyd W. Brown, the "marriage of an Austen heroine signalises the achievement of a self-sufficient and mature individualism on both sides, and as such it underscores the full equality on which the relationship is now based" ("The Business" 33). Brown points to the necessity of respect and equality within matrimony. This is the marriage that Elizabeth and Darcy have. It is one of companionship that becomes increasingly important as the century progresses. Elizabeth and Darcy's marriage of mutual affection is best substantiated in the following passage between Elizabeth and Mr. Bennet, when the latter states:

> 'My child, let me not have the grief of seeing *you* unable to respect your partner in life.'[…] Elizabeth, still more affected, was earnest and solemn in her reply; and at length, by repeated assurances that Mr. Darcy was really the object of her choice, by explaining the gradual change which her estimation of him had undergone, relating her absolute certainty that his affection was not the work of day, but had stood the test of many months suspense, and enumerating with energy all his good qualities, she did conquer her father's incredulity, and reconcile him to the match. (*PP* 418)

Nardin addresses Mrs. Bennet's manipulation of conduct books; she is only the "proper woman" when she wants something.

Mr. Bennet's deep affection for Elizabeth is obvious and she reassures him with regards to the seriousness of Darcy's love for her, all the while revealing Mr. Bennet's awareness of the roots of his own marital unhappiness.[60] Having lived his life confined to his library (where he is sheltered from his wife), Mr. Bennet's unhappiness shows that women cannot be "acceptable companions to their husbands once initial passion has subsided, unless they bring other qualities besides beauty and sensibility" (Kirkham, *Jane Austen* 42).

In Austen's time, women were generally limited to each other's company.[61] The bond that forms between mother and daughter, while the mother prepares her daughter to enter society, as well as instruct her to be a model wife, is disrupted when the daughter first realizes that her mother is not omnipotent, but rather subservient to men. In "Anger in the Mother-Daughter Relationship," Lewis Herman and Block Lewis base their argument on Freud's theory of penis envy. A female child's envy of the penis occurs at around age three when she discovers she does not have one:

> They automatically think they are castrated and inferior, and experience their lack as a wound to their self-interest (a narcissistic

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[60] Samuel Kliger believes Mr. and Mrs. Bennet's marriage to be equivalent to the potential relationship between Elizabeth and Wickham:

> If we question why he married his wife in the first place, we find an exact parallel to the Elizabeth-Wickham romance. Mr. Bennet must have responded to his wife's 'natural' charms as a young girl. But since education or breeding, or what we call 'art,' has added nothing to her natural charm, Mrs. Bennet lacks the just mixture of the opposing qualities of 'art' and 'nature.' In exactly the same way, Elizabeth is attracted to Wickham's natural gaiety and charm. His nature, however, is impervious to breeding and gentlemanly virtue. Obviously the point is that had Elizabeth married Wickham, her fate would have been a copy of her father's. Her married life would have been as desolate as her father's of companionship worthy of respect. (265)

[61] Discussing the importance of privacy, Patricia Meyer Spacks notes that little isolation is available to (upper-class British) women since, as "novels, diaries, letters, and conduct manuals suggest, physical privacy was hard to come by. Even if they slept alone, without the company of a sister, cousin, aunt, friend, or servant (and relatively few did), women did not customarily retreat to their rooms except to sleep" (516).

> wound). […] They also develop contempt for others, like their mother, who do not have penises and at the same time blame her for their own atrophied state. This contempt, plus their anger at her, leads them to turn away in anger and hostility from their mother, who has been their first love object. They turn to their father, who has a penis and might provide them with this much desired appendage. (Chodorow 94)

Along similar lines, Lewis Herman and Block Lewis provide a cultural explanation to the relationship between men and women. They claim that there are three different stages whereby

> daughters angrily reject their mothers: [these are] the oedipal, pubertal, and the young adult periods of life. Each stage originates in a sudden period of growth, expanded curiosity and understanding, and interest in sex and the relation between the sexes. Each precedes entry into a wider social world. At each stage, the daughter comes to a fuller awareness of the relative place of males and females in society. At each stage, she reacts with shock, disappointment, and anger against her mother. Fuelling this anger is a deeper, often unconscious, reaction to the injustice of women's second-class status, and an implicit demand that a truly nurturant mother should struggle against her own (and her daughter's) inferiority. (149)

Sheltered by her mother, the daughter idealizes her as her protector and caregiver. As the daughter grows up, however, she is faced with certain realities she had previously been ignorant about. Elizabeth fits into the "young adult period of life" stage. She is at the age of marriage and her maturity allows her to be more perceptive of situations around her. Opportunity for new friendships arises when the Bingley siblings, Darcy, and the regiment come to Hertfordshire. The interactions that ensue between Elizabeth and these members introduce her to different social circles and to a great scope of information. For instance, Miss Bingley criticizes Elizabeth for walking from Hertfordshire to Netherfield. Elizabeth's actions and appearance do not fit Miss Bingley's description of

appropriate female behaviour: "To walk three miles, or four miles or five miles, or whatever it is, above her ancles in dirt, and alone, quite alone! what could she mean by it? It seems to me to shew an abominable sort of *conceited independence*, a most *country town indifference to decorum*" (*PP* 39, italics mine). Unlike Wollstonecraft who would have approved of the exercise, Miss Bingley's response shows how exerting independence is frowned upon. She hints at Elizabeth's wildness and unrestrained masculinity, and hence, her sexual energy.[62] Moreover, Miss Bingley underhandedly attacks Elizabeth for behaving as a countrywoman. This of course is purposeful because of her self-imposed rivalry with Elizabeth for Darcy's affection.[63]

Although the other Bennet daughters remain passive to their mother's character and inquisitiveness, Elizabeth's reaction to Mrs. Bennet's plan to send Jane to Netherfield in the rain shows how her mother creates additional layers of difficulty to the already existing constraints for woman. Compelling Elizabeth to act unconventionally, Mrs. Bennet only complicates matters further as she harms the reputations of her daughters and their chances of marrying well. By moving away from the privacy of the home to the external social world, Lewis Herman and Block Lewis maintain that the daughter is no longer the mother's center of attention. As a result, the daughter realizes, at every stage, that her mother is not as powerful as she used to think her to be, and blames her mother for lying to her,

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[62] For more references to the body and sexual energy see, for instance, Jill Heydt-Stevenson's "The Anxieties and 'Felicities of Rapid Motion'" in *Austen's Unbecoming Conjunctions: Subversive Laughter, Embodied History*, or Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's "Jane Austen and the Masturbating Girl" in *Tendencies*.

[63] Mooneyham shows how Miss Bingley achieves the opposite effect on Darcy with "her attempts to trespass on Darcy's words, Miss Bingley demonstrates how not to gain Darcy's interest" (54).

and for not doing anything to alter their fate. Though Elizabeth dislikes her mother's stubbornness, she despises even more the fact that Mrs. Bennet does not alleviate their circumstances, but complicates them instead.

Concurrently, Lewis Herman and Block Lewis contend that the father-son relationship undergoes its own disappointments, despite the fact that the son is rewarded with the "uncertain hope of admission to a superior caste" (150). While the father will disappoint his son, the son will grow up to be a man and will share a position of power with his father. Similarly, Chodorow writes that a "boy gives up his mother in order to avoid punishment, but identifies with his father because he can then gain the benefits of being the one who gives punishment, of being masculine and superior" (113). Unfortunately, there is no such ultimate hope for the daughter, since her position in society is inferior to a man's. Lewis Herman and Block Lewis assert that it "is indeed a shock when the little girls first recognize what it means to be female in a world where power and privilege are the province of males" (150). The daughter reconsiders her mother's status in view of her conclusions, and re-examines her own estimation of her mother.

Furthermore, the daughter's pride is "deeply wounded when she realizes that her mother prefers males to females, placing her love for her husband (and often for her sons as well) above her love for her daughter" (Lewis Herman and Block Lewis 150), thus causing further anger between mother and daughter. As the mother chooses to side with "power and privilege" (i.e. men) she admits to her own and, consequently, her daughter's inferior status. Ironically, the mother's betrayal leads the daughter to turn to "power and privilege" as well. The daughter

wants her father to rescue her from her mother's constant betrayal, and "she attempts to form a privileged relationship with her father that might exempt her from the onerous fate of an ordinary female" (Lewis Herman and Block Lewis 150). She thus turns to her father to help her change her fate—one ironically imposed upon women by the same person she seeks help from. [64]

Elizabeth's father becomes the counterpart that complements her. As her "father's daughter" (Morris, n. pag.), Mr. Bennet could provide her with "power and privilege" to express herself nearly as an equal, and he appreciates her intelligence. In turning to her father, Elizabeth tries to form a relationship with him that would ultimately save her from becoming like her mother. Chodorow notes that

> a daughter looks to her father for a sense of separateness and for the […] confirmation of her specialness […]. She (and the woman she becomes) is willing to deny her father's limitations (and those of her lover or husband) as long as she feels loved. She is more able to do this because his distance means that she does not really know him. The relationship, then, because of the father's distance and importance to her, occurs largely as fantasy and idealization […]. (195)

The ambivalence of the relationship of the daughter to her mother and father is underlined by the daughter's need of recognition. A daughter feels worthy with

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[64] Chodorow stresses the complicated nature of the mother-child relationship. She writes that

> Children wish to remain one with their mother, and expect that she will never have different interests from them; yet they define development in terms of growing away from her. In the face of their dependence, lack of certainty of her emotional permanence, fear of merging, and overwhelming love and attachment, a mother looms large and powerful. Several analytic formulations speak to this, and to the way growing children come to experience their mothers. Mothers, they suggest, come to symbolize dependence, regression, passivity, and the lack of adaptation to reality. Turning from mother (and father) represents independence and individuation, progress, activity, and participation in the real world. (82)

Children want their mother to share their interests while they forge their own identity. It is only by being totally independent that growing children could participate in society.

her father's acknowledgment. Because a daughter has a distant relationship to her father she creates the person she wants in him.

Elizabeth dissociates herself from her mother and her younger sisters after Mrs. Bennett becomes ecstatic with Lydia's invitation from Mrs. Forster to join the couple in Brighton. For Elizabeth "this invitation was so far from exciting in her the same feelings as in her mother and Lydia, that she considered it as the death-warrant of all possibility of common sense for the latter" (*PP* 255). Elizabeth later admits that Lydia is only "understood only by her mother" (*PP* 258). She underlines her mother's immaturity and frivolity, and by detaching herself in such a way, Elizabeth reduces her mother to a reckless young adult. John Wiltshire concurs

> It is what we glimpse, in the violence of [Mrs. Bennet's] emotions, in the volubility of her discourse, in the unnuanced, coarse vibrations of her presence, a great deal of energy. And it is – we might concede – a sexual energy too. 'I remember a time when I liked a red coat very well – and indeed so do I still at my heart': this confession, early in the novel, already indicates how Mrs. Bennet's still unappeased sexuality is to play its role in fostering her youngest daughter's erotic escapade. ("Mrs. Bennet" 184) [65]

In fact, while Mrs. Bennet relives her adolescence, it is Elizabeth who becomes the parent that is most concerned with her family's reputation, and successfully minimizes the damage her mother inflicts upon the family. Nevertheless, she abhors her mother's attitude and consequently turns to her father for her escape. Chodorow, however, maintains that despite the daughter's aversion to her mother, she maintains ties to her:

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[65] Wiltshire further believes Mrs. Bennet to be the "worst exemplar of the mother, a woman who cannot separate herself from her offspring because she is in many respects herself still an envious and fractious child" ("Mrs. Bennet" 183-84).

> Because of the father's lack of availability to his daughter, and because of the intensity of the mother-daughter relationship in which she participates, girls tend not to make a total transfer of affection to their fathers but to remain also involved with their mothers, and to oscillate emotionally between mother and father. (192-93)

These complicated manifestations of a daughter's conflicting feelings can be found in Elizabeth. Despite her mortification and embarrassment, "her responses to her mother never take the articulate and formulated shape that she allows herself in criticism of her father" (Wiltshire, "Mrs. Bennet" 182). Indeed, throughout the novel, Elizabeth, though many times exasperated by her mother's behaviour, never spitefully checks her for it. Regardless of the damage Mrs. Bennet creates, Elizabeth's reflections point to the fact that she "had frequently united with Jane in an endeavour to check the imprudence of Catherine and Lydia; but while they were supported by their mother's indulgence, what chance would there be of improvement?" (*PP* 236).

On the other hand, Elizabeth is not always in complete agreement with Mr. Bennet, who as Susan Fraiman observes, "is not really a bad father – just a modern one, in the manner of Locke's influential text on education. Smooth-browed advocate of instruction over discipline and reason over force, he typifies the Lockean father" (169).[66] It is this same method of instruction that Mr. Bennet

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[66] Opinions of Mr. Bennet differ. Trilling believes that of,

> all the fathers of Jane Austen's novels, Sir Thomas is the only one to whom admiration is given. Fanny's real father, Lieutenant Price of the Marines, is shallow and vulgar. The fathers of the heroines of *Pride and Prejudice*, *Emma*, and *Persuasion*, all lack principle and fortitude; they are corrupted by their belief in their delicate vulnerability - they lack *apatheia*. (53)

In a contrasting way, Mary A. Burgan believes that Mr. Bennet is a failure as a father since he never really learns from his mistakes: "When Mr. Bennet's difficulties with Lydia are solved by the marriage arrangements with Wickham, he returns to his old habit of cynical inertia" (345). Moreover, Burgan claims that he "provides a rare example of a character who slips from 'round'

applies when he allows Lydia to go to Brighton. Elizabeth's plea to her father to forbid Lydia from going underlines Mr. Bennet's responsibility for the public opinion of his daughters and the way society will in turn accept the Bennet family. Mr. Bennet believes that his daughters will be judged individually, based on their own merits: "'Wherever you and Jane are known, you must be respected and valued; and you will not appear to less advantage for having a couple of – or I may say, three very silly sisters. We shall have no peace at Longbourn if Lydia does not go to Brighton" (*PP* 257). The real reasons for permitting Lydia to travel are peace and privacy. Putting his selfish need for tranquility above the preservation of the family's reputation can only backfire since, as Adam Smith argues, "private interest should be sacrificed to the public interest of [the wise and virtuous man's] own particular order of society" (277). Astutely aware of the danger, however, Elizabeth intervenes and tells her father:

> Our importance, our respectability in the world, must be affected by the wild volatility, the assurance and disdain of all restraint which mark Lydia's character. Excuse me —for I must speak plainly. If you, my dear father, will not take the trouble of checking her exuberant spirits, and of teaching her that her present pursuits are not to be the business of her life, she will soon be beyond the reach of amendment. Her character will be

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to 'flat'" (343). Anne Crippen Ruderman blames Mr. Bennet's bad behaviour on his relationship to women:

> Good manners and rules of propriety in this novel have much to do with respect for women. Mr. Bennet's improprieties, for example, are chiefly displayed in his disrespect for his daughters and especially his wife. It is the fact that he exposes his wife to the contempt of her own children that Elizabeth sees as 'reprehensible,' a 'continual breach of conjugal obligation and decorum' […]. Nor does he believe his daughters need the protection of his respect. They are 'all silly and ignorant, like other girls' […], a dismissal that makes him not bother to ever guide or restrain Lydia, makes him 'disconcert' his daughter Kitty […] and even, most cruelly mortify' his favorite Elizabeth by teasing her about Darcy. (152)

Phyllis Ferguson Bottomer provides yet another explanation for Mr. Bennet's behaviour, placing him, and most other characters in the novel, on the autistic spectrum. For more information, see *So Odd a Mixture Along the Autistic Spectrum in Pride and Prejudice.*

> fixed, and she will, at sixteen, be the most determined flirt that ever made herself and her family ridiculous. (*PP* 256)

Elizabeth sees the potential threat where Mr. Bennet does not, and she uses the bond that she has developed with him to address him on near equal terms. Although she speaks her mind, she is paralyzed and cannot do anything further. In the end, Mr. Bennet's decision reminds Elizabeth of her position in society: "with this answer Elizabeth was forced to be contented; but her own opinion continued the same, and she left him disappointed and sorry" (*PP* 257). She is dissatisfied, at once because she is not successful in changing Mr. Bennet's mind, and because her inferior position in society prevents her from minimizing harm she anticipates that her family's reputation will suffer. In fact, Elizabeth is proven catastrophically right. Indeed, pressured by the anxiety of castration, the girl "takes refuge in a fictitious male role" (16). This is an explanation Karen Horney puts forward that could apply to Elizabeth's behaviour. However, Horney is quick to remind the reader that it "is true that this attempt to deviate from her own line to that of the male inevitably brings about a sense of inferiority, for the girl begins to measure herself by pretensions and values that are foreign to her specific biological nature and confronted with which she cannot but feel herself inadequate" (Horney 17). Moreover, Susan Fraiman similarly contends with Horney that Mr. Bennet "respects Elizabeth only because she is unlike other girls. This puts his exceptional daughter in an awkward position – bonding with her father means breaking with her mother, even reneging on femaleness altogether. Elizabeth is less a daughter than a surrogate son" (171). Though this explains the fondness Mr. Bennet has for Elizabeth, it will never alter her status as the inferior

sex. Later, Mrs. Bennet rejoices in the match between Lydia and Wickham. As Merryn Williams correctly observes the "form of marriage – not its moral or emotional significance – is all that matters to Mrs Bennet, so she and Lydia congratulate themselves when Lydia finally marries Wickham (46).[67]

While conduct manuals focused on training girls into suitable matches, Leroy W. Smith reminds us that the

> women of Jane Austen's novels live in a male-dominated society in which they are inferior and dependent. This standing is imposed upon them by education and social tradition. From infancy a girl is taught to revere the male; in adolescence she discovers the economic and social foundations of male superiority. She is brought up to be subordinate, praised for being 'feminine', and offered 'advantages' for acquiescing. Playing the 'feminine' role, she finds herself in a vicious circle: the less she exercises her

[67] Mudrick emphasizes the importance of marriage for Lydia. Her status as a married women, wed even before her eldest sisters, is her only concern, the implications and problems arising before and after her marriage she does not care for:

> One of Jane Austen's triumphs in *Pride and Prejudice* is her refusal to sentimentalize Lydia (as well as Mrs. Bennet) once she has fashioned her to a hard and simple consistency. Lydia is a self-assured, highly sexed, wholly amoral and intellectual girl. When she runs off with Wickham, nothing can lower her spirits or drive her to shame – not all the disapproval of society, not the horror and shame of her family (though her mother, of course, is neither horrified nor ashamed). She has done what she wanted to do; and if her uncle or father or someone else must pay Wickham to persuade him to legalize the union, that is their worry, not hers. She is not defiantly, but simply, impenitent: she recognizes no authority to which penitence or concealment is due. If marriage is valued by some, so much the better; if, for no effort on her part, it gives her a social precedence and dignity, she will take these, though she did not ask for them and could have lived without them. (100)

Interested in the details of elopement, Susannah Fullerton provides a Georgian explanation of the consequences of Lydia and Wickham's decision to flee together: "Lydia believes they are heading for Scotland, but Wickham has a closer destination in mind – London, and its promise of anonymity. Eloping to Gretna Green was an expensive business, certainly too costly for Wickham with his shortage of ready cash" (82). The severity of their setting off together becomes more serious when Fullerton informs us about an act Parliament passed in 1698 which

> specifically prohibited 'unlawful commerce between men and women in hackney coaches.' Such a venue was often the only option for couples engaging in illicit sex. In fact, so frequently was this law broken that the commissioners who licensed coaches seriously considered removing the blinds from the windows and the cushions from the seats. As neither Lydia nor Wickham are noted for their patience or restraint, readers may easily imagine 'unlawful commerce' taking place in one or other of the coaches they travel in. (82)

The reality of their elopement, and the threat of it leading to Lydia's seduction and dishonour, are Austen's way of including important daily facts that threatened families, and by extension the nation.

> freedom to understand, the fewer resources she discovers in herself and he less she dares to affirm herself as a subject. Marriage is her chief means of support and the chief justification of her existence. As a result, getting a husband is her most important undertaking, and the disposition she makes of herself in marriage is the most critical event of her life. (144)

Smith's argument demonstrates the stages in which a woman remains bound to a man. No matter how much she wants to dissociate herself, society imposes male dominion. Similarly Lady Susan encounters many dead ends in her attempt to rule her passions as she wishes.[68]

Though mothers are not favourably portrayed, Mary Margaret Benson declares that

> the inadequate maternal figures do not set motherhood itself in a negative light. While all the novels begin with heroines in unbalanced family situations, and with dead or bad mothers, they all end with the heroines – and their future mates – on the verge of creating balanced families. All the heroines will be better mothers than their own. (n. pag.)

Order, stability and hope dominate eighteenth-century society. The Austen heroines learn to manipulate their ways into society in a positive way. The contrast between Elizabeth and Mrs. Bennet, and the way society considers them is clearly illustrated throughout the novel. Austen underscores Elizabeth's intelligence and her ability to use her mind rather than her appearance to find love, happiness and to rise in the social structure. Ultimately Elizabeth is respected by Darcy and by the people in their social circle, and she successfully circumvents the possible havoc that her mother nearly causes in her life with her unacceptable behaviour.

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[68] For Nina Auerbach, "men also create whatever strength of sisterhood we see in the novel. If at times the fight for male approval prevents cooperation among women, the mysterious power a man can also draw women together under its aegis" ("Pride" 362).

Chapter three

'*Wherever you are, you must be the lowest and last*': Abuse within the Extended Family in *Mansfield Park*

> [W]hat [Austen] requires from parents is firmly principled guidance. From children she requires submission and quiet; from young men and women, respect.
> (David Grylls 114)

> Austen is always disturbed by the exploitation of children.
>
> (Jacqueline Banerjee 23)

> … when [Captain Weston's] wife died after three years' marriage, he was rather a poorer man than at first, and with a child to maintain. From the expense of the child, he was soon relieved. […] Mr. and Mrs. Churchill, having no children of their own, nor any other young creature of equal kindred to care for, offered to take the whole charge of the little Frank soon after her decease. Some scruples and some reluctance the widower-father may be supposed to have felt; but as they were overcome by other considerations, the child was given up to the care and the wealth of the Churchills, and he had only his own comfort to seek and his own situation to improve as he could.
> (Jane Austen's *Emma* 14)

> Mimeticism is the original source of all man's troubles, desires, and rivalries, his tragic and grotesque misunderstandings, the source of all disorder and therefore equally of all order through the mediation of scapegoats.
> (René Girard 165)

During the eighteenth century, society changed its perception of children with the advent of new philosophical ideas. With the influence of Locke and Rousseau, children were no longer considered miniature adults, but fragile individuals that needed care and attention.[69] From infancy, breastfeeding was encouraged because it secured a natural bond between infant and mother; wet-nurses and bringing

[69] Locke's popularity remains constant during the century. As Babenroth notes "Richardson must have had his Locke open before him while writing *Pamela* (1740). Richardson has Pamela discuss the duties of a mother to nurse her child. Publishers' announcements from 1728 to 1791 indicate that books on child nurture were in demand" (Babenroth 37).

children up "by hand" were discouraged.[70] Education was eagerly promoted by both these philosophers: Locke believed that children are "as white paper, or wax, to be moulded and fashioned" (176) and had to be taught everything (his concept of *tabula rasa*) whereas Rousseau thought that the child was born good and corrupted by the influences of society.[71] Studying Wordsworth's portrayal of childhood, A. Charles Babenroth contends that in "the eighteenth century may be observed the beginnings of many modern conceptions in poetry as well as in politics, theology, education, and social welfare. This is especially true with respect to interest in childhood" (1). Though the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children was founded only in 1884, issues of child neglect and abuse were prominent in eighteenth-century Britain. Indeed, the Foundling Hospital was established in 1739 as a result of the high levels of infanticide,[72] and admitted its first patient in 1741. However, as the rate of child mortality dropped, and architectural innovations provided servants with separate living quarters that kept them away from children, a closer parent-child bond was developing.

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[70] For more on breastfeeding and its implications see, for instance Jacobus, Perry ("Colonizing the Breast") and Bowers ("'A Point of Conscience,'" and *Politics*). On bringing up children "by hand," see Perry and Lynd.

[71] Calvinism is also important in shaping the relationship between parent and child. The Calvinists believe that only a select few would be going to heaven, all the rest had to be in constant repentance. For more, see for instance, David Grylls's. *Guardians and Angels: Parents and Children in Nineteenth-Century Literature* (24-28).

[72] For more on infanticide see Marilyn Francus's "Monstrous Mothers, Monstrous Societies: Infanticide and the Rule of Law in Restoration and Eighteenth-Century England" and Julie Kipp's "Naturally Bad and Dangerously Good: Romantic-Era Narratives of Murderous Motherhood."

In *Mansfield Park,* Jane Austen is true to tradition and deals with the separation of mother and daughter, in addition to the emotionally detached aunt, Lady Bertram, and with the busybody Aunt Norris.[73] As a bildungsroman,

> the heroine's family background must be made known to the reader; at least a few members of the family must be present as characters in the novel; the family must be credible as the heroine's point of origin, yet must fail to guide and protect her completely, so that her coming of maturity will not lack interest. (Nardin 73)

Such is the pattern of Austen's novels.[74] The obstacles Fanny faces only temporarily impede her marrying the man she loves from the outset of the story.

In 1779, Jane Austen's twelve-year-old brother Edward accompanies his distant cousin Thomas Knight on his honeymoon with his new wife Catherine (Tomalin 25). Because Mrs. Austen had eight children to care for, one of whom was mentally handicapped, the Knights "may have thought […] that Mrs. Austen had a good deal on her hands, and she may have agreed" (Tomalin 25). Four years later, in 1783 the Knights adopt Edward. Though Mr. Austen was against this adoption, Mrs. Austen "urged for it for Edward's good" (Tomalin 37). In fact,

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[73] David Kaufmann's "Closure in *Mansfield Park* and the Sanctity of the Family" provides an interesting discussion on the circular nature of the relationship of the three Ward sisters. He claims that

> *Mansfield Park* opens with an account of the fate of three sisters, the Misses Ward, and concludes with the history of the next generation, centering on, again three sisters (in fact, if not legally). That Austen intends us to draw this parallel is clear from the choice of names: Maria Ward's eldest daughter is named Maria; her youngest sister's name is Frances (also called Fanny), and Frances's daughter – also named Fanny – becomes the third, youngest daughter of Maria's family. Oddly, the middle daughter of the first generation, who becomes Mrs. Norris, is never given a first name; the anonymity of Mrs. Norris's first name forms a curious parallel to Julia, who, though physically present, remains the *only* one who takes no part, active or passive in the crucial scene, the rehearsals for the play. In light of this […] perhaps more than idle speculation suggests that Mrs. Norris was originally Miss Julia Ward. (215)

[74] For more on the bildungsroman aspect of the novel see, Jane McDonnell's "'A Little Spirit of Independence': Sexual Politics and the Bildungsroman in *Mansfield Park*."

Edward was old enough at sixteen, to "understand and appreciate what was happening, and to keep up his contacts with Steventon; and he was fitted perfectly into the world of the Knights. They were rich, kindly and not particularly clever; and Edward was neither an intellectual nor an imaginative boy, but one with a good heart and a steady nature" (Tomalin 37). Tomalin's descriptions are reminiscent of Austen's *Mansfield Park* in which Austen's protagonist, Fanny Price, is sent off to her rich aunt in order to alleviate her mother's load.

While Mrs. Austen urges the adoption to offer Edward greater opportunities, his absence will also lighten her charge. Similarly, the narrator in *Mansfield Park* describes Mrs. Price's desperation. After eleven years of no contact between the families, for which Mrs. Norris is at fault,

> Mrs. Price could no longer afford to cherish pride or resentment, or to lose one connection that might possibly assist her. A large and still increasing family, an husband disabled for active service, but not the less equal to company and good liquor, and a very small income to supply their wants, made her eager to regain the friends she had so carelessly sacrificed; and she addressed Lady Bertram in a letter which spoke so much contrition and despondence, such a superfluity of children, and such a want of almost every thing else, as could not but dispose them all to a reconciliation. She was preparing for her ninth lying-in, and after bewailing the circumstance, and imploring their countenance as sponsors to the expected child, she could not conceal how important she felt they might be to the future maintenance of the eight already in being. (*MP* 5)

Mrs. Price's misery comes across very poignantly: she has a large family and little money to support them because her husband does not work and drinks too much. The reader pities her and is understanding of her want to seek help from her sister. Besides, her honesty, though motivated by financial troubles, successfully breaks the silence between the families.

With a tradition that begins in the fifteenth century, the following excerpt points to the habit of consigning children:

> The want of affection in the English is strongly manifested towards their children; for after having kept them at home till they arrive at the age of seven or nine years at the utmost … they put them out, both males and females, to hard service in the houses of other people, binding them generally for another seven or nine years … few are born who are exempted from this fate, for everyone, however rich he may be, sends away his children into the houses of others, whilst he, in return, receives those of strangers into his home. (Ariès 365)

Perry contends that this ancient custom continued into the eighteenth and nineteenth century, with what she calls "service-in-husbandry," whereby "adolescents hired out to work in households more or less like their own to be trained in life's tasks, develop skills, meet wider range of possible marriage partners, and earn a modest nest egg towards their own marriages" (Perry, *Novel Relations* 22-23). Samuel Richardson provides one such example with his heroine Pamela.[75] Perry describes a natural process that helps shape the child's identity and financial future. Mrs. Price, however, would much rather have one of her sons sent away and not her eldest daughter who could help with the chores around the house. Sending off a son to a wealthy relative would ensure social advancement and the opportunity of meaningful connections that would be advantageous to the whole family.[76] Sending Fanny is what Paula Marantz Cohen describes as a

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[75] Perry demonstrates this statement with her reference to Samuel Richardson:

> The heroine of Richardson's *Pamela* is in just such a phase of her life when we first meet her. Sending children out to service was still fairly common practice in all but the wealthiest classes at the beginning of the eighteenth century. This practice enabled grown children to maintain an independent existence away from their families of origin for a while, and then to return, marry late, and take over the land holdings and often the literal dwelling place of one or another of their sets of parents. (*Novel Relations* 23)

[76] In an attempt to secure Fanny's affections, Henry Crawford uses his connection to promote William Price.

> comparison to a marriage transaction as Claude Lévi-Strauss describes its function in an elementary kinship system. According to Lévi-Strauss, the exchange of women in marriage is the basic transaction by which a structured relationship between families is established, opening each family to a wider community and thus beginning the process of civilization. (671)

Due to the unfamiliar yet related nature of the families, Fanny is sent away "not *across* families but *within* her own family" (Cohen 671). Firmly rooting the family and giving the appearance of being united is a primary concern. Expanding the family to include another creates social bonds that can prove to be invaluable. A Price coming into the Bertram household will naturally lead to mutual education. When Fanny will return home (as initially planned) she will transfer what she has learned to her immediate family, thus enabling the community to grow. Sir Thomas, as the patriarch of his family, imparts the economic and emotional skills so that others can participate in public affairs. Learning to function within the family, the individual also learns how to function in the outside world. Bearing in mind Habermas's theory, a balance must be found between the private and public worlds, only then will the individual successfully integrate into society. Thus, additionally Fanny could potentially provide her family with the social skills that would contribute to further making her family respectable.

While a reconciliation amongst the sisters proves helpful to Mrs. Price, it has negative effects on the child that is uprooted. In *Mansfield Park*, Austen traces the upheaval, transfer and integration of its protagonist Fanny Price at Mansfield. Fanny's search for a home, for love, and for acknowledgment causes her emotional and physical distress. It is through the character of Fanny that

Austen represents the many manifestations of child abuse. Samuel X. Radbill begins his article "Children in a World of Violence: A History of Child Abuse" with the statement that "violence against children has been manifested in every conceivable manner: physically, emotionally, through neglect, by sexual exploitation, and by child labor" (3). Though Fanny experiences neglect, physical, and emotional abuse from everyone she meets, both at Mansfield and at Portsmouth, she suffers most at the hands of her meddlesome Aunt Norris.[77]

Fanny's abuse begins with her relocation to Mansfield Park. She is torn from her parents and siblings at the age of ten to live with her unknown aunt and uncle. Without understanding the reason for her relocation, Fanny must leave all that she knows and loves behind to enter a world much different than hers, and live with people she previously had no knowledge of. Prior to Fanny's move to Mansfield Park, Sir Thomas, however recognizes the severe responsibility that he would have: "He debated and hesitated; – it was a serious charge; – a girl so brought up must be adequately provided for, or there would be cruelty instead of kindness in taking her from her family" (*MP* 6). Indeed, while Sir Thomas understands the delicacy of the matter, he is concerned with Fanny's position at Mansfield Park and knows that proper education is crucial for a girl. Fanny's status in the family becomes an issue and she will always have to remember that she does not have the same entitlements the Bertram girls have:

> 'I should wish to see them very good friends, and would, on no account, authorize in my girls the smallest degree of arrogance towards their relation; but still they cannot be equals. Their rank, fortune, rights, and expectations, will always be different. It is a

[77] In "Mrs. Elton and other Verbal Aggressors," Juliet McMaster states: "Mrs. Norris's words to Fanny are so brutal as to constitute abuse" (83).

> point of great delicacy, and you must assist us in our endeavours to choose exactly the right line of conduct.' (*MP* 12)

Sir Thomas recognizes the need to maintain a balance and distinction between Fanny and his daughters; yet, he also acknowledges the difficulty and sensitivity of such a task. Although he seems considerate of Fanny's feelings, he nonetheless agrees with Mrs. Norris's attitude. He gives her the authority to enforce the distinction between the girls and she assures him that she will see to it that there is no confusion amongst the cousins.[78]

Since Mrs. Norris has been in charge of both Maria and Julia's education,[79] Sir Thomas expects her to share the responsibility for Fanny's upbringing as well. It was, after all, her suggestion to take her up.[80] Sir Thomas assigns this task to Mrs. Norris because Lady Bertram is unavailable to perform her maternal role. According to Randolph Trumbach, it was commonplace for a man to seek assistance from a female family member: "Although a husband might

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[78] Sir Thomas is initially oblivious to Mrs. Norris's failures, and though he orders the distinction between the cousins be reinforced, "[a]t the end, Sir Thomas appears dependent on the affections of others, most especially of Fanny" (Spacks, *Desire* 223).

[79] Tony Tanner looks at the characters of the novel and argues that Fanny, though seemingly passive, is really very much like Sir Bertram: she craves order, and stability (147). David Grylls also observes that "with parental relations – whether the children be juveniles or young people in their twenties – [Austen] comes out strongly in favour of firmness, of control and supervision; she ridicules cosseting, or even marked fondness, and condemns premature independence" (114). For more on Jane Austen and education see D.D. Devlin's *Jane Austen and Education.*

[80] In "Ordination and the Divided House at Mansfield Park" Joseph W. Donohue Jr. points to Sir Bertram's ignorance of Mrs. Norris affect on his daughters

> inconsistency inherent in Sir Thomas's view is that, while he recognizes the importance of shaping a still malleable disposition, and further recognizes the importance of vicious human influence upon his daughters, he is absolutely blind to the corrupting effect upon them of Mrs. Norris, his sister-in-law. He becomes aware only too late that Mrs. Norris's inordinate indulgence of his daughters, especially Maria, has badly warped their dispositions. Maria, under her influence, finally destroys her own character […] and Julia's escape from Maria's fate is primarily due 'to her having been less the darling of that very aunt, less flattered, and less spoilt.' (95)

Moreover, while contemporary debate on education remains inconclusive, Trumbach claims that women "had less to lose by associating with children than did men, for men drew the line of full rationality between themselves and women" (*Rise* 237).

on occasion intervene in his wife's arrangements for their children, her disappearance, whether from death, divorce, or psychic withdrawal, left him helpless. As quickly as possible he farmed out his children to a grandmother, a sister, or a sister-in-law…" (*Rise* 241). Whether or not Lady Bertram is unavailable to educate her children or whether she chooses to be a signpost of her husband's wealth and leave her inferior sister with the unwanted work is never directly stipulated in the novel. Austen informs us, however, that "[t]o the education of her daughters, Lady Bertram paid not the smallest attention. She had no time for such cares. She was a woman who spent her days in sitting nicely dressed on a sofa, doing some long piece of needlework, of little use and no beauty, thinking more of her pug than her children" (*MP* 22). This quotation underlines Lady Bertram's decorative role in the household. Austen sets Fanny up against all these adults to emphasize their deficiencies.

Austen uses mature interactions with young Fanny to reveal the true nature of adults.[81] Aunt Norris's attitude towards Fanny reveals the former's

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[81] For Lerner, however, admiration is obtained through the attention one pays to another's children. *Sense and Sensibility* is

> Austen's most direct and satirical comment on childhood […], when Elinor and Marianne Dashwood, and Lucy and Anne Steele visit Lady Middleton. Austen depicts an effective scene of conceit and adulation, whereby the Miss Dashwoods obtain Lady Middleton's 'good opinion' […], and the Steele sisters secure it through excessive doting on her children. (138)

He believes the Steele sisters win Lady Middleton's approbation by showing affection to her kids. Moreover, Lerner astutely observes that

> [m]others introduce their children into adult company through vanity; other women admire them through flattery. Elinor and Marianne […] are commended for 'sitting so composedly by'; the Miss Steeles' indulgence is at best foolish, at worst sycophantic" […]. The Miss Steeles' exaggerated behaviour makes them ridiculous, while at the same time, giving them praise and access to important social circles. (138)

Lerner depicts the conceited mother's desire for praise. Furthermore, whereas Austen's satire is directed at adults, little Annamaria Middleton's unrelenting crying also demonstrates a child's ability to manipulate them. Lerner further contends that Austen "views the struggle between child and adult as a type of the struggle between people; everyone wants what he can get, and we must be careful not to offer free gifts to anybody, child and adult alike" (139). Criticizing this self-

shrewish nature:

> Fanny has suffered greatly from a real shrew Mrs. Norris, who has been to her an embodiment of Samuel Johnson's definition of the word in his Dictionary of the English Language: 'A peevish, malignant clamorous, spiteful, vexatious, turbulent woman.' […] It is a wonderful reversal when the final catastrophe to which Mrs. Norris has so largely contributed makes of her 'an altered creature, quieted, stupefied.' In Jane Austen's revision of the stereotype, the quietness of the silent woman is recuperated as valuable. (Harris, "Silent Women" 10)

Harris points to Mrs. Norris's transformation when she learns about Maria's elopement with Henry Crawford. While the peace that ensues, as Harris claims, is the reaction that a proper woman should have, and thus, explains the silent behaviour of Lady Bertram, Mrs. Norris is primarily dumbfounded. She is shocked that her favourite niece has been jilted and her reputation tarnished. Mrs. Norris neither blames herself nor assumes any responsibility for Maria's transgression, but she blames Fanny. Sir Bertram makes Mrs. Norris pay for her wrongdoings by casting her off with Maria. It is in this instance of male superiority and power that Mrs. Norris is finally silenced.

Fanny's early journey foreshadows both the expectations demanded of her and the poor treatment of her health. No family member will escort Fanny to her new destination: "[the Prices] may easily get her from Portsmouth to town [London] by the coach, under the care of any creditable person that may chance to be going," where Fanny will meet Nanny (*MP* 8). Considering Fanny's age and circumstances, the reader can assume that she has never before traveled alone, especially for such a distance. Her age and gender contribute to the dangers of her

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serving society, Austen shows the need for balance. She points to an egotistical world, parallel to the one described above, where pride and personal advancement override modesty and greater social advancement (Lerner 138).

traveling alone.[82] Despite the fact that Mrs. Norris accompanies Fanny for some of her journey (she meets Fanny at Northampton), Fanny was "longing for the home she had left" and was crying incessantly even after meeting the family (*MP* 14).[83] According to the narrator: "[Fanny's] feelings were very acute, and too little understood to be properly attended to. Nobody meant to be unkind, but nobody put themselves out of their way to secure her comfort" (*MP* 15). Fanny feels unwanted and unwelcome and her earlier voyage with her Aunt Norris further increases her trauma:

> Mrs. Norris had been talking to her the whole way from Northampton of her wonderful good fortune, and the extraordinary degree of gratitude and good behaviour which it ought to produce, and her consciousness of misery was therefore increased by the idea of its being a wicked thing for her not to be happy. (*MP* 14)

Mrs. Norris expects Fanny to understand the opportunity that has been bestowed upon her. As such, Fanny is expected to forget about her life in Portsmouth and live happily at Mansfield. Because Fanny continues to long for her family and home, they think her inconsiderate. Her elders cannot understand Fanny's

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[82] The dangers of women traveling alone appear in numerous novels of the time. One such example can be found in Mary Hays's *The Victim of Prejudice*. In *Jane Austen and Crime* Susannah Fullerton claims that Jane Austen chooses not to deal with the dangers on traveling alone:

> Jane Austen wanted no truck with highwaymen either and deliberately excluded theft on the highway from the world of her novels. This was not because meeting a highwayman was an unlikely experience – it was quite the opposite – but because she knew that highwaymen had become a favourite image of the sentimental novelist and a standard ingredient of melodrama. (43)

Austen, therefore, differentiates herself from other writers and stays away from the overused sensationalism of such an attack (despite Harriet Smith's encounter with the gypsies).

[83] Grylls contends that independent strong children are threatening to society; they are much more loved when they are feeble:

> Winning sympathy for children was easier when, instead of admitting their independence, you depicted them as mortally injured, or starving, or writhing with fever; and if, in addition their death was the outcome of some kind of social injustice, so much the better for the potency of the effect: pity grows rankly in an atmosphere of righteous indignation. (41)

unhappiness at the opportunity that has been granted to her. Ignorant of child emotions, they anticipate Fanny to have adult knowledge and understanding of the advantages given to her. Grylls claims that

> In her treatment of parent-child relations Jane Austen is pre-Romantic. But she also displays a regard for children, a certain cautious tenderness … But in her personal fondness of children, and her occasional focus on them in her books, she was rather advanced for her time. In the majority of eighteenth-century novels … children are nullities. The formative period in the lives of the characters is dismissed in a sentence or two: the needlessness of recording it is often remarked by the authors. Jane Austen shared some of these presuppositions, but she could also at times, as with Fanny Price, enter into the mind of a child. (112-13)

Grylls nicely illustrates Austen's dichotomous relationship to children. The author originally makes Fanny the protagonist of her novel. However, Austen also deals with them in relation to adults and it is this relationship that must be understood.

Despite Mrs. Norris's initial good will in suggesting the family help their poor sister, she feels threatened when Fanny shares the world of luxury, opportunity, and power. In fact, Fanny enters Mansfield Park, less like a family member and more like the Other, whose mean education and manners are a threat to the stable and orderly world of Mansfield. In his theory of the scapegoat, René Girard contends that "[t]he victim is a person who comes from elsewhere, a well-known stranger. He is invited to a feast which ends with his lynching" (32). Fanny's inferior status is what distinguishes her from the rest of her family. While Fanny's position makes her a stranger who does not share the same lifestyle, she is nonetheless invited to feast at Mansfield and suffers for it. The Crawfords, on the contrary, who are not related to the Bertrams, and who, unknowingly bring

corruption with them, are welcomed into Mansfield and are praised for their savoir-vivre, status, and what initially is mistaken for good manners.

Aunt Norris's behaviour rests squarely on jealousy;[84] she is envious of Lady Bertram's social position and attaches herself to her so as to reap the benefits. By appropriating Lady Bertram's position and mimicking the power her status entitles her to, Mrs. Norris governs over the Bertram household. In "Lady Bertram, Mrs. Norris and Mrs. Price: Place and Moral Identity in *Mansfield Park*," Jacqueline M. Erwin considers the social status and morality of each of the Ward sisters. For her, "Mrs. Norris represents in most respects the antithesis of the static Lady Bertram" (147), whereby Mrs. Norris's story "at the outset is tinged with a poignant desperation like Charlotte Lucas's in *Pride and Prejudice*" (Erwin 147). Mrs. Norris's desperate need to marry--although she is the eldest, it is her idle sister that marries first – has her settle for Mr. Norris. Sibling rivalry ensues since, as Erwin suggests, "[u]nlike her sister whose passivity and luck engage the affections of Sir Thomas, Mrs. Norris's equal beauty results in no such

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[84]In *Desire and Truth*, Patricia Meyer Spacks looks at how Mrs. Norris manipulates power:

> Power exists where people – its agents or its objects – think it exists. Mrs. Norris, […], like Mr. Palmer [of *Sense and Sensibility*] supplies a parodic view of the novel's concerns. Self-designated organizer and expediter of Mansfield Park affairs, she tyrannizes the helpless and indulges the privileged. Her fantasies reassure her of her indispensable role. Fanny, her victim, fears and placates her. Although the narrator's dry accounts of Mrs. Norris's accomplishments alert the reader to discrepancies between her sense of her own importance and her actual achievement, the narrative also reports the degree to which she recurrently enforces her view on others. (222)

Because Mrs. Norris fancies herself vital to the proper functioning of the Bertram family, she puts herself center stage and in charge expecting to be respected by those who are inferior. However, Spacks contends that

> [w]hen actual disaster strikes […] Mrs. Norris proves altogether inadequate to it, unable to imagine new ways of consolidating her power or of using what credit she has. Even before Mrs. Rushworth elopes with Mr. Crawford, Sir Thomas has begun to see that Mrs. Norris has less good will and less meaningful force than he had previously assigned her. (222)

Once Sir Thomas returns from Antigua, he begins to see Mrs. Norris' deficient administration. As he increasingly includes Fanny into his family, Mrs. Norris sees her services, and by extent her position at Mansfield, disintegrate.

connection" (147). Envious of her sister's good fortune, Mrs. Norris remains resentful. She, therefore, constantly struggles to prove her worth, much like Fanny does throughout her stay at Mansfield, and again when she returns home to Portsmouth. For Amy J. Pawl, "[t]he similarities between Fanny and her disagreeable aunt are greater than perhaps the author has intended. As a dependent relation Fanny could conceivably become another Mrs. Norris - tolerated, not loved, struggling to find a way to feel needed" (296-97). By drawing parallels between Fanny and Mrs. Norris, Pawl brings (the rival) aunt and niece increasingly together. In this respect they are more alike than unlike each other.[85] However, Pawl continues,

> Austen seems to have done everything she could to keep the reader from seeing this identity or from sympathizing with Mrs. Norris. Through Mrs. Norris, Austen both hints at what Fanny might become, if left to languish unappreciated, and denies any such possibility by casting her as Fanny's opposite. This mirroring helps explain the excessiveness of Mrs. Norris's characterization. Mrs. Norris is a compound of projection and denial; she is the heroine's ugly Other, an old, unwanted woman, and Austen abuses her accordingly. (297)

By claiming that Austen portrays Mrs. Norris as Fanny's alter ego, Pawl poignantly represents Fanny's possible and fatal future outcome. On the other hand, Mrs. Norris is a mock figure that serves to impede Fanny's moral growth and psychological development. Still, Mrs. Norris envies Fanny because Fanny threatens the former's presence at Mansfield, and consequently, the status of a poor widow woman without protection. This rivalry, however, is not new, since "the troublesome aunt or older female companion is a staple of sentimental and

[85] For an interesting discussion of a daughter's fear of becoming like her (surrogate) mother, see or instance, Deborah D. Rogers' *The Matrophobic Gothic and Its Legacy*.

Gothic fiction (consider Emily St Aubert's aunt, Madame Montoni)" (Pawl 296). And indeed, even Austen, in her gothic satire *Northanger Abbey*, pokes fun at the convention of the female companion:

> It is now expedient to give some description of Mrs. Allen, that the reader may be able to judge, in what manner her actions will hereafter tend to promote the general distress of the work, and how she will, probably contribute to reduce poor Catherine to all the desperate wretchedness of which a last volume is capable – whether by her imprudence, vulgarity, or jealousy – whether by intercepting her letters, ruining her character, or turning her out of doors. (*NA* 12)

Austen sets up the readers's expectations only to ignore the gothic convention. Instead, she presents the villain in the character of Mrs. Norris. As the newest arrival in the Bertram household, Fanny becomes Mrs. Norris's competitor. Mrs. Norris has to maintain and ensure her position at Mansfield Park, since Fanny could attract all the attention to herself. Pawl perceptively comments that it is to Mrs. Norris's advantage that she makes sure

> Fanny remains 'lowest and last.' A childless widow, Mrs. Norris too is a single woman occupying a marginal position in the Bertram household. […] Mrs. Norris desires are like Fanny's, but the methods she uses to manoeuvre herself into the centre of the family circle are much louder and more offensive, and they ultimately result in her banishment from the paradise of Mansfield. (296)

While both share similarities, Mrs. Norris feels Fanny's presence jeopardizes her importance at Mansfield; this is why Mrs. Norris refuses to help her assimilate into the household.

In his theory of Gemeinshaft and Gesellschaft, Tönnies points to the necessity of balancing human interaction and formal transactions. Imbalance occurs, however, when one feels superior to others. This individual's struggle for

power creates a hostile and unfriendly environment that ruptures the community growth. Mrs. Norris who, "considers herself in charge of everything, entertaining herself with fantasies of control," (Spacks, *Desire and Truth* 220) gives herself more self-worth than her actions reveal her to be worthy of. She unfortunately advances the destructive Gesellschaft. While Tönnies focuses on a self-serving and power-craving society, his explanation of the society of exchange perfectly fits the situation at Mansfield Park, which has become a place of opportunity and disrespect.

Aunt Norris's cruel behaviour towards Fanny remains consistent throughout the novel, and ultimately reaches its climax when she blames the girl for Maria and Henry Crawford's elopement: "Mrs. Norris, instead of having comfort for either, was but the more irritated by the sight of the person whom, in the blindness of her anger, she could have charged as the daemon of the piece. Had Fanny accepted Mr. Crawford, this could not have happened" (*MP* 518). Mrs. Norris's illogical reasoning stems from her hatred for Fanny. The self-imposed competition Mrs. Norris has created shows the rivalry she feels towards Fanny.[86] Girard claims that "violence is the process itself when two or more

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[86] René Girard explains that there need not be a valid reason for competition to make one feel threatened:

> The blind instinct for reprisals, the stupid reciprocity which pits each one against the nearest or most visible adversary, is not based on anything specific; thus everything can converge at almost anytime, on almost anyone, but preferably at the moment of greatest hysteria. Something must trigger the incident, either accidentally or by some sign that points to a victim. A possible target need only be slightly more attractive than others for the whole group suddenly to come together in total agreement without the slightest feeling of doubt or contradiction. … Since in such cases there is never any reason for violence except everyone's belief in that other reason, who then becomes everyone's 'other.' (*Scapegoat* 86-7)

Girard here testifies to the fact that any hurtful or chaotic episode can make people gather against one person. Luckily, no one shares Mrs. Norris' blame. On the contrary, Sir Thomas turns against her even more firmly.

partners try to prevent one another from appropriating the object they all desire through physical or other means" (Williams 9). Therefore, Mrs. Norris hopes that blaming Fanny would see the latter removed from Mansfield, and Mrs. Norris could rule uninhibited. Mrs. Norris resents the girl because she must make room for her. While Fanny shares and participates (to whatever minimal extent) in the family's belongings and activities, Mrs. Norris is physically restrained and her physical presence is weakened. For instance, she refuses to have Fanny accompany them at Sotherton. Going in Lady Bertram's post-chaise only fits three (presumably Maria, Julia, and Mrs. Norris), but going in Crawford's barouche allows room for more as Edmund observes: "'There can be no objection then to Fanny's going with you; there can be no doubt of your having room for her'" (*MP* 91). Mrs. Norris's violent behaviour towards Fanny is a result of her fear of exclusion from the Bertram family. Fanny is constantly in their presence, while Mrs. Norris eventually retires to her home and is ultimately indefinitely alienated. She must prevent the Bertram family from becoming fond of Fanny, and thus, Aunt Norris constantly belittles her.

Ironically, however, Fanny does not cause Mrs. Norris harm; rather the latter brings about her downfall herself. Additionally, Jacqueline Erwin explains Mrs. Norris's miserly character through her social and financial status; because her economic deprivation is reflected through deficiency in her household, "she shapes her behavior and finally her individual identity according to the practice of frugality" (Erwin 147).[87] Mrs. Norris applies the same economy to her feelings.

[87] David Kauffman further comments: "Mrs. Norris gives up hope of marrying […], and becomes dependent upon her brother-in-law's generosity for her status, a situation that obviously

Fanny can have nothing to offer her; her aunt believes she will have a better return in the Bertram sisters. Indeed, Maria's prospective marriage to Rushworth makes her even more loved.[88] Mrs. Norris cares for no one but herself and uses her pretended interest in Sir Thomas's family to ensure she remains within it. Since the family unit represents community and furthering community is of outmost importance, Mrs. Norris, as a way of participating in it, proceeds to manipulate Sir Thomas. Juliet McMaster documents Mrs. Norris's desperate need for attention and power, whereby her

> hyperactive energy is channeled into snatching power and status like scraps from someone else's plate, when deep down she believes that the whole meal was meant for her. Since such power as she can snatch is dependent on the goodwill of her brother-in-law Sir Thomas, she must mask her hunger for power from him and Lady Bertram, disguising it as zeal for their family. ("Mrs. Elton" 83)

McMaster's analogy to food and hunger shows Mrs. Norris's avarice for power. Ironically, however, she is the one who dismantles the family by corrupting the Bertram sisters through inappropriate and deficient education. Among the manners taught, Mrs. Norris has instilled pride and conceit in her Bertram nieces. Sharing these values herself, Mrs. Norris has found allies in her nieces. For Girard, the "scapegoat effect […] mean[s] that strange process through which two or more people are reconciled at the expense of a third party who appears guilty or responsible for whatever ails, disturbs, or frightens the scapegoaters" (Williams

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aggravates her ill-tempered disposition and offends her vanity" (216). Kauffman believes that Mrs. Norris unwillingly succumbs to Sir Bertram, despite the fact that she seems to revel in every moment she could rule.

[88]According to Jane Nardin, "Like Mrs. Bennet, Mrs. Norris is a parental promoter, not a parental critic, and she also resembles Mrs. Bennet in playing favorites even among children whom she will not criticize, by apportioning the excess of her praise unfairly" (82). Mrs. Norris' predilections are obvious in her doting of Maria.

12). Mrs. Norris feels all the more powerful with formidable allies whom she has taught to look down on Fanny.[89]

Indeed, Austen portrays Mrs. Norris as an opportunistic character, controlling, eager to please, and nosy. Much like Lady Susan, she uses speech in an attempt to exercise power.[90] According to McMaster "Mrs. Norris uses speech as her weapon, and she wields it doughtily. It's notable that she goes in for monologues rather than verbal exchanges" ("The Talkers" 78).[91] With no real conversation, McMaster notes, Mrs. Norris's speeches are "shifty, aggressive, compulsive, damaging; used not to communicate truth and advance community, but to misrepresent and cut down others; and used, also, to excess" ("The

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[89] These three form an unspoken union, and join their opinions about Fanny when they would otherwise not get along or agree. The end of the story reveals the true nature of the relationship between Maria and her aunt:

> It ended with Mrs. Norris's resolving to quit Mansfield, and devote herself to her unfortunate Maria, and in an establishment being formed for them in another country […] where, shut up together with little society, on one side no affection, on the other, no judgment, it may be reasonably supposed that their tempers became their mutual punishment. (*MP* 538)

Austen reveals how the lack of feelings and judgment interfere in Mrs. Norris and Maria's peaceful co-existence.

[90] McMaster also points to Mrs. Norris's false sense of power:

> This wicked step-mother figure [Mrs. Norris] would like to enact the role of God, like Lady Catherine, but she is short of power, and that shortage rankles. Although we are never explicitly told as much, it seems that as the oldest of the three Ward sisters she had expected to retain her superior position among her siblings. ("Mrs. Elton" 83)

Mrs. Norris' self-proclaimed power has no real effect.

[91] Amy J. Pawl seconds McMaster's argument:

> Mrs. Norris's words roll out of her in torrents, unwanted yet unstoppable. Even Sir Thomas has difficulty checking their flow; she interrupts him repeatedly upon his homecoming, when he is reciting his adventures abroad. Mrs. Norris's speech seems beyond her own control, almost like some embarrassing physical debility. (297)

Pawl contends that Mrs. Norris has fancied herself in charge during Sir Thomas's absence, and she forgets her place once he has returned. Moreover, contrasting Mary Crawford's use of speech to Mrs. Norris's, Pawl ultimately concludes that both these women

> have demonstrated the unacceptability of feminine speech in two different modes. According to these models, feminine speech may be seductive yet unsound, or it may be unpleasant and uncontrolled – but either way, it is too much of a bad thing. Fanny, in contrast, could never be accused of saying too much. (298)

Fanny is surrounded by faulty feminine ideals. These two women represent the model Fanny should not emulate.

Talkers" 79). This is important in relation to Habermas's study of the public sphere since community is what he is establishing, the familial ties that form a unit within a larger one: society. Since Mrs. Norris's negativity prevents growing feelings within the family, no bond can be created with society, thus also hampering, and a reason for, the catastrophic outcomes of Maria and Julia Bertram.

Furthermore, McMaster points to the abusive relationship of Mrs. Norris and Fanny: the "pattern is that Mrs. Norris abuses, Fanny takes it" ("Mrs. Elton" 84). Mrs. Norris's one-sided conversations show how engrossed she is with herself. Fanny with time learns to ignore her and shuts her out. She, therefore, becomes almost unaffected by Mrs. Norris's comments, and finds consolation in Edmund instead, but also in Lady Bertram, for whom she is useful and in return makes her feel worthy: "eight and a half adviceless years may explain some of Fanny's affection for her. Subjected as she was to a constant stream of directives from Mrs. Norris, Lady Bertram's company must have been singularly peaceful in contrast" (Bowden 31). Fanny finds Lady Bertram a less controlling and more accepting person. In addition, the likeness between Mrs. Price and Lady Bertram serves as consolation to Fanny, both when she initially arrives at Mansfield and when she returns to Portsmouth: "Fanny was in the narrow entrance-passage of the house, and in her mother's arms, who met her there with looks of true kindness, and with features which Fanny loved the more, because they brought her aunt Bertram before her" (*MP* 436).[92] Having been away from her mother for

[92] Bowden astutely observes that Lady Bertram also communicates through letter writing (31). Her correspondence with Fanny while the latter is in Portsmouth serves as "Fanny's life-line" (32).

several years, Fanny transfers the emotions she has developed for Lady Bertram onto her mother. Thus, Fanny expects her to be like Lady Bertram and to be loved. This reflects Fanny's need for a home and her continuous strive to fit in.

Although critical debate varies about the nature of Lady Bertram's character,[93] for Bowden, Lady Bertram is not totally passive. Bowden depicts crucial periods in the novel where Austen gives Lady Bertram strident lines. In a fitting example that shows Lady Bertram's awareness of Mrs. Norris's motivated hypocrisy, Bowden claims:

> Following Mrs. Norris' discussion of her own poverty, and the necessity for retrenchment, ending, 'I *must* live within my income, or I shall be miserable; and I own it would give me great satisfaction to be able to do rather more – to lay by a little at the end of the year,' Lady Bertram replies coolly, 'I dare say you will. You always do, don't you.' (31)

Not only does Lady Bertram's comment show her to be conscious of what is happening around her, it also underlines the hostility between the two sisters: "The oyster must occasionally come out of its shell to notice what is going on around it. At least once, her remarks gain the attention of everyone in the room" (Bowden 31). Ultimately, the greatest weapon Lady Bertram has against her sister is her title and status. By remaining indolent, she succeeds in infuriating Mrs. Norris, albeit sacrificing and harming her daughters in the process.

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[93] In "Jane Austen and the Feminist Tradition," Lloyd W. Brown discusses Lady Bertram's nature in terms of parental failure; in "The Difficult beauty of *Mansfield Park*," Thomas R. Edwards, Jr. refers to her as a vegetable (56); in "Moral Integrity and Moral Anarchy in *Mansfield Park*," Joseph M. Duffy sees her as an oyster (72); in "Jane Austen's Fools," John Lauber discusses her indolence yet shows her good nature. All these critics focus on Lady Bertram's incompetence as a parent. Yet another article "Sex, Debility, and Lady Bertram: Lover or Loafer?" by Pauline Beard suggests that "Over-stimulated by sexual activity in the past, Lady Bertram's system has been undermined and debilitated; as a result, in her older, possibly menopausal years, she is capable only of lying on the sofa and caring for her lapdog, rather than fulfilling her central duty as responsible mother" (n. pag.).

Ironically, Mrs. Norris believes that she is practicing economy by helping herself to other people's possessions without their consent. In fact, Mrs. Norris's slyness almost goes undetected until the reader links her verbal attacks to her thievery. Susannah Fullerton explains that Mrs. Norris locking her spare room is odd behaviour: "'I was afraid it would be too much for her,' said Lady Bertram; 'but when the roses were gathered, your aunt wished to have them, and then you know they must be taken home' … 'unluckily, Fanny forgot to lock the door of the room and bring away the key, so she was obliged to go again'" (*MP* 85). While this is another example of Lady Bertram exposing Mrs. Norris, for Fullerton, this scene represents how

> Jane Austen well understood that there are none so quick to suspect others of dishonesty as those who are dishonest themselves. She makes Mrs. Norris an excellent example of this. The average Georgian householder took care to lock all exterior doors, but locking interior doors was not so common, unless the room contained family silver or other items of great value. Mrs. Norris is paranoid about thieves because she is a petty thief herself. (52)

Afraid of being robbed of what she has herself stolen, Mrs. Norris physically strains Fanny. In an attempt to keep attention off herself, Mrs. Norris's constant ramblings serve toward her privacy: the more annoying she becomes, the more she is ignored. Fullerton backs up her accusation by noting Mrs. Norris "frequent[ly] visits […] Mansfield and she doesn't like to go home empty-handed" (52).

Cunningly, Mrs. Norris feigns sympathy for the effect the theatricals have on Sir Bertram while she steals the curtain that served for the play. "Green baize," Fullerton informs us, "was often used to cover carpets and prevent them from

fading, or even as a cheap substitute for carpet itself" (53), and since "[n]obody's permission is asked, no offer of payment made, Mrs. Norris pinches an amount of expensive fabric that would have seen her hanged had she been caught with it as a common thief!" (53).[94] In the novel, Austen does not stress the severity of her actions, but contemporary readers would have been aware of the implications. Austen's discreet representations provide the reader with an understanding of Mrs. Norris nature. As the list of Mrs. Norris's kleptomaniacal behaviour grows, Maria, Mrs. Norris's favourite niece, "accuses Mrs. Norris of 'sponging' at Sotherton" (53). The contextual meaning of "sponging" is:

> 'to live off someone parasitically.' A 'sponging-house' was a bailiff's lodging house for debtors in his custody before their committal to prison, and 'sponging' in Jane Austen's time was a word with criminal connotations. Jane Austen wants her reader to know that Mrs. Norris' booty has not been hospitably presented, but has been acquired deviously through self-serving flattery. (Fullerton 53)

It is ironic that Mrs. Norris, widow of a parson, breaks one of the Ten Commandments. Instead of promoting stealing, as a role model for the Bertram sisters, she should be teaching them honesty and loyalty. With her motivated insincerity, Austen contrasts Mrs. Norris to Fanny. Moreover, in the theme of absent mothers, Mrs. Norris's pretend interest in her nieces is also a representation of the inadequate parental figure in the novel.

Mrs. Norris is not as warm hearted as she claims herself to be. She admits never to love Fanny as well as Sir Thomas's daughters: "I could never feel for this little girl the hundredth part of the regard I bear your own dear children, nor

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[94] This instance is reminiscent of Austen's aunt, Jane Leigh Perrot's, alleged theft of lace (Fullerton 43).

consider her, in any respect, so much my own" (*MP* 8). Moreover, she does not deliver on the promises she initially makes to have equal share of the responsibility of caring for Fanny. In fact, her actions, commanding personality, and her coldness toward Fanny are Austen's reasons for not giving this character any children of her own. Her nonexistent maternal instinct does not allow her to feel love or attachment for another being. Indeed, Erwin contends that "[r]emaining childless, she substitutes money and the activity of economy as the objects of the 'needful solicitude' which, as Austen carefully states, children would have supplied" (147). Mrs. Norris's activities fill the void that would have been filled by her own child. Even the passive Lady Bertram is in a state of agitation when Tom comes down with a fever, while Mrs. Norris cares little. On the other hand, she repeatedly boasts of her love for Maria and constantly affirms her antipathy for Fanny: "Mrs. Norris had no affection for Fanny and no wish to procuring her pleasure at any time" (*MP* 92). Mrs. Norris's sterility thus makes her selfish and prejudiced in her actions, and her hostility is marked in her words and actions.

Since Fanny is to be at all times undermined by her aunt, set apart from her cousins, and raised differently from them, what will she do, if she is not to have the same luxuries and opportunities they do? Lawrence Stone claims, much as Perry does, that "most children of all classes left home very early, between the ages of seven and fourteen, to work in other people's houses as servants or apprentices, to serve in a magnate's household, or to go to school" (6). Fanny, who is not attending school, becomes a servant and companion primarily to Lady

Bertram who "'always found [Fanny] very handy and quick in carrying messages, and fetching what she wanted'" (*MP* 22).[95] Fanny's servitude at Mansfield resembles Sir Thomas's slaves in Antigua. McMaster argues that "[s]ilent obedience is [Fanny's] portion, as the slaves in Antigua. Talk is Mrs. Norris's means of domination, and her calculated servility towards her superiors must be compensated by tyranny towards her inferiors" ("Mrs. Elton" 84). Thus, running a servant's errands, Fanny's status is inferior to Maria's and Julia's, but proves equally confusing since Mary Crawford perplexingly asks: "'Pray, is she out, or is she not? —I am puzzled.—She dined at the parsonage, with the rest of you, which seemed like being out; and yet she says so little, that I can hardly suppose she is'" (*MP* 56). Mary Crawford's cluelessness reveals Fanny's undefined status: one that promotes connections, but that simultaneously abases her. Austen, therefore, links female companionship to slavery.

Fanny is most often considered a slave to Lady Bertram, transposing Antiguan life to Mansfield Park. However, she is also considered her slave, since Fanny is what the eighteenth century called a toadeater, "a common type of humble companion" (Rizzo 41). In *Companions Without Vows: Relationships Among Eighteenth-Century British Women*, Betty Rizzo addresses the issue of possession and ownership in female relationships of companionship. As Rizzo looks at various real and fictional instances of unhealthy female friendship throughout the second part of the century, she adds an important layer of socio-

[95] For Bowden, Lady Bertram is something more "than a cardboard cutout" (32). She genuinely cares for Fanny: "Seeing Lady Bertram in this way lessens our sense of Fanny's life as constant, unrewarded servitude; the patience she displays in untangling her aunt's needlework stems not from a superhuman source, but from affection returned" (32).

cultural information. Sarah Fielding deals with this subject in *The Governess* (1749), influencing Jane Collier's very successful *An Essay on the Art of Ingeniously Tormenting* (1753). In this essay Collier provides

> careful analyses of the abuses practiced by those in power against the powerless […] Collier's satire is calculated to shame the punishers of the weak into adopting the more beneficent ways to which they were already hypocritically pretending. She begins her examination of the treatment of humble companions by wondering, since the love of tormenting is so prevalent, why more families do not take advantage of those well-educated but indigent daughters of the services and the clergy who make such splendid victims. They are, she points out to potential mistresses, much more vulnerable than servants: unlike servants, they receive no wages and are always on hand 'to receive every cross word that rises in your mind'; like servants, they must bear the insults of mistress, dogs, cats, parrots, and children, but they must bear the insults of the servants too. They are thus the ideal victims of tyranny. (Rizzo 47)

Rizzo rightly interprets Collier's observation of the multiple attacks single, powerless women suffer. While the servants may not insult Fanny, she performs the duties of one. For instance, she is made to cut the flowers and gets a headache as a result of walking the assigned distance twice in the sun. And although Lady Bertram does not insult Fanny, Mrs. Norris does so incessantly.

Mrs. Norris's status at Mansfield is also that of a companion (a toad-eater) to Lady Bertram. In fact, Mrs. Norris is a *complaisante manquée* since, she at once, serves Lady Bertram and orders Fanny. Although Lady Bertram treats Mrs. Norris far better than Mrs. Norris treats Fanny, the nature of their relationship places Fanny triply at the servant level (once as a parallel to the slaves in Antigua, next as slave to Lady Bertram, and finally as slave to Mrs. Norris). Once again, Fanny and Mrs. Norris are compared, this time in their respective status of

servant. But most importantly, their potential relationship to each other becomes clear and frightening when Sir Bertram suggests the two live together. Although his aim is to have Mrs. Norris share in the responsibility of raising Fanny, the threat that arises for Fanny is a serious one, since as previous indication has proven, her abuse will be constant.

Until the end of the novel, Fanny's status at Mansfield Park is unknown. Questioning family loyalty in late eighteenth-century England, Perry quite rightly asks "To whom did one belong – to one's family of origin or to one's conjugal or contractual family? To whom did one owe allegiance? Who had claim on one's love and obedience? With whom should one share one's resources?" (*Novel Relations* 3). Fanny's position is complicated because it is not until she returns to Portsmouth to realize for herself that she has not been missed and consequently, no one has been loyal to her, that her loyalties change and from then on she considers Mansfield her home. For Kay Torney Souter who deals with the theme of "child-stealing" in the novel, "reconsigned children become like their adoptive families as far as values go, but if they are expected to remain in their externalized positions, they never feel secure about their right to a home" (209).[96] Fanny never feels worthy and is constantly reminded of her inferiority. She stays home to keep Lady Bertram company while her cousins attend the social affairs their class entitles them to. Her integration into the family only happens at the end of the novel, when she gets approval from Sir Thomas and Lady Bertram.

[96] Austen returns to the theme of the re-consigned child in *The Watsons* (1805), where Austen shifts focus and represents Emma, who was brought up from childhood by her wealthy aunt, as she returns to her birth parents and into her biological family.

Fanny's inferior status explains the emotional abuse she suffers while at Mansfield Park. She is always reminded not to be ungrateful, not to want what her cousins have, and she is neither asked for her opinion nor does she feel entitled to providing one. This causes her a lot of pain because she feels like she is not loved, not wanted, and that she does not fit in. Mansfield Park is not a safe place for her. She fears Sir Bertram, and upon his return from the plantation the narrator tells the reader that Fanny "was nearly fainting: all her former habitual dread of her uncle was returning" (*MP* 206). She is also horrified and humiliated by the way her cousins treat her: "there was no positive ill-nature in Maria or Julia; and […] Fanny was often mortified by their treatment of her" (*MP* 22-3). Patricia Meyer Spacks agrees that

> [f]rom the point of view of Fanny Price, everyone always possesses more power than she. She readily accepts hierarchical arrangements, as eager as her cousins could be to place herself at the bottom of any conceivable social ordering of those above the class of servants. […] Her female cousins, richer, smarter, more cultivated, more beautiful than she, deserve the best the world can offer. Her male cousins will in due course rule the world. […] Fanny gets what others do not want, does what others prefer not to do. […] Fanny's apparent inability to claim the slightest authority, the most minimal rights, becomes the salient aspect of her personality. (*Desire and Truth* 218)

With only pieces left for her, Austen creates a compassionate and simple character with little expectations, but maternal affection. She longs for her home in Portsmouth where she believes she will get the love she deserves. Bernard Paris claims that

> [c]onstitutionally feeble to begin with, Fanny has no chance to be her own person in the chaotic, competitive, unsympathetic milieu of the Price household. She subordinates herself entirely to others in the hope of gaining some scrap of love, praise, consequence, and

> protection. What is at issue is not whether Fanny will be able to grow, but whether her self-sacrifice will be appreciated. (37)

While Paris is right about Fanny's need for validation, he limits her worth to self-sacrifice, ignoring the fact that she has grown. Her relationship with Crawford further proves this growth. Upon her return to her rightful family, Fanny hopes that she and her mother will "soon be what mother and daughter ought to be to each other" (*MP* 428).

Fanny's craving for maternal affection and care and her certainty that she will find her place in her original home are the factors that get her through the most difficult times at Mansfield. But once at Portsmouth, her mother's initial interest in her subsides; "[t]he truth is while the child *wants* to believe her mother loves her unequivocally, she can live with disappointment at finding out it is not so. What is most necessary is that the child feel her mother is for real, *authentic*. It is better to learn as early as possible that while mother loves us, it is not to the exclusion of everything or everyone else" (Friday 8, author's emphasis). Having made progress and adjusted to the life at Mansfield, Fanny upon her return to Portsmouth faces the same challenges she encountered at the outset at Mansfield. She must give up the attention she needs from her mother to her brothers, and especially her older brother William, the one she too loves the most. She must prove herself worthy all over again in a place where she believed she would be accepted and freely loved. She soon realizes, however, that Portsmouth is no longer her home, and though she is not totally at ease at Mansfield, it is there she wishes to return:

> Easter came – particularly late this year, as Fanny had most sorrowfully considered, on first learning that she had no chance of leaving Portsmouth till after it. It came, and she had yet heard nothing of her return – nothing even of the going to London, which was to precede her return. Her aunt often expressed a wish for her, but there was no notice, no message from the uncle on whom all depended…it was a cruel, a terrible delay to her. (*MP* 498-9)

Sir Thomas wants Fanny to realize the usefulness of a rich husband. By sending her to Portsmouth, Sir Thomas hopes to check her ingratitude and make her realize the disorderliness, but also the difficulty of living poor. While Fanny is unhappy at Portsmouth, she does not succumb to Crawford's proposal. Although staying exhausts her patience and her nerves, Fanny hopes and waits to be called back to Mansfield Park – a place where she was also physically abused. McMaster concedes that

> [s]poken language takes on almost physical force. Fanny, at least, shrinks physically from the 'shock' of the verbal 'attack' of Tom and the others when they want her to take part in the play … she is struck speechless and breathless by Sir Thomas's address about Henry Crawford. No one would deny that Fanny suffers verbal abuse at the tongue of her aunt Norris. In Fanny's case, verbal abuse is very close to being physical abuse. ("The Talkers" 78)

Indeed, the closest instance of physical abuse Fanny suffers is when she is made to work under the sun. Edmund exclaims when he hears Lady Bertram and Aunt Norris discuss Fanny's activities of the day: "'What!' cried Edmund; 'has she been walking as well as cutting roses; walking across the hot park to your house, and doing it twice, ma'am? – No wonder her head aches'" (*MP* 85). Though Lady Bertram shows some concern for Fanny's well being, as she has to travel twice, the beauty of the roses is much more important than her health. The result is a headache that Aunt Norris blames on Fanny's lack of exercise and on Lady

Bertram's insistence that Fanny cut the roses. The danger to her health is an important one since her gentle state is not used to such exertions.

Fanny is constantly placed in intolerable conditions: she is also made to suffer cold temperature. Thus, another instance of physical abuse becomes known when Sir Thomas enters Fanny's room for the first time in eight years (after his return from the plantation) and notices that she does not have a fire in her room.[97] He reveals a softer side, more humane side when he remarks: "'[y]our aunt Norris has always been an advocate, and very judiciously, for young people's being brought up without unnecessary indulgencies; but there should be moderation in every thing'" (*MP* 361). He is ashamed at Mrs. Norris's severity, and he justifies her actions: "'[s]he is also very hardy herself, which of course will influence her in her opinion of the wants of others'" (*MP* 361). Though Sir Thomas seems to provide an excuse for Mrs. Norris's cruelty, he emphasizes Fanny's frail condition. This, then, becomes another important example of the physical abuse Fanny suffers at the hands of Mrs. Norris. Not only does she withhold comfort from Fanny, but the former also endangers Fanny's life. Fanny is of weak disposition and she could have caught a cold and died from Mrs. Norris negligence. Though Sir Thomas is disappointed with his visit with Fanny, he does not allow his anger to prevent such an important necessity. More importantly, he

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[97] According to Avrom Fleishman,

> though the novel does not develop Sir Thomas's experience in Antigua, a personal consequence of his voyage suggests that it was a profound one. After his return, he shows a marked change of temperament, pre-eminently in his relations with Fanny but also in his awareness of the failings of in his establishment – particularly the baleful influence of Mrs. Norris…Though he had formerly joined her in abasing Fanny because of her class origins, now he treats Fanny as a favorite child. (38)

Sir Thomas has returned from Antigua a changed man, one that recognizes Fanny's moral goodness, and his daughters' lack of morals.

does not use it as leverage to get Fanny to marry Henry Crawford. This shows his superiority and good character.

What begins as a temporary stay becomes a permanent residence for Fanny Price. She enters into an unwelcoming world that proves challenging for its own inhabitants, and though she does not remain unscarred, she manages to marry the man she loves. Fanny is a realistic character, very human, not only because of her psychological weaknesses, but because she grows into an individual despite the abuse she suffers.[98] At a time when individualism is on the rise and a person's personality is increasingly respected, Lawrence Stone reminds us that at the end of the eighteenth century there is a need to respect individuals (224). In any case, interest in the individual takes longer to arrive at Mansfield Park. In spite of the fact that Fanny is constantly put in her place and continuously criticized for her lack of education, she proves to be more worldly than members of the upper class. She understands the basic human needs that Habermas stresses in his argument for the success of the public sphere. She respects, even if it is from fear, her elders, people's feelings, and her inferior status.[99] She does not "make exaggerated demands for obedience" (Stone 224) to anybody, yet they are made

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[98] Marian Fowler depicts Fanny as a conduct manual example:

> [The character] of Fanny Price was created in the years 1811-13 when the Evangelical movement was reaching its height. … By 1811, the year in which *Mansfield Park* was begun, the rising tide of Evangelical piety and propriety had affected the concept of the courtesy-book girl, and certain Evangelical ideals had been added to the earlier eighteenth-century ones. Fanny Price is not merely an old-fashioned courtesy-book girl according to the eighteenth-century prescription; she is very much a modish young lady exemplifying Evangelical concepts current at the time of her creation. (154)

[99] Claudia Johnson asserts that

> Turn-of-the-century female conduct books copiously demonstrate that the extreme physical delicacy which Trilling considers so distressing and so striking in Fanny is the most conventionally feminine thing about her. Far from being considered a feature of Christian virtue in general, which all mankind, including Sir Thomas and Edmund, should cultivate, it is a quality exclusively recommended to daughters of good families. (*Jane Austen* 95)

of her; she does not “manipulate or coerce the individual beyond a certain point in order to achieve social and political ends,” (Stone 224) yet she is urged to marry Henry Crawford. Fanny better understands the upper class world than its own people do. Whether prig or paragon, Sir Thomas wishes his own children were more like her.

Chapter four

Appropriate Decorum: Abuse within the Public Sphere

> Jane Austen, Charlotte Smith, Frances Burney, Eliza Parsons, and Anna Maria Bennett, among many others, remain acutely aware of the economic perils that threaten their heroines in their progress to their destined 'heaven on earth'
>
> (Edward Copeland 59-60)

> Some years ago, the Leicester historian Alan Everitt invented the word pseudo-gentry as a helpful substitute for the word bourgeois, having in mind the latter's misleading overtones. […] The pseudo-gentry were 'pseudo' because they were not landowners in the same sense as the gentry and aristocracy were. They cannot be said to have owned landed estates. But they were gentry of a sort, primarily because they sought strenuously to be taken for gentry. They devoted their lives to acquiring the trappings of gentry status for themselves and especially their children: the schooling, the accent, the manners (from style of conversation to dressing for dinner), the sports, the religion, the habit of command, the large house in its own grounds, servants, carriages and horses, appropriate husbands and wives, and, last but not least, an appropriate income, which Jane Austen called 'independence,' that most desirable of all social states. In short they had a sharp eye for the social escalators, were skilled in getting on them, and (what was more important) no less skilled in staying on them. They were adept at acquiring what the economist Fred Hirsch has aptly called 'positional goods'— those scarce services, jobs, and goods which announce social success. In this they helped to inaugurate a 'positional competition' inevitably more widespread than that indulged in by landowners, which has set the style for all modern societies, once those societies achieve a certain level of wealth and enterprise sufficient to feed the voracious appetite for positional goods.
>
> (David Spring 60-61)

Fanny Price is on the receiving end of abuse, but women like Lady Catherine, Marianne, Emma and Isabella Thorpe are handing it out. Abuse is not limited to the nuclear and extended family; it is equally important in society. As neglect and exploitation move out of the family and branch into the public sphere, women no longer suffer only at the hands of their family protectors, but they are also at the mercy of the population at large. Women thus have a double strain: they must abide by the patriarchal conventions, as well as struggle within a further

unwelcoming matriarchal society.[100] Major characters such as Lady Catherine de Bourgh (*Pride and Prejudice*), Emma Woodhouse (*Emma*), and minor ones like Marianne Dashwood (*Sense and Sensibility*), and Isabella Thorpe (*Northanger Abbey*) use their social status, ego, and age to impose their superiority on other women. Although others could be added to this list (Mrs Jennings, and Mrs. Churchill, for instance),[101] my choice is not limited to a particular social class. Rather, I would like to demonstrate that abuse amongst women was omnipresent at the time, independently of one's status.[102]

During Austen's time, women had limited options for work available to them. Despite minor or no social and economic recognition that interferes with their livelihood, they still need to survive. As a female writer, Austen was very class conscious. Her family roots, her neighbourhood, and her connections presented her with people with different characteristics. She was an astute observer and participant in a tumultuous time of war, death, fear, and uncertainty, but also of loyalty, pride, and patriotism.[103] Moreover, with the influences of the

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[100]Mary Waldron believes Knightley to be of the patriarchs who require order:

> Was he [John Knightley] attracted by the presumed thirty thousand pounds? Or does he simply prefer a silly wife, though, we have to believe, a 'man of sense'? Toward the end of the novel we begin to suspect the latter, for his approval of his brother's engagement to Emma is very qualified. Though we are never given the exact grounds for his reservations, there can be no other explanation than that he believes that women should be ruled by men and that his brother will have difficulty in governing Emma. (464)

[101] Karen Stohr offers a good reading of Mrs. Jennings' duplicitous nature and her "sterling moral character" (384).

[102] Tita Chico suggests an alternative reading in which social class is a necessary component of women's relationships: "Women […] can *have* intimacy with each other if it is socially sanctioned. Without a coordination of rank and roles, intimacy between women is impossible" (208, author's italics). Chico is promoting the very structure that is in place: one that allows women to abuse each other. A consciousness of status that needs to be approved of by a patriarchal community, which for itself wants a containment of women, creates further divide, not unity.

[103] Austen's brothers were in the navy and thus, the family was directly influenced by the course of events. For more on Austen and the war in France, see Warren Roberts's *Jane Austen and the French Revolution*.

Enlightenment, and sensibility, and the rise of equal rights, Austen's characters present traits of the many influential literary, social, and political debates engaging England at the time.

The French Revolution became in part about the individual. With increasingly liberating information that provided women with tools and encouragement to participate in the public sphere, men needed to keep women in their "assigned place."[104] However, Wollstonecraft, among others, presented an alternative to female dependency: "I wish to persuade women to endeavour to acquire strength, both of mind and body, and to convince them that the soft phrases, susceptibility of heart, delicacy of sentiment, and refinement of taste, are almost synonymous with epithets of weakness" (9). Wollstonecraft's use of the oxymoronic "strength" would have shocked the population. Her arguments run counter to the ideas promoted by contemporary conduct manuals, which instead served to tame woman's rebelliousness: "they urged her to learn how to control and, if possible, eradicate her desires, especially those of independence, close female friendship, personal wealth and involvement in power" (Todd, "Introduction" xiv). According to Todd, women were discouraged from any type of power and control; this included female friendship that may encourage rebellion. As a result, Wollstonecraft uses the same vocabulary these books

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[104] A woman's place required her to show little intellectual thought. In "Men of Sense and Silly Wives," Mary Waldron remarks that

> [p]art of the reason for Austen's qualified approval of Gisborne may be his rejection of imbecility as the best property in the marriage market. But – and here Austen may have perceived a contradiction that militated against 'Nature and Probability' – a girl was not encouraged, even by Gisborne and [Hannah] More, to push herself, to use her knowledge to attempt to exercise power. She must be able to join in conversation when required, but to leave leadership to the men. Emma has offended against this ideal in several ways, and Mr. Knightley is deeply dissatisfied with her. (141)

employ to display their manipulation. Although these manuals by James Fordyce (1766) and John Gregory (1774), for instance, circulated before the French Revolution, they were particularly popular in the late eighteenth century. While these volumes tried to preserve patriarchy, they simultaneously, however, created divisions within female society. Some women remained subservient to men (as depicted by Fanny Price), others to women (Anne Eliot), and others still defended their individual rights to those who claimed superiority over them (Elizabeth Bennet and Emma Woodhouse).

Although class is a crucial reason for women to disrespect other women, morality is an equally dangerous influence. Patricia Meyer Spacks cleverly combines them both to depict the root of power:

> [n]ot only do men, […] possess a kind of power unavailable to women. Women too, given sufficient unscrupulousness or moral blindness, can make others do their will. Edward Ferrars's mother, a bully by virtue of her money and age, provides one case in point, Lucy Steele another. (*Desire and Truth* 216)

Spacks draws attention to the power some women exercise, whether they be authoritarians, like Lady Catherine de Bourgh, Mrs. Ferrars, Mrs. Churchill, or brutes like Mrs. Bennet, Mrs. Jennings, and Mrs. Norris. Spacks's main point, however, is to draw attention to the lack of morality (in various degrees) of all these women.

Sentimental fiction addressed the intense human feelings and emotions but it also attracted much philosophical debate. The two philosophers David Hume

and Adam Smith, for instance, were interested in feelings and human actions. Hume concluded, and Smith elaborated on, the idea that sentiment is the primary source of all moral judgments (Brissenden 53). Thus, acting on feeling can potentially threaten the proper functioning of society. One such example can be found in *Sense and Sensibility,* Austen's first published novel, which participates in the sentimental tradition. Indeed, Marianne Dashwood is Austen's earliest attempt at sensibility.[105] Despite, however, Marianne's high sensitivity to her surroundings, she has little respect for appropriate decorum and other people's feelings. Ultimately, she comes out of her suffering aware of her erroneous ways. William Wandless rightly claims that "[a]lthough [Marianne] performs all the rites of sentimentality early in the novel, her suffering affords her a vantage from which she may observe and regret her prior excesses. Virtue, she learns may not always be "equated with feeling" (67). Conducting oneself with "the principles of morality" (*OED*, def. 2), has little to do with emotions, since doing what is right may go against one's feelings. Indeed, Marianne reacts passionately in her relationship with Willoughby, yet she follows no decorum. Marianne must come to terms with social reality. Her love for Willoughby does not allow for purity since acts of kindness and goodness are what should determine it.

Furthermore, Marianne refuses to be diplomatic in her relationships with other members of her surroundings. Believing this to be hypocrisy, Marianne judges herself justified in her impolite and selfish attitude towards her

[105] For more on sensibility, see Inger Brodey's "Adventures of a Female Werther: Jane Austen's Revision of Sensibility" where she contends that "Marianne Dashwood [is] a female counterpart to Werther" (114), demonstrating Austen's "affinities with the culture of sensibility and her domestication of its extreme forms" (114).

acquaintances: "if there had been any real impropriety in what I did, I should have been sensible of it at the time, for we always know when we are acting wrong, and with such a conviction I could have no pleasure" (*SS* 80). Marianne's feelings guide her in her moral judgments. Elinor, however, is concerned with the social consequences of improper decorum Marianne exhibits, and attempts to minimize any damage committed by her sister. Spacks perceptively compares the siblings:

> Elinor […] possesses not only a highly developed sense of privacy but marked sensitivity to social norms. She accepts the responsibility of covering up Marianne's violations of decorum, conducting gracious exchanges with vulgar Mrs. Jennings while Marianne remains tangled in her own fantasies, creating conversations with the Steele sisters while Marianne ignores them, trying to atone to Colonel Brandon for Marianne's neglect. (*Privacy* 112)

Elinor intervenes as a way of making her sister's behaviour go unnoticed.[106] Doing so points to Elinor's disapproval of her behaviour. Thinking herself above and beyond others makes Marianne abusive. She is not secluded in society and though Mrs. Jennings's vulgarity is in itself indecorous, Marianne's is not justified.

Ferdinand Tonniës's theory of Gesellschaft explains the isolation Marianne creates for herself in terms of community advancement. For him, Marianne's, like Mrs. Norris's, self-imposed importance and negative attitude make her selfish. She does not advance the human relationship bonding that is the basis of Gemeinschaft. Rather, Marianne is exemplary of impersonal, tense and negative transactions. She snubs those she feels are intrusive, thus selectively choosing with whom to associate. Trapped by decorum, even Elinor cannot ask

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[106] For more on sibling relationships, see for instance, Sarah Annes Brown's *Devoted Sisters: Representations of the Sister Relationship in Nineteenth-Century British and American Literature.*

Marianne about the nature of her relationship with Willoughby, as Spacks cleverly argues:

> No crowds beset Elinor and Marianne in Devonshire, but Austen makes it clear that even a tiny society can threaten privacy. Mrs Jennings wants to know everything about everyone; Sir John assumes the availability to view of every romance and all desire. For Marianne, other people's prying impulses hardly matter while her relationship with Willoughby proceeds as she would have it. Everyone can see, everyone is free to know. If some – notably her sister – disapprove of her behavior, that fact does not matter either. Locked in her solipsistic love (Willoughby, she believes, duplicates her every thought and feeling), Marianne finds the rest of the world irrelevant. She neither conforms to established social standards nor cares about conformist social judgments. Her risk-taking denies the force and relevance of community. (*Privacy* 116)[107]

Motivated by her own selfish desires, Marianne sets herself apart from others. Her refusal to participate in community growth and proper functioning of society threatens its stability and, until she realizes her mistake as she later does, she will have to be removed from it.

Marianne's power also has potentially negative consequences for Elinor. Marianne pursues her feelings and her life regardless of the stigma her actions can leave on their reputation. Marianne's excessive feelings are dangerous even though

> Austen was not thinking [of] specifically physiological terms when she wrote *Sense and Sensibility*; but she had a clear realisation that for a young woman to over-indulge her feelings or to be unwisely generous (a word with both erotic and pecuniary connotations) could lead to disastrous consequences of an undeniably sexual nature. (Brissenden 78)

[107] Austen contrasts Elinor who cannot ask her sister about her relationship with Willoughby, to characters like Mrs. Jennings, Mrs. Ferrars, or the Steele sisters who have no problem asking. This shows Elinor's superior delicacy and the others' vulgarity.

Marianne's behaviour directly affects Elinor since loose morals were perceived to be a sign of loose sexual behaviour. Elinor, however, fearing Marianne has not been acting decorously, adopts the maternal role and urges Mrs. Dashwood to ask Marianne about her relationship with Willoughby.

Spacks addresses the crucial subject of manners. Conduct books provided women – and men – with lists of proper behaviour etiquette. In "Apppearing Respectful: The Moral Significance of Manners," Sarah Buss links proper manners to morality (795). She claims that "the most important lessons in manners are the lessons in how to avoid being discourteous, impolite, rude, inconsiderate, offensive, insulting […]. [S]omeone who floats these lessons behaves in a manner that is immoral and impolite" (795-6). By emphasizing that proper interaction and behaviour are indicators of one's morality, Buss contradicts Immanuel Kant who rejects any relation between moral duty and politeness: "I am not bound to venerate others (regarded merely as men), i.e. to show them positive reverence. The only respect which I am bound to by nature is that for the law generally (*reverere legem*)" (133). Kant shows allegiance to the law and disregards human respect. Buss adapts Kant's opinion arguing that "acknowledging a person's intrinsic value – treating [him/her] with respect – also requires that one treat [him/her] politely (considerately, respectfully)" (797). Thus Mrs. Bennet, Mrs. Norris, Marianne Dashwood and Isabelle Thorpe are morally deficient. One of Marianne's flaws is her sensibility. The author of an 1812 unsigned review of *Sense and Sensibility* in the *Critical Review* portrays Marianne as sensible as Elinor, but with "an immoderate degree of sensibility which renders

her unhappy on every trifling occasion, and annoys everyone around her" (*Critical Heritage* 36). In fact, the anonymous author believes Marianne's "sensibilities are all in the extreme" (36). Likewise, Sir Walter Scott, in his unsigned review in the *Quarterly Review* of March 1816, describes Marianne as a young lady whose "influence of sensibility and imagination predominate" (*Critical Heritage* 64). Indeed, after Marianne recognizes her extreme behaviour, she is able to re-enter society. As Wandless claims, "Austen, through the depiction of Marianne, approaches sensibility as a habit to be outgrown. If it can never be fully put aside, it must finally be tempered by reflection and reason" (67). Thus, having Marianne control her emotions is crucial to stabilizing society. At a time when the war with France threatens any and all stability, controlling women's sexuality is a way of providing a sense of consistency and loyalty.

Privacy is another subject that involves the respect of human boundaries. With the rise of individualism came the need for confidentiality. Privacy is multifaceted and includes both concrete and abstract limits. One concrete example of privacy is that houses were being designed differently creating a personal space for every member of the family, including a separate room for servants. Imagined limitations begin to exist between individuals as well, one example being conversation. Austen uses conversation between characters to explore the boundaries of human relationships. Gregg Stovel and Lynn Weinlos Gregg make the following important point:

> [c]onversation is all-important in Jane Austen's novels. The ways in which a given character speaks is our main source of knowledge about the character; changing speech habits chart her protagonists' growth, just as the unchanging speech of other characters reveals a

> comic inability to change. Her heroines continually judge others by the way they speak. (xvii)

Stovel and Gregg point to the ground-breaking narrative Austen uses to introduce information. Indeed, Marianne says little, but what she does tell Elinor reveals her egocentric desire to live in the fantasy she creates for herself, outside social expectations. While Elinor respects her sister's privacy and uses conversation wisely, Lady Catherine de Bourgh of *Pride and Prejudice*, however, despite her claims to the gentry, does not.

Lady Catherine de Bourgh's social status and wealth allows her a certain *aisance*. Wickham describes Lady Catherine as having "the reputation of being remarkably sensible and clever; but I rather believe she derives part of her abilities from her rank and fortune, part from her authoritative manner, and the rest from the pride of her nephew, who chuses that every one connected with him should have an understanding of first class" (*PP* 94). Class and wealth are not Lady Catherine's *only* explanations for her austere actions: Darcy, like Sir Thomas, endorses her behaviour. She gets her power from her nephew, but he could just as easily take it away. While Darcy's decision to marry Elizabeth goes against Lady Catherine's wishes, he believes that despite Lady Catherine's "unjustifiable endeavours to separate" (*PP* 423) them, she will in time come around to their union. His power and influence are too strong to make it otherwise. In fact, even Mr. Bennet advises Mr. Collins to shift his loyalty towards Darcy: "if I were you, I would stand by the nephew. He has more to give" (*PP* 424).[108] In fact, in *Desire and Truth*, using fathers as representatives of

[108] Darcy's influence extends to Bingley, who does not marry Jane until Darcy approves the union.

patriarchal power, Spacks contends that "[f]or women, there is no escaping fathers. Even 'feminized' males, unambitious, unaggressive, reveal the fundamental arrogance of the masculine position" (206). All men recognize and take advantage of the power they have. Women's actions are limited to the actions of their fathers and their husbands. The Dashwood ladies's future, for instance, rests in Mr. Dashwood's hands even after his death. Consequently, a woman's life is defined by her attachment to a man or in other words: "the period of protracted waiting is not a probationary interim before life begins: waiting for a male is life itself" (Auerbach, *Communities* 40).

In *Communities of Women*, Nina Auerbach shows how previous research by feminists, such as Elizabeth Janeway, claims that malice and disloyalty within a community of women are likely since women look for approval from men. Similarly, Lady Catherine's assault on Elizabeth reveals the former's attempts to show that her subsistence is never in danger, but she believes that her family's reputation is threatened by Darcy's union to Elizabeth.[109] Lady Catherine expects her status to command respect, and her orders to be obeyed. When Elizabeth Bennet stands up to her, the former breaks the cycle of abuse that women of privilege perpetuate. Elizabeth, without being disrespectful, but very shrewish,[110] lets this matriarch know that she cannot wield her power undauntedly. Lady Catherine cannot rule the lives of others no matter how much the consequences of

[109] Devoney Looser also contends that women collectively promote male interests: "Austen's novels illustrate with painstaking detail the ways that unscrupulous women compete in a society configured to advance the legal and economic interests of men" (583).

[110] Jocelyn Harris in "Silent Women, Shrews, and Bluestocking: Women and Speaking Jane Austen," asks if Elizabeth Bennet is "a shrew?" and concludes that "[h]umility redeems the potential shrew" (12-13).

these actions will transgress social lines (albeit both Darcy and Elizabeth are the children of gentlemen).

Her interview with Elizabeth violates the laws of privacy. In *Privacy*, Spacks makes the important statement that "[c]onversation is a form of relationship, not just a form of speech" (115). Instead of conversing like equals do, Lady Catherine talks[111]; she demands Elizabeth's obedience and forbids her cheekiness.[112] However, through her effort at conversation, Lady Catherine presents her concerns of class mobility. Austen uses this controlling matriarch to address the issues of marriage. From education, to the younger sisters's statuses (Lady Catherine believes they are too young to be out in society), to Elizabeth's pretentiousness for wanting to marry above her class, as well as her refusal to promise never to accept Darcy, Lady Catherine brings contemporary topics to the forefront. She makes indiscreet criticism, questions and observations, and tries to impose her own demands on Elizabeth. By trying to promote her own interests, Lady Catherine tramples on Elizabeth's. Spacks claims that "[c]onversation [much like privacy] raises issues about the relation between interests of a community at large and those of the individuals it includes (*Privacy* 115). While Elizabeth's contemporary world clashes with that of Lady Catherine's, which

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[111] For more on talk as asserting superiority, see for instance Bruce Stovel's "Asking Versus Telling: One Aspect of Jane Austen's Idea of Conversation."

[112] Burrows studies speech patterns and discovers the resemblances between Austen's characters that fit into specific categories:

> [o]f all Jane Austen's major characters, […] Elizabeth Bennet and Emma Woodhouse speak most like each other […]. There are close resemblances between authoritarians as Sir Thomas Bertram and Lady Catherine de Bourgh and, on the other, among such vulgarians as Mrs Bennet, her daughter Lydia, Lucy Steele, and Isabella Thorpe. (9)

It is important to note that Lady Catherine uses a patriarchal vocabulary.

represents the old order with defined behaviour and social class, both these women participate in the same ordered community.

Furthermore, tone, hypocrisy and *double entendres* affect discussion. Hypocrisy adds an additional layer of meaning in conversation:

> Conversation as a social mode lends itself readily to hypocrisy – that by now familiar issue profoundly implicated with privacy. Indeed, early manuals of conversation suggest the possibility that conversation in its very nature constitutes a codified species of hypocrisy. Such manuals, which flourished from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century, tacitly or explicitly emphasize artifice. They understand conversation as one among many social activities, governed like the others by endlessly elaborated rules, *rules* that in this instance bear at least as heavily on men as on women. (Spacks *Privacy* 116, my emphasis)[113]

Spacks refers to the deceitful conduct manuals that instruct women how to act, dress and talk. Austen herself acknowledges their deception,[114] but Spacks stresses the importance of both male and female participation in hypocrisy. Both can make use of language deceptively to advance their individual purposes. Wickham, Willoughby, and Sir Walter Eliot, for instance, use deceit to further their ends, while Charlotte Lucas and Lucy Steele use their wiles to make suitable marriages. Lady Susan uses her wit to get out of sticky situations. Likewise, Marianne Dashwood refuses to be a hypocrite and ignores those she chooses. Conversation, therefore, when hypocrisy is involved, is self-serving and promotes that individual's improvement, success and goal. Spacks defines the rules of conversation as those which "essentially locate the art of conversation as a subcategory of the art of pleasing, that important attribute of men – and even

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[113] For an interesting study on manners and hypocrisy, see for instance Jenny Davidson's *Hypocrisy and the Politics of Politeness: Manners and Morals from Locke to Austen*.

[114] One instance of Austen's dissatisfaction with the constraint conduct books impose is depicted in the scene where Mr. Collins reads from James Fordyce's manual in *Pride and Prejudice*.

more emphatically of the lady. Pleasing requires self-suppression, self-manipulation, the assumption that effects matter more than their causes" (*Privacy* 116). For Spacks, conversation requires people to be pleasant and as a result artful. Indeed, the nature and morals of a young lady can be determined through verbal exchange. However, since conversation is deceptive because it can aim to please through manipulation, a woman, like Lady Susan, for instance, can present herself as she wishes to be perceived. Conversation between women is equally important in the friendships of Emma Woodhouse and Harriet Smith, and Isabella Thorpe and Catherine Morland.

Most specifically in *Mansfield Park* amongst all of her novels, Austen addresses the issue of female companionship. The *OED* documents Horace Walpole as being the first to use the term toadeater in 1742: "[a] fawning flatterer, parasite, sycophant" (*OED* def. 2a), much like Aunt Norris. A second part to this definition appears in 1744 where a toadeater is also "[a] humble friend or dependant; spec. a female companion or attendant" (2b), similar to Fanny Price, Harriet Smith, or Catherine Morland. Its derivative toady, that becomes popular after the 1820s combines the above definitions of a toadeater. These terms are important when we become aware of the increasing importance of female friendships among women.

Although Austen never used the above terms, the relationships between her characters illustrate the threat of the dependency of female companionship. Harriet is Emma's toady; Isabella tries to make Catherine her own. Emma runs her home, controls her father, and believes her influence extends to the rest of her

neighbourhood[115]. Her influence is especially great on Harriet: "a Harriet Smith, therefore, one whom she could summon at any time to walk would be a valuable addition to her privileges … Harriet would be loved as one to whom she could be useful" (25). Harriet could be useful to Emma, so far as Emma can shape her and make of her whom she pleases. Emma takes her under her wing, when her obscure birth would keep her on the margins of the community, and thus allows Harriet to aim for higher aspirations.[116] Although Harriet's initial love interest is Robert Martin, Emma connivingly has Harriet reject him. But this backfires when Harriet sets her sights on Knightley. Emma is a puppeteer in Harriet's life and Knightley reproaches Emma for encouraging Harriet to hope for a relationship beyond her social circle.

Emma's ultimate reprimand from Knightley comes when she insults Miss Bates. This popular scene at Box Hill is a way for Emma to affirm her power: "much of [Emma's] unpleasantness can be attributed to her consciousness of

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[115] Marilyn Butler points to Emma's position of power:

> Emma is healthy, vigorous, almost aggressive. She is the real ruler of the household at Hartfield – in her domestic ascendancy she is unique among Jane Austen's heroines. She is also the only one who is the natural feminine leader of the whole community. Every other Austen leading lady is socially neglected or discounted. It is a misreading of Emma's character to say that she grasps the power, for she neglects rather than exploits the opportunities at Highbury. Jane Austen's purpose in giving her an exceptionally unfettered social position is rather to leave her free to act out her willful errors, for which she must take entire moral responsibility. (250-74)

Butler depicts Emma as a character seeking moral development. For her, Emma could not grow or learn if she were constrained by patriarchal conventions. Nonetheless, Austen's other heroines grow despite their restrictions.

[116] Marvin Mudrick takes a closer look at Emma's relationship to Harriet:

> Emma's interest in Harriet is not merely mistress-and-pupil, but quite emotional and particular: for a time at least – until Harriet becomes slightly resentful of the yoke after Emma's repeated blunders – Emma is in love with her: a love unphysical and inadmissible, even perhaps indefinable in such a society; and therefore safe. (203)

For more on Emma's interest in the female sex, see Susan M. Korba's "'Improper and Dangerous Distinctions': Female Relationships and Erotic Domination in Emma."

rank" (Mudrick 186).[117] As the novel progresses Emma loses her status in the neighbourhood. While she must initially make way for Jane Fairfax, her rival,[118] and submit her place to the married Mrs. Elton, Emma loses her influence particularly when everybody attends the Coles's dinner party despite Emma warning them not to. In this case, when she realizes that she has no influence over the matter, she ultimately accedes and becomes a follower instead of a leader. Ruth Perry contends that the "visibility of women's competition in *Emma* serves as a reminder of the patriarchal structures in which women live" ("Sexual Politics" 114). Emma struggles to keep her status intact, and it is at Box Hill that Emma can reassert her position by reminding everyone present that she remains powerful in their community despite its new additions.[119] Emma's attack on Miss Bates is particularly hurtful because Emma "remind[s] Miss Bates of her personal inadequacies and her lowly status. The flirtation of Frank Churchill is a tacit reminder of Miss Bates's sexual inadequacy just as the verbal rejoinder is a reminder of her intellectual inadequacy" (Moore 580). The double implication of

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[117] Majaa Stewart believes that "In rejecting the aunt and the niece, Emma rejects a woman's realism that seems to be marked by lack, negation, and limitation" (76). On the other hand, Mudrick astutely observes that

> Emma needs to dominate, she can of course – in her class and time – most easily dominate women; and her need is urgent enough to forego even the pretense of sympathetic understanding. She feels affection only toward Harriet, Mrs. Weston, and her father; instance, not of tenderness, but rather of satisfied control. She feels affection only toward those immediately under her command, and all of them are women. Mr. Woodhouse is no exception. (192)

Emma likes those she could manipulate and, while Mudrick omits Knightley, Emma feels affection for him even though her control over him is limited.

[118] An additional reason why Emma dislikes Jane is because Emma is "[s]hamed by Jane's superior playing on the piano, she detests her more unjustly than ever" (Mudrick 186).

[119] Julia Prewitt Brown points to Emma's unsettling behaviour:

> Emma's cruelty completely shocks us. There is something particularly moving and frightening about the rejection of the comic figure in art […] Emma's action violates the most basic human law found in any society whether barbarous or advanced: the protection of the weak … Emma delivers the insult because she 'could not resist' … there is no reason for it; it is simply a case of unrestrained human hostility. (88)

Emma's rejoinder points to Miss Bates's deficiencies. It is Emma's way of maintaining her superiority. Spacks contends that gossip

> serves serious (possibly unconscious) purposes for the gossipers, whose manipulations of reputation can further political or social ambitions by damaging competitors or enemies, gratify envy and rage by diminishing another, generate an immediately satisfying sense of power, although the talkers acknowledge no such intent. (*Gossip* 4)

Through gossip, Emma unconsciously promotes herself. In fact, before Knightley shames her for her treatment of Miss Bates, Emma tries "to laugh it off" (407). Emma claims she "could not help saying what [she] did […] Nobody could have helped it. It was *not* so very bad. I dare say she did not understand me" (407, my emphasis). Miss Bates is however smarter than Emma gives her credit for and has been deeply hurt by her comment.

Interestingly, it is status that determines and excuses behaviour. In his reproof, Knightley admits that "[w]ere she a woman of fortune, I would leave every harmless absurdity to take its chance, I would not quarrel with you for any liberties of manner. Were she your equal in situation —but, Emma, consider how far this is from being the case" (408). In this section, Knightley acknowledges that status and wealth permit a different kind of behaviour. And since Emma does not perform her duty towards Miss Bates, Knightley, as the chivalrous patriarch, has to step in to defend this poor woman who "has sunk from the comforts she was born to; and, if she live to old age, must probably sink more. Her situation should secure your compassion. It was badly done, indeed!" (408).[120] At one time,

[120] Butler contends that "The hurt to Miss Bates is not therefore a single instance, for there is a pattern in the novel of vulnerable single women, whom it is the social duty of the strong and the rich to protect" (*Jane Austen* 257).

Miss Bates commanded respect because her wealth entitled her to it.[121] The people who know Miss Bates and her fortune continue to respect her as an old maid.[122] Shamed for her actions, Emma

> attains a new level of insight and maturity. The moral development in the novel suggests the need for the diminishment of Emma in the social sphere, a new position for her, but an appropriate place in the scale of value, rather than one defined by her self-aggrandizing ego. When Emma grows in a moral way as a result of her recognition of objective truth, she evolves into a more integrated person, a better person, and in the process gains what is truly right for her as an individual. (Jackson n. pag.)

Jackson rightly presents the idea that rank is meaningless without community integration. Emma's need to control and excel in Highbury makes her competitive and discriminating. The harsh lesson Emma learns is that of moral and social obligations. She must protect the weak and poor, keep them on their righteous path, and not turn their head toward unattainable and inappropriate desires. This is a something Catherine Morland witnesses as she comes into her own.

Isabella Thorpe leeches onto Catherine Morland in *Northanger Abbey*. Four years her senior, Isabella uses her age to set herself above Catherine, though she is not much more mature:

> Arch and attitudinizing, Isabella is a dubious influence from the start, providing some nicely vulgarized, almost sleazy moments of 'girl talk' […]. A spoilt 'scion' of a very 'indulgent mother,' Isabella is, with Lydia in *Pride and Prejudice*, a strong contender for the hotly contested title used by Mr. De Courcy in Letter 4 of *Lady Susan*: 'the most accomplished coquette in England.' It seems fair to conjecture, however, that her desperately predatory

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[121] In Miss Bates, Majaa Stewart claims that Austen attempts to "rende[r] her old maid with a humanity that adds sympathy to our laughter" (74).

[122] For more on impoverished women, see for instance, Mary-Elisabeth Fowkes Tobin's "Aiding Impoverished Gentlewomen: Power and Class in *Emma*." Moreover, Miss Bates differs from the neglected widow Mrs. Smith is *Persuasion.*

> air owes more to straitened gentility than natural gentility. (Neill 21)

In Isabella (and Lydia Bennet), Neill sees the coquettes at their inception. Like Lady Susan, who is looking for a wealthy husband for Frederica, so too is Isabella on a quest to find an affluent spouse. Because, she lacks the assets that would facilitate such an admirable match, and alone in Bath, she latches onto Catherine. Her only connection there, Isabella forces herself on Catherine ignoring the latter's rights to privacy and freedom.

Forcing herself to appear genteel, Isabella adopts the behaviour and characteristics that other powerful women use to command power and attention. Isabella, we suppose, watches other women exercise their power and follows suit. These are horrible role models for young women, but thankfully Catherine eventually judges good from bad despite her initiation into society.[123] Catherine refuses to be mistreated and misled, and even acts against proper decorum when she invites herself to the Tilneys's to explain her recent behaviour to Miss Tilney. Catherine is unaccompanied as she makes her way to their house after Thorpe's first intervention: she "hastened away with eager steps and a beating heart to pay her visit, explain her conduct, and be forgiven" (*NA* 90). Lying to her, Thorpe leads Catherine into error, one that she decides to rectify. Catherine is less ready to believe that he changed her plans with Miss Tilney after a second unrequested intervention: "Isabella […] caught hold of one hand; Thorpe of the other … 'I could have spoken to Miss Tilney myself. This is only doing it in a ruder way;

[123] According to John Lauber, Mrs. Allen is unable "to fill the role of guardian and guide to Catherine Morland, a helplessness which allows Catherine the necessary freedom to act and decide for herself" (513). Austen does not present Mrs. Allen as the ideal protector, thus giving Catherine the opportunity to learn from experience.

and how do I know that Mr. Thorpe has—he may be mistaken again perhaps; he led me into one act of rudeness by his mistake'" (*NA* 101). Isabella physically restrains Catherine in an ultimate attempt to make her change her mind. But, despite the harsh behaviour, Catherine remains true to her beliefs and rushes into the Tilneys's house using "only the ceremony of saying that she must speak with Miss Tilney that moment, and hurrying by [the servant] proceeded up stairs" (*NA* 102). Catherine breaks social rules in order to safeguard the value of her word.

Isabella's domineering attitude pushes Catherine to question social and moral values. After the Thorpes trick Catherine into believing the Tilneys would not be visiting her, Catherine begins to make her own steadfast decisions. Isabella looks for diverse means to have her way. As Isabella tiresomely tries to get Catherine to cancel her visit to Miss Tilney, she resorts to different ineffective measures:

> 'Do not urge me, Isabella. I am engaged to Miss Tilney. I cannot go.' This availed nothing. The same arguments assailed her again; she must go, she should go, and they would not hear of a refusal … Isabella became only more and more urgent; calling on her in the most affectionate manner; addressing her by the most endearing names … She knew her beloved Catherine to have so feeling a heart, so sweet a temper, to be so easily persuaded by those she loved. But all in vain … Isabella then tried another method. She reproached her with having more affection for Miss Tilney, though she had only known her so little a while, than for her best and oldest friends … Isabella, in the meanwhile, had applied her handkerchief to her eyes. (98-99)

Isabella deceptively tries to persuade Catherine, first by applying to her sweetly, and by manipulating her affections, and finally by shaming her into changing her plans. Isabella exaggerates their friendship: they have known each other almost as along as Catherine has known Miss Tilney. Catherine, however, remains resolute.

She increasingly moves away from Isabella, as she disapproves of her behaviour. When Catherine, speaking to the Tilneys about Isabella, says "I cannot still love her" (213), even being "relieved by this conversation" (213). The readers witness another instance of Catherine's initiation as well her closure on her friendship with Isabella. Catherine is strong enough to end a relationship that makes her inferior to a friend.

While Claudia L. Johnson rightly observes that "Gothic novels teach the deferent and self-deprecating Catherine to do what no one and nothing else does: to distrust paternal figures and to feel that her power of refusal is continuously under siege" (*Jane Austen* 39), she is also continuously blocked by the Thorpes, who alter and make plans for her, and speak on her behalf, to name a few contrivances. The innocent and unpretentious Catherine is at times required to act immodestly in order to make herself heard.

D. W. Harding states that "[t]he people [Austen] hated were tolerated, accepted, comfortably ensconced in the only human society she knew; they were, for her, society's embarrassing unconscious comment on itself" (172). Incorporating these into her novels, Austen depicts the reality of her community. There are people to contend with in any community but mutual respect and moral behaviour should preside over wealth and social status at all time. Austen's widows, old maids, and unmarried ladies have varying attitudes, statuses, as well as various degrees of moral integrity. The abuse Austen depicts among these women shows instability within the matriarchal society, one that was held together by the imposed regulations of the patriarchy.

Chapter five

"Dirty Old Men" in Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*

> [I]f the literature a society produces can be said to reflect its obsessions, eighteenth-century England was obsessed with fathers and daughters.
>
> (Perry, *Novel Relations* 77)

> What the child should know is that it is weak and that you, adult, are strong; and from this difference it follows that it is under your authority. That is what the child should know, that is what it ought to learn, that is what it must feel.
>
> (van den Berg 23)

> [The nineteenth century] was as legislatively active in liberal causes as any at any time, but it was comparatively neglectful of the young in its reforms. Opposition to any association offering to protect children was fierce throughout the period, blocking any such organization until 1884, though the Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals had existed since 1824.[124]
>
> (Kincaid 77)

Scholars have long argued about the sexual knowledge of the eighteenth century population. Following the steps of Michel Foucault, critics such as Lawrence Stone, Roy Porter, Tim Hitchcock, Randolph Trumbach, and more recently Bradford K. Mudge, provide manifold interpretations about sexuality in the eighteenth century.[125] While ideas diverge, these scholars have noticed the increase in sexual literature that dominates that period of time. Writings condemned masturbation, and prostitution increased due to male libertinism.[126]

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[124] Despite the existence of organizations to protect children, abuse existed. In fact, according to David Grylls some people "defended the individual's right to beat up his children" (65). On the other hand, "In the five years following the passing of the first Prevention of Cruelty to Children Act, 5,792 persons were prosecuted for cruelty, and 5,460, or more than 94 per cent, of them convicted. In addition, 47,000 complaints were investigated by the Society" (Pinchbeck and Hewitt 628).

[125] *The History of Sexuality* (1976), *The Family, Sex and Marriage* (1977), *The Facts of Life: The Creation of Sexual Knowledge in Britain, 1650-1950* (1995), *English Sexualities, 1700-1800* (1997), *Sex and the Gender Revolution* (1998), *The Whore's Story: Women, Pornography, and the British novel, 1684-1830* (2000).

[126] According to Trumbach (*Sex and the Gender Revolution*), the rise of sexual liberation corresponds to the repression of, what was later to be termed, homosexuality. Men wanted to

Sexual acts are depicted in various degrees both in paintings, as in the works of Thomas Rowlandson and William Hogarth, and in literature, as in John Cleland's novels.

In fact, pornography is an essential aspect of the gothic genre:

> the Gothic was enlisted in the name of making pornography an indictable category because it offered a way of designating in human nature and in an increasingly unwieldly public and imperial sphere transgressive thoughts and acts that, by virtue of being marked transgressive, required legislation and containment. (Faflak, Eberle-Sinatra 134)

Control and confinement are important to control sexual licentiousness in this period, while simultaneously and ironically, authors continuously search for ways to shock their audience. Incest[127] is an important motif of the Gothic,[128] and Horace Walpole arguably initiated the tradition with *The Mysterious Mother* (1768). With this Gothic drama, Walpole, as he writes in his postscript, "was

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prove their masculinity and virility by going to prostitutes. This had dire consequences since many of these women carried diseases that they transmitted to their clients, who in turn, spread the disease to their wives and children. For more on the many forms of sexuality Cleland depicts in *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure*, see for instance Peter Sabor's review essay "From Sexual Liberation to Gender Trouble: Reading *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* From the 1960s to the 1990s."

[127] Louise Jackson notes the various designations of the term "incest", which only became an illegal offence in the early twentieth century: "Incest – sexual intercourse between blood relatives – was not made a crime in England and Wales until 1908, although it had been an offence punishable before the courts until 1857." (14). According to Jackson, it is in the late nineteenth century that

> mass campaining and parliamentary legislation were mobilized over the emotive topics of child prostitution, incest and the age of consent. Victorians used a wide collection of euphemisms – 'moral corruption', 'immorality', 'molestation', 'tampering', 'ruining', 'outrage' – to refer to sexual abuse, which was prosecuted in the courts as indecent assault, rape, unlawful carnal knowledge or its attempt… Although Victorians had no umbrella term that was uniformly applied, they would certainly have recognized the term 'child sexual abuse'… Victorians had a clear concept of inappropriate sexual attention that constituted abuse of power and which, on various occasions, was brought to public attention as an issue. (2-3)

[128] This topic is significant for both the Romantic and Victorian period. However, as Defoe's *Moll Flanders* (1722) and Fielding's *Tom Jones* (1749) testify, incest is an existing, if marginal, issue in the early eighteenth century. The *OED* traces the existence of the term *incest* to the early thirteenth century.

desirous of striking a little out of the common road, and of introducing some novelty on our [English] stage" (87) knowing very well that "the subject is so horrid that I thought it would shock, rather than give satisfaction to an audience" (Walpole 82). Looking for shock-effect, Walpole gives the incestuous mother-son relationship centre stage. The topic and its sympathetic portrait ultimately prevented any production of the tragedy. Similarly, Matthew Lewis' *The Monk* (1796), with the notorious protagonist Ambrosio, continues the theme of incest in the author's sexually charged novel, while incorporating elements from Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*. Ann Radcliffe proves a worthy counterpart to Lewis with her Gothic villain Schedoni in *The Italian* (1797).[129] Incest, however, is not exclusive to Gothic literature. For instance, Henry Fielding's famous protagonist Tom Jones, from the novel of the same name, temporarily believes he slept with his mother.

True to her Romantic roots, Jane Austen tackles the issue of incest in *Mansfield Park*. Jan Fergus addresses the adage that sex and Austen are mutually exclusive: "the courtship plots [Austen] creates allow her to explore the relations between sex and moral judgment, sex and friendship, sex and knowledge – that is, between sex and character. In this sense there is no escaping sexuality in Austen's novels" ("Sex" 66). Fergus points to the many layers of meaning (existing sexuality) embedded into Austen's novels. While Janeites and scholars alike have focused primarily on the incestuous relationship between Edmund and Fanny,[130]

[129] For Austen's parody of the gothic, especially as related to Radcliffe, see for instance, Judith Wilt's *Ghosts of the Gothic: Austen, Eliot, & Lawrence.*

[130] For more on the relationship between Fanny and Edmund, see, for instance, Hudson's *Sibling Love and Incest in Jane Austen's Fiction*, or Smith's "'My Only sister now': Incest in Mansfield

her relationship with her uncle, Sir Thomas Bertram, and her father, Mr. Price, has somehow attracted less attention despite the fact that they too treat her in a sexual manner, because they use sexual innuendoes and looks that make Fanny uncomfortable.

In her novel, Austen traces the upheaval, transfer and integration of her protagonist, Fanny, at Mansfield. It is in Fanny's search for a home, for love, and for acknowledgment that she puts up with the many forms of abuse – emotional, physical and sexual she faces throughout the story. Austen uses class hierarchies to demonstrate the various forms of exploitation, which prove to be an underlying concern in this novel. Thus, Austen uses Fanny as an example through whom she raises awareness of the many manifestations of child maltreatment. Due to her lower social status, Fanny experiences neglect, physical and emotional abuse from all those she encounters both at Mansfield and in Portsmouth. Though she suffers most evidently at the hands of her controlling aunt Norris,[131] she also suffers at the hands of Sir Bertram. Austen aptly uses narration, dialogue, and body language to describe the various ways in which Fanny is abused by the Bertram family.

Park." Ruth Perry is also among the scholars to address the incestuous nature of the first-cousin marriage between Fanny and Edmund. She observes that as

> the novel progresses and the match between Edmund and Fanny make it feel endogamous rather than incestuous. That Fanny and Edmund are maternal cousins means that not material advantage will accrue from the marriage – such as keeping a title or estate in the family – although the union will strengthen consanguineal bonds and consolidate family feeling. (*Novel Relations* 123)

Perry therefore concludes and stresses that "maternal and paternal first-cousin marriages had very different social and fiscal implications because of the concentration of wealth and title in the male line" (*Novel Relations* 123). Edmund and Fanny's union serves to strengthen ties rather than focus on entitlement. For more on marriages between unrelated children who grow up together see Alan Richardson's "Rethinking Romantic Incest: Human Universals, Literary Representation, and the Biology of Mind."

[131] Joan Klingel Ray's "Jane Austen's Case Study: Fanny Price" insightfully portrays Fanny's abuse at the hands of Aunt Norris.

In his *Dictionary of the English Language*, Samuel Johnson defines *abuse* as "to make an ill use of" (def. 1), "to deceive; to impose upon" (def. 2), and "to treat with rudeness; to reproach" (def. 3). Similarly, the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines *abuse* as "to ill-use or maltreat; to injure, wrong, or hurt" (def. 5), tracing the definition back to the mid-sixteenth century. Both Johnson's dictionary and the *OED* refer to the emotional and physical implications of the term. Equally, Johnson and the *OED* respectively define an *abuser* as "a ravisher; a violator" (def. 3) and "one who uses badly or injures; an ill-user; violator; one who seduces, a ravisher" (def. 3). This harsher meaning is expanded to include sexual exploitation. These words have connoted violence and rape since their inception. The absence of the terms themselves from *Mansfield Park* arguably points to the silence around the issue.[132] In fact, Laura Dabundo contends that, "Jane Austen balances her art between silence and speech and knows the limits beyond which speech cannot proceed" (53). While Austen uses innuendoes and various connotations, Stone confirms that "there were even examples in the early seventeenth century of what is known today as the 'battered child syndrome' in which maternal and paternal hatred of the child reaches pathological proportions" (169). This statement might seem quite strong with regard to *Mansfield Park*, but in fact, Mrs. Norris repeatedly claims not to care about Fanny, and it is only once Sir Thomas returns from Antigua that his own feelings for Fanny develop. Stone chooses to illustrate the widespread abuse occurring in England, and Europe, with

[132] Austen does use the term abuse in her novel, but never in connection to her characters' behaviour towards Fanny. With William's visit to Mansfield, the narrator, in one long sentence that testifies to Fanny's exhiliration for sharing time with him, informs us that William, guided by Fanny is "ready to think of every member of that home as she directed, or differing only by a less scrupulous opinion, and more noisy abuse of their aunt Norris." (273)

the description of the maltreatment Henri IV of France (future Louis XIII) suffered as a child:

> if this was the treatment meted out to a future and even a reigning king in the early seventeenth century, on the instructions of his father, it is clear that the contemporaries quoted were describing no more than the reality about late sixteenth- and early seventh-century domestic relations between parents, governesses and children at home. Admittedly, mitigated by much physical caressing and fondling, including genital play, whipping was a regular part of the experience of a child. (169)

Using the royal family as an example, Stone points to the widespread nature of abusive attitudes that are found in all social classes.[133] Moreover, Stone emphasizes the prevalence of sexual abuse, a point Roy Porter confirms when he announces "it was commonly admitted that the widespread practice of beating (e.g. in schools) was sexual in nature – an association repressed and buried in Victorian times" (12). Simultaneously, however, change within human relationships is increasingly observed in the eighteenth century, where there "was a steady shift away from prime reliance on physical punishment in the upbringing of children to reliance on the reward of affection and the blackmail threat of its withdrawal" (Stone 435). With the Enlightenment comes the rise of individualism and thus, children are recognized as independent beings. Although whipping and

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[133] A point William Blackstone makes in his *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, when he asserts that "correction" was still practiced in the late eighteenth century:

> The husband also (by old law) might give his wife moderate correction. For, as he is to answer for her misbehaviour, the law thought it reasonable to intrust him with this power of restraining her, by domestic chastisement, in the same moderation that a man is allowed to correct his servants or children; for whom the master or parent is also liable in some cases to answer. But this power of correction was confined within reasonable bounds; and the husband was prohibited to use any violence to his wife […]. But with us, in the politer reign or Charles the second, this power of correction began to be doubted: and a wife may now have security of the peace against her husband; or, in return, a husband against his wife. Yet the lower rank people, who were always fond of the old common law, still claim and exert their antient privilege: and the courts of law still permit a husband to restrain a wife of her liberty, in case of any gross misbehaviour. (432-33)

slapping are no longer socially acceptable, punishments take on a more emotional aspect, similar to the abuse Fanny endures.

Fanny's abuse begins with her relocation to Mansfield Park. At the age of ten, Fanny cannot understand the necessity of being torn from her parents and siblings. She must leave all that she knows and loves to enter into a world much different from hers, and to live with her wealthy aunt and uncle whom she has never before seen. Prior to Fanny's move to Mansfield Park, Sir Thomas is concerned with Fanny's position there: "He debated and hesitated; – it was a serious charge; – a girl so brought up must be adequately provided for, or there would be cruelty instead of kindness in taking her from her family" (*MP* 6). Sir Thomas' concern testifies to the family ties that bind Fanny to the Bertrams. Moreover, her uncle recognizes the enormous duty of properly educating a daughter and preparing her for society. While his initial concern seems genuine, what really worries him is preserving the class distinction that will separate Fanny from the members of his own family. She will always have to remember that she is not a Miss Bertram, and that she is not entitled to the same luxuries:

> 'There will be some difficulty in our way, Mrs. Norris,' observed Sir Thomas, 'as to the distinction proper to be made between the girls as they grow up; how to preserve in the minds of my *daughters* the consciousness of what they are, without making them think too lowly of their cousin; and how, without depressing her spirits too far, to make her remember that she is not a *Miss Bertram*. […] It is a point of great delicacy, and you must assist us in our endeavours to choose exactly the right line of conduct.' (11-2)

For Sir Thomas it is crucial to uphold the socioeconomic distinction between Fanny and his daughters, all the while maintaining a balance. He nevertheless

acknowledges the difficulty and sensitivity of such a task. While he is considerate of Fanny's feelings, he is also aware of Mrs. Norris' need to control situations and circumstances. By confiding in Mrs. Norris, Sir Thomas counts on her to eliminate any confusion between the cousins, thus implicitly sanctioning her future bad behaviour. Sir Thomas entrusts Mrs. Norris with the education of his daughters, Maria and Julia, a decision which proves to have dire consequences by the end of the novel.[134] He, therefore, also expects Mrs. Norris to see to Fanny's education.

In his well-known work, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Enquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, Jürgen Habermas contends that the bourgeois nuclear family is the first important structure of the public sphere. These families are well suited to move from the private into the public sphere due to their economic status and emotional education. Sir Thomas's children are appropriately schooled, yet lack what Habermas believes is essential to successfully participate into the public sphere: the ability to form emotional bonds. Responsibility falls on the patriarch to provide at once emotional and social integration. Sir Thomas himself shows little emotion, and thus his children behave autonomously. The disregard of familial bonds leaves man cruel and selfish, unable to successfully participate in this sphere.

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[134] On the father-child relationship Trumbach affirms that no early bond is formed between the two:

> [b]efore 1750 men positively avoided their infant children. After 1750 their fear of children was moderated and some fathers began to take close interest even in the first year of childhood. But fathers never managed to associate very closely with their daughters at any age, and they avoided their sons until they were about 7. (*Rise* 238)

In *A Reading of Mansfield Park: An Essay in Critical Synthesis*, Avrom Fleishman echoes Habermas' observation when he claims that Fanny "is placed in the role of simple virtue assaulted by upper-class worldliness" (33). As a "supposed spokesman for the ruling class," Austen uses *Mansfield Park* to "criticize the weaknesses of the gentry" (Fleishman 10, 22). It is in this upper-class society that Fanny feels unsuited and degraded – she is never good enough. Aunt Norris always advises Fanny to "'[r]emember, wherever you are, you must be the lowest and last'" (*MP* 258). Since Sir Thomas is not Fanny's biological father, she has no means of entering elite society and benefiting from its privileges. To her, this society is cruel, its people – the Bertrams, Aunt Norris, and the Crawfords – uncaring, and unfeeling. They encourage her to look up to them but she must never strive to be them.

The backdrop of colonialism is quintessential in understanding Fanny's status and the abuse she suffers. Sir Thomas owns a plantation in Antigua; Mansfield Park and consequently Sir Thomas' socio-economic status are sustained through the profits of this plantation. Through Sir Thomas, and his transformation "into a benevolent, reforming land-owner," Austen illustrates the moral implications of being a slave owner (Ferguson 118). The debate over the relationship between master and slave was an open issue, with abolitionists "condemn[ing] the maltreatment of slaves" (Ferguson 120). In fact, Ferguson claims that "gender relations at home parallel and echo traditional relationships of power between the colonialist and colonized peoples: European women visibly signify the most egregiously and invisibly repressed of the text" (118). Both

Ferguson (122-23) and Edward Said (91) see Fanny as a slave, similar to the ones found on Sir Thomas's plantation in Antigua.[135]

The colonial allusions are further emphasized through the names Austen gives to the places and people. (Mrs.) Norris and Mansfield (Park) reflect contemporary people with their own agendas. As Moira Ferguson notes, John Norris was an infamous pro-slaveryite; and Lord Chief Justice Mansfield "wrote the legal decision for the James Somerset case in 1772, stipulating that no slaves could be forcibly returned from Britain to the Caribbean, which was widely interpreted to mean that slavery in Britain had been legally abolished" (120; 130). Mrs. Norris, very much like her namesake, is the one who suggests and masterminds Fanny's whole transplantation. Fanny becomes a pawn in Mrs. Norris' game of control. Significantly, it is after Sir Thomas reforms and reclaims control of both his estates, getting rid of Mrs. Norris in the process, that order is restored at Mansfield Park.

Moreover, Fanny is further marginalized by the physical space she occupies at her residence. During her stay at Mansfield Park, she is placed near the nurseries, the governess, and housemaids' rooms. She is geographically alienated from the Bertram family, thus defining her social status as being lowly.

> Not only does Fanny's gradual appropriation of an otherwise 'useless' space, a room 'nobody else wanted' […] reinforce her identification with waste and excess, her 'natural' incursion into the governess's room as she approaches adulthood confirms her social displacement within the Bertram family: if Fanny does not have children to educate, she is still required to fill Miss Lee's place as a companion to her indolent aunt, 'naturally bec[oming]

[135] Lady Bertram herself uses Fanny in a capacity arguably similar, as when she comments that Fanny is "handy and quick in carrying messages, and fetching what she wanted (22).

> every thing to Lady Bertram during the night of a ball or a party.' (Cleere, n. pag.)

Fanny is always kept on the external boundaries of the Bertram household. Her room is in the same vicinity as all those who work for the house's proper functionality. It is almost as though she is being pushed into the future role of governess.

Besides being of humble origins, uneducated and a quasi-slave, Fanny's weak disposition also marks her inferior status: "her lack of energy and confidence, her small size, her liability to tiredness, confirm her as inferior, in [the Bertrams'] eyes and her own" (Wiltshire, *Body* 65). All these unfortunate characteristics gear her to a life of prostitution at a time when "prostitutes as young as 8 or 9 were not uncommon" (Kincaid 76):

> Beginning life either as an innocent servant in a gentry household, or else as impoverished, but middle-class, daughter of a half-pay officer or clergyman, the prostitute of mid-century and beyond was inevitably the victim of the honeyed words of a young rake who seduced and then abandoned the now ruined object of his attentions. The story […] provides a major plot element of Cleland's *Fanny Hill*. (Hitchcock 100)

Hitchcock's description of the original social status of the prostitute closely resembles Fanny's situation at Mansfield Park. He also depicts the classic plot elements of male seduction, which can be found in Austen's novel whereby Henry Crawford tries to tempt Fanny, but instead succeeds in seducing Maria. Furthermore, the parallel between John Cleland's *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* (also referred to as *Fanny Hill*) and *Mansfield Park* is important.[136]

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[136] For an interesting parallel between Fanny Hill and Fanny Price see Jill Heydt-Stevenson's articles "'Slipping into the Ha-Ha': Bawdy Humor and the Body Politics in Jane Austen's Novels" and "Making and Improving: Fallen Women, Masquerades, and Erotic Humor in *Mansfield Park*."

Besides sharing ingredients of the seduction plot, the protagonists of each share the same name. The success of Cleland's novel saw the appropriation of the name *Fanny* to designate the "female pudenda" (Partridge def. 1). Fanny's name becomes further eroticized when it is coupled with Price, stressing currency, commodity, and exchange. As a sexually loaded term, the name "Fanny Price" is ironic because it represents one thing and her behaviour quite another.[137] A further paradox is Sir Thomas' insistent desire for Fanny to marry Henry Crawford, since both these men threaten Fanny.

Stressing Fanny's struggle to belong, Fleishman observes that Fanny "is a frail spirit fighting the battle of life with weapons inadequate to cope with the society in which she exists" (44). She is not trained like her cousins, or the Crawfords, to survive in an egotistical and self-serving society. Rather *Mansfield Park* resembles the fairy tale genre, since the "structure of the fairy tale is an object lesson in character formation: Fanny overcomes her childhood weakness by developing moral implements for self-preservation, and when presented with the weakness of her tormentors she employs these tools with sufficient strength to prevail over them" (Fleishman 60).[138] Contrary to Fleishman's argument, Fanny

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[137] Maaja Stewart pointing to the connotations of the novel's names argues that

> Fanny Price bears a name that reminds us that she is not related to the land by birth and that she is not a gentleman's daughter: her first is a rhetorical joke, suggesting both derriere and also the Renaissance usage in which 'Frances' is a synonym for *whore*, a usage marking a woman as a marketable commodity. Her last name also suggests the marketplace. Furthermore, it alludes to Richard Price, whose radical preaching prompted Edmund Burke's celebration of traditional values in his reflections on the Revolution in France. Burke's text itself forms an important background to *Mansfield Park*, as is suggested not only by specific stylistic echoes but also by the name Edmund for the hero. Fanny's name, in short, reveals her uneasy position in a house that bears the authority-saturated name of England's chief justice William, Lord Mansfield. (17)

[138] Many have compared Fanny to Cinderella. See for instance Thomas Hoberg's "Fanny in Fairyland: *Mansfield Park* and the Cinderella Legend" or Jane McDonnell's "'A Little Spirit of Independence': Sexual Politics and the Bildungsroman in *Mansfield Park*."

never actually surmounts her childhood weakness for genuine approval, but she finds ways to deal with it.[139]

Like Fleishman, Bernard J. Paris believes that Fanny develops "defensive strategies" to deal with her environment, since she is treated as "personally and socially inferior" (23-24). These defence strategies include shying away and hiding from people, adjusting her behaviour to conform to others' expectations, and wanting to please people to gain approval. Moreover, Paris argues that through these defence strategies the novel claims "that it is better – i.e., more gratifying – to renounce pleasure than to enjoy it; better to deny vitality than to affirm it; better to die – or live a death-in-life – than to live" (64). In fact, the author further claims that Fanny is

> the chief spokesman for life denial. Although she affirms her love for at least two persons, Edmund and her brother William, her typical response is to deny: the theatricals, the courtship of Henry, even her parents. Fanny may not be an acceptable symbol of death itself, but it is her role to deny the pleasures of *life* in favor of the pleasures of *principle*, which feel like death. (64, emphasis mine)

What Paris rightfully acknowledges is Austen's irony toward conduct manuals that encourage woman to be feminine.[140] Fanny represents the opposite extreme of conduct-book frivolity and Austen uses her in contrast with her cousins and the

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[139] Amy Pawl underlines Fanny position at Mansfield:

> The role offered to Fanny by the younger family members is, in Tom's words, 'a nothing of a part, a mere nothing … and it will not much signify if nobody hears a word you say' … Oddly enough, this is believed to be a tempting offer, but it is the same role that she has been asked to play in the family for years. No wonder she turns it down. … More important … is Tom's use of the word 'nothing' – it is a word fraught with meaning and danger in *Evelina*, and in *Mansfield Park* it represents the worst possible female fate, the failure of all Fanny's quiet strivings for significance. (295)

[140] Discussing Austen's opinion about conduct books, Margaret Kirkham argues that Fanny

> in some respects, looks like an exemplary conduct-book girl, but this is deceptive. Fanny is not a true conduct-book heroine and, insofar as she resembles this ideal – in her timidity, self-abasement, and excessive sensibility, for example – her author mocks her – and us, if we mistake these qualities for virtue. ("Feminist Irony" 231)

Crawfords. Sir Thomas is exceedingly proud of "the Miss Bertrams [who] continued to exercise their memories, practise their duets, and grow tall and womanly; and their father saw them becoming in person manner, and accomplishments, every thing that could satisfy his anxiety" (*MP* 23). Maria and Julia Bertram, like Mary Crawford, exhibit conduct-book-like behaviour, through their recitation of history, drawing, singing, and appearance, while Fanny's "femininity is not fashioned according to male standards but is self-defined," satisfying "no one but herself in her pursuit of knowledge" (Despotopoulou 574).[141] For Mary Wollstonecraft, "writers who have written on the subject of female education and manners from Rousseau to Dr. Gregory, have contributed to render women more artificial, weak characters, than they would otherwise have been; and consequently more useless members of society" (22). Wollstonecraft writes about women like Maria Bertram, and Mary Crawford who seek upward mobility and male praise. Fanny's sincere interest in learning, on the other hand, is limited to private personal achievement, not social acknowledgment.[142]

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[141] Anne K. Mellor contends that *Mansfield Park* clearly shows "Austen's conviction that women must above all be rational" ("Why Women" 280). Here,

> we are asked to endorse the cautious, chaste modesty of a Fanny Price rather than the energetic imagination of a Mary Crawford. Fanny is the voice of prudence in the novel, of good moral and intellectual sense, a voice that sustains the organic growth of the family with a clean, well-lighted home, a voice that is finally beyond price. In contrast, the women of *Mansfield Park* who are badly educated, like the Bertram sisters who can recite by rote but cannot recognize the insincerity of a Henry Crawford, or who rebel against the discipline of logic and morality, like Mary Crawford, whose wit and charm identify her as the romantic revolutionary in the novel, all end badly. ("Why Women" 280)

[142] For Mellor, Austen's heritage is closer to the ideas propounded by Mary Wollstonecraft than those of "celebration of the creative process and of passionate feeling" ("Why Women" 278) put forward by Romanticism and poets such as Wordsworth, Blake, and Byron. Mellor contends that

> Appealing to her male readers, Wollstonecraft further argued that more highly educated women will not only be more virtuous, but they will also be better mothers, more interesting wives and 'companions,' and more responsible citizens. In contrast, Wollstonecraft observed, her society's practice of teaching females only 'accomplishments' – singing, dancing, needlework, a smattering of foreign languages –

Fanny has learned to be a proper lady by applying the more imperative guidelines offered in conduct manuals. It is in "three particulars, each of which is of extreme and never-ceasing concern to the welfare of mankind, the effect of the female character is most important" (Gisborne 12). Among these three, Thomas Gisborne claims in his 1797 work that, "contributing daily and hourly to the comfort of husbands, of parents, of brothers, and sisters, and of other relations, connections, and friends, in the intercourse of domestic life, under every vicissitude of sickness and health, of joy and affliction" is crucial to female character formation (12). While Fanny sees to the comfort of all, neither her cousins, nor Mary Crawford show any interest in relieving others. In contrast to these women's behaviour, Gisborne's suggestion only comes to solidify Fanny's role as a servant. She waits on Lady Bertram, while also displaying the true elements of virtue necessary for a lady. She is the quintessential wife who would be able to take care of her husband, her family, as well as manage her household. Fanny proves to perform her required womanly functions since she eventually ensures the comfort of all at Mansfield.

The proper lady must also reveal what Maria Edgeworth and her father, Richard Lovell Edgeworth, see as a required components:

> [t]imidity, a certain tardiness of decision, and reluctance to act in public situations, are not considered as defects in a woman's character; her pausing prudence does not to a man of discernment

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produced women who were obsessed with their personal appearance and fashion, who devoted all their energies to arousing a man's sexual appetites while duplicitously appearing 'modest' and chaste in order to capture the husband upon whom their financial welfare depended, and who became 'slaves' to their masters but petty tyrants to their children and servants. 'Created to feel, not to think,' the women of her time were kept in 'a state of perpetual childhood' and necessarily became 'cunning, mean and selfish.' ("Why Women" 278-79)

> denote imbecility, but appears to him the graceful auspicious characteristic of female virtue. (699)

The virtues that the Edgeworths condone for a proper lady are found in Fanny. Ironically, her low self-esteem and her need for love are what lead her to be shy and quiet. Austen shows the paradox of such eighteenth-century beliefs by providing information on how Fanny feels that explains the way she acts in situations. Similarly, Mary Poovey notes that "bourgeois society simultaneously depended on and perpetuated a paradoxical formulation of female sexuality, the late eighteenth-century equation of 'female' and 'feminine' is characterized at every level by paradoxes and contradictions" (15). Women were to be modest, even if fundamentally they were sexual. As Poovey confirms,

> even modesty perpetuates the paradoxical formulation of female sexuality. For a modest demeanor served not only to assure the world that a woman's appetites were under control; it also indicated that female sexuality was still assertive enough to *require* control. That is, even as modesty was proclaimed to be the most reliable guardian of a woman's chastity – and hence the external sign of her internal integrity – it was also declared to be an advertisement for – and hence an attraction to – her sexuality. (21)

Similarly, Fanny, as the emblem of virtue, attracts the attention of her uncle Thomas Bertram, and in turn arouses him.

The psychological approach Paris adopts focuses on the behaviour of Austen's characters. His analysis of what Northrop Frye calls the mythic – with a "tendency to tell a story… about characters who could do anything" – and mimetic poles – with a "tendency to verisimilitude and accuracy of description," places Austen's works in the low mimetic mode (qtd. in Paris 13). Paris reiterates Austen's interest in portraying common life by considering Fanny a "highly

realized mimetic character," whereby the novel is "designed to vindicate Fanny Price and the values for which she stands" (22). Paris attempts to show that the realism in Austen's novel is an effort to apply human psychological criteria to Fanny. By emphasizing the authentic nature of the novel, Paris creates sympathy for Fanny and further brings the issue of abuse to the forefront.

Along with the obvious emotional abuse Fanny faces, she also suffers sexual abuse at the hands of male patriarchs.[143] Sandra Butler defines "incestuous assault" as

> any manual, oral or genital sexual contact or other explicit sexual behavior that an adult family member imposes on a child, who is unable to alter or understand the adult's behavior because of his or her powerlessness in the family and early stage of psychological development. (4-5)

This also includes "any sexual activity or experience imposed on a child which results in emotional, physical or sexual trauma" (5). Butler particularly stresses that forms of incestuous assault "are not always genital and the experience not always a physical one" (5). This is crucial to the understanding of sexual abuse happening in Austen's novel. The absence of physical contact is superseded by

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[143] Until 1875, the age of consent for sexual intercourse for girls was 12 (Jackson 13). According to Jackson, the

> confusion dated back to the reign of Elizabeth I and resulted from distinctions between felony and misdemeanour and between common and statutory law. Under Edward I, forcible rape had been made a felony in 1285 while the act of carnally knowing a female 'within age' (the legal age of marriage, which was 12 according to common law) was considered a misdeameanour. Under Elizabeth, both rape and the carnal knowledge of a girl under the age of 10 were redefined as felonies without benefit of clergy in 1576 […] Blackstone […] took the line that offences involving girls under 10 were felony by Elizabethan law and merely misdemeanours, under common law, if they involved girls aged 10-12. Anthony Simpson has argued that although the Elizabethan statute aimed to amend rather than replace the medieval law, the notion of a common law age of consent was gradually set aside as the dead letter during the eighteenth century up until 1875 […]. [It is only] the Offences Against the Person Acts of 1828 and 1861 stated categorically that the carnal knowledge of females under 10 was a felony and of girls aged 10-12 a misdemeanour, eradicating the distinction between common and statutory law and removing what were undoubtedly grounds for dispute. (13)

innuendos, looks, and admiring compliments. The social implications of Butler's definition allow for a greater awareness of abuse in all societies. Barbara Seeber judiciously notes further that "Fanny's subjection to sexual remarks and scrutiny and her visible discomfort and anxiety fall very much within the parameters of [Butler's] definition" (104). Indeed, onus lies on the narrator whose role is crucial in communicating "scenes not directly represented in the text: [like for instance, Fanny's] '[…] terror of [Sir Bertram's] former occasional visits'" (Seeber 104). The narrator mentions that Fanny is troubled by these visits but does not clarify why; this lack of clarification leaves enough room for various interpretations. Moreover, Fanny's body language reveals her inner feelings. Alice Chandler confirms that, "body language is also speech and, like purely verbal communication, reveals attitudes of aversion and attraction. [These are] exemplified by gestures and actions that are at once realistic and metaphoric" (94). Gesticulations and facial expressions (including blushing) play an important role in disclosing the characters' thoughts, intentions, and feelings:

> As she entered, her own name caught her ear. Sir Thomas was at that moment looking round him, and saying 'But where is Fanny? – Why do not I see *my little* Fanny?'; and on perceiving her, came forward with his kindness which astonished and *penetrated* her, calling her his *dear* Fanny, kissing her affectionately, and observing with decided *pleasure* how much she was grown! (208, emphasis mine)

Sir Thomas' display of affection surprises Fanny and the reader since there has been no previous outward indication of his feelings towards her. While his term of endearment *little* is set in opposition to her actual size, his surprise at seeing her is genuine. After such a long absence, changes in the body are to be expected –

especially since he has seen everyone's altered physique before seeing Fanny. Sir Thomas' public display of affection for Fanny shocks her. Austen uses the sexually loaded term *penetrated* to complicate Fanny's feelings. Fanny has always been afraid of her uncle and constantly seeking his approval. Although previously unable to move her, now his new affection for her pierces her body. Fanny was initially transposed into Mansfield like chattel, now she is a sexual commodity at the mercy of a patriarch.[144]

Michel Foucault claims that as sexual awareness rose, "power advanced, multiplied its relays and its effects, while its target expanded, subdivided, and branched out, penetrating further into reality at the same pace. In appearance, we are dealing with a barrier system; but in fact, all around the child, indefinite *lines of penetration* were disposed" (42).[145] The silence that aims at repressing sex and sexuality has the reverse effect: it actually brings the issue to the forefront and makes the subject more interesting. Thus, the adult imbues the child with sexuality. The power to do so invites questions and with it an expansion, and layering of meanings making it all the more overt. It is through knowledge and discourse that power arises. Furthermore, discourse of child sexuality allows for a better understanding, and identification of its many forms, which in turn leads to

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[144] In *Jane Austen and Crime*, Susanah Fullerton looks at how *Mansfield Park* "is especially rich in criminal themes and images" (9):

> Adultery furthers the plot, but is made to work on several other levels too. The extra-marital sex betrays human frailties, adds commentary to the theme of education within the novel, picks up on contemporary debate as to how adulterers should be punished (financially, socially, morally, or physically with a whip?) and allows a blindfold to be removed from the eyes of the hero. Elopement, too, is made to function on many deeper levels. Information about the poaching laws so hotly debated at the time gives the modern reader a fuller understanding of Mr. Rushworth's remarks about poaching and a very good idea of Jane Austen's views on the matter. (9)

[145] For more on Foucault's concept of family and sexual systems see, Joanna Aroutian's "The Sexual Family in *Mansfield Park.*"

appropriate labelling and, where possible, treatment. Just like Sir Thomas penetrates Fanny with his goodness, Foucault's use of *lines of penetration* similarly suggests the invasion of the discourse of sexuality.

Furthermore, Foucault contends that power is exercised through "presupposed proximities; it proceeded through examination and insistent observation; it required an exchange of discourses, through questions that extorted admissions, and confidences that went beyond the questions that were asked. It implied a physical proximity and an interplay of intense sensations" (44). The upper hand (power) is obtained by gaining the other's confidence. That person will let his/her guard down and reveal secrets that could then be used against him/her. This heightened awareness sensitizes people and incites them to discover the secret sources of a person's sexual pleasure. Observation and language are the two ways that such secrets could be discovered. Catherine Decker echoes Foucault when she claims that, "while secrecy is one key aspect of fashionable patriarchy, the other major aspect is power. The more power a person has, the less secrecy is required of him or her" (13). Insofar as secrecy has followed sex, Sir Thomas' actions are indicative of sexual abuse.

Sir Thomas addresses Fanny directly for the first time since her consignment at Mansfield Park.[146] As he advances toward her,

> Fanny knew not how to feel, nor where to look. She was quite oppressed. He had never been so kind, so *very* kind to her in his life. His manner seemed changed, his voice was quick from the agitation of joy, and all that had been awful in his dignity seemed lost in tenderness. He held her near the light and looked at her again – inquired particularly after her health, and then correcting

[146] For more on Fanny as a reconsigned child see, for instance, Kay Torney Souter's "Jane Austen and the Reconsigned Child: The True Identity of Fanny Price."

> himself, observed that he need *not* inquire, for her appearance spoke sufficiently on that point. A fine blush having succeeded the previous paleness of her face, he was justified in his belief of her equal improvement in health and *beauty*. (208)

Though Sir Thomas does physically show Fanny affection by kissing her, the more erotic undertones are stressed through his sight of her. In "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," a groundbreaking essay on women in film that paved the way for reading gender in cinema studies, Laura Mulvey contends that

> In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its fantasy on to the female figure which is styled accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote *to-be-looked-at-ness*. (27)

Applying Mulvey's theory to Austen's protagonist reveals Fanny's role to be a passive one, since she is the recipient of Sir Thomas' gaze. Her body exudes an eroticism that attracts men's attention. Mulvey further emphasizes, the static and inflexible nature of women when she argues that woman "stands in patriarchal culture as signifier for the male other, bound by a symbolic order in which man can live out his fantasies and obsessions through linguistic command by imposing them on the silent image of woman still tied to her place as bearer of meaning, not maker of meaning" (23). And indeed, Fanny can neither say nor do anything. She must receive these compliments, whether she enjoys them or not. In fact, Sir Thomas devotes more time to Fanny in this scene than he ever did in the first part of the novel: Austen lengthens the scene to purposely emphasize Sir Thomas' newfound interest in Fanny. By examining her so minutely, Sir Thomas draws attention to her body, and her face. Aileen Ribeiro confirms that "the eighteenth

century was certainly not prudish about laying emphasis on the shape of the body. The figure was much more the centre of beauty than the face" (105), while Anne Hollander "traces a shift in erotic interest from the abdominal region to the breast as far back as the 1690s" (Gelpi 49).[147] This shift of importance from the face to the body is precisely what accounts for Sir Thomas' notice of his niece.

What Wiltshire calls a "war of looks" remains a crucial component in Austen's novel (Wiltshire, *Body* 63). While Mulvey focuses on the gaze, Norman Bryson doubles the possible point-of-view by distinguishing between the *gaze* – a "masterful, vigilant and penetrating weapon, able to freeze the body into a unified icon of vicarious sexual consumption" – and the *glance* – "a flickering and ungovernable phenomenon, resists homogenization and highlights the body as the site of polymorphous drives and desires" (qtd in Cavallero 21). Depth is the key distinction between these two terms. While the glance works on the surface of the body, the gaze infiltrates it, much like Sir Thomas' affectionate manner penetrates Fanny. Anna Despotopoulou who differentiates between the social and moral gaze makes still another distinction. For Despotopoulou, the social gaze is that which focuses on the appearance of the body, and this type of looking is what Fanny shies away from. It entails the hollow complements that arise from the display of superficial conduct-manual behaviour and the "love of praise" as it is shaped by the male gaze (Despotopoulou 572). On the contrary, Fanny craves the

[147] Despite the eroticization of the breasts,

> at the end of the century [they] still serve as signifiers of women's defenselessness, but the fascination they invite in proffering their own specific shape and texture to the eye and to the imagined or actual touch parallels the shift to an eroticization of the maternal that we have seen in the medical literature [*La Belle Assemblée*, *Lady's Monthly Museum*…] previously discussed. (Gelpi 49)

moral gaze, which encompasses genuine approbation, and admiration of her mind; hers is a "pursuit of praiseworthiness" that allows for "independent development" (Despotopoulou 572).

Fanny's *naïveté* in this situation underlines her purity. Her body uncomfortably reacts to the examination she endures. Foucault contends that,

> since sexuality was a medical and medicalizable object, one had to try and detect it – as a lesion, a dysfunction, or a symptom – in the depths of the organism, or on the surface of the skin, or among other signs of behavior. The power which thus took charge of sexuality set about contacting bodies, *caressing them with its eyes* […]. It wrapped the sexual body in its embrace. (44)

Like Mulvey, Foucault acknowledges the importance of the gaze, which, for him, is a sign of the disease that is sexuality. Sir Thomas' focus on Fanny's body is a symptom of his sexual illness. Fanny's body silently responds to this disorder as it expresses her feelings of embarrassment. When receiving the torturous attention from Sir Thomas, a blush appears on the surface of Fanny's skin.

The blush is an important literary convention in the eighteenth century.[148] From Jonathan Swift to Frances Burney and from John Keats to Charles Darwin, the blush becomes an important indicator of characters' feelings. While John Gregory insists on the modesty of the blush (13), authors like John Cleland and John Keats explore its sexual implications. Christopher Ricks makes the valid statement that "[f]or like much else in Romanticism, the young person and the blush both embody paradoxes about innocence and guilt" (4). John Wiltshire's

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[148] Christopher Ricks testifies to the multiple meaning of the blush:

> Romanticism, with its pre-occupation with the subjective and the objective, was naturally fascinated by the blush, so intensely both. The blush too could sum up so much of what was rightly felt about spontaneity and the extent to which the deepest feelings are somehow involuntary and yet are our responsibility; some of the essential paradoxes about spontaneity, will, and freedom, could come together in the blush. (53)

important study of the body explores the implications of the blush,[149] whereby social status and sexuality conjoin: "[h]eadaches, weariness, and trembling are not the only bodily manifestations of Fanny's besieged condition in this novel, for Jane Austen repeatedly shows her prone to another symptom conjoining *desire* and *powerlessness* – blushing" (76, emphasis mine). The blush indicates Fanny's inferior status as well as her covert sexuality. The involuntary reaction of blushing further emphasizes the dichotomous representation of women, as Mary Poovey has described it. The underlying sexuality women were required to control is equally manifested in the blush:

> it is a sign in which not femaleness but 'femininity' is produced: it designates the woman's embodiment of modesty and sensitivity – and Fanny's aptitude for this particular form of self-expression therefore seems designed on one level to recommend her as an exemplary feminine presence. (Wiltshire, *Body* 79)

A sign of femininity, the blush is on the one hand a proper bodily manifestation and on the other, it "inevitably entails the consciousness of sexuality, of eroticism, however veiled or denied" (Wiltshire, *Body* 78). It is on the body that sexuality manifests itself: "the body is not outside culture, or language, but deeply conditioned by them, performing social and sexual requirements within itself, as well as upon its surface" (Wiltshire, *Body* 77). Thus blushing is a significant and obvious marker of cultural and linguistic effects. Since the social encounters and

[149] Katie Halsey's study of the blush in "The Blush of Modesty or the Blush of Shame? Reading Jane Austen's Blushes," also points to its multifaceted nature. She points to its two traditions: the modest and the knowing blush. "Within the modest heroine tradition," Halsey contends "the blush is assumed to be a guarantee of authentic emotion, a safeguard against feminine deceit. Blushing speaks the language of the heart, a language that the lips may be denied from uttering" (4). A blush can reveal what a character is feeling, but cannot say. For Halsey, Austen does not follow in the paths of Gregory or Sterne, who believe in the innocence the blush expresses. In fact, she argues that Austen complicates the blush, even sexualizes it, thus complicating the narrative of her novels.

family values Fanny picks up from the Bertrams serve for her development, Fanny's body reacts to unknown elements and things she has to repress. Moreover, Wiltshire echoes Foucault's claim on the secrecy surrounding sex and the individual's need to discover a person's source of sexual pleasure:

> blushing is almost always a communication to the reader which is misconstrued by the characters of the novel, functioning both to remind the reader of this disregarded person's intense emotions, and of those emotions' isolation and secrecy. (Wiltshire, *Body* 77)

Indeed, in literature, a person's blush reveals a private intense emotion to the reader. The complexity of the meaning of the blush is linked to human curiosity. Austen's characters misread each others' blushes: Mary, for instance, mistakes Fanny's colouring for affection for Henry (Halsey 8). The characters try to interpret one's feelings in a way that is convenient for them, which also causes confusion and misinterpretations. The ambiguity of the blush is important because of its diverse meanings. Fanny is uncomfortable receiving compliments from her uncle because she is aware of their sexual connotations. The dichotomous nature of the blush, at once an indicator of eroticism and femininity, culminates in Fanny. Ironically, what attracts Sir Thomas to Fanny is both her complexion and her feminine presence. Because Fanny's position at Mansfield has always been problematic in terms of her status, an additional layer of complication is added when she is to be defined as a sexual being. While she is not the daughter of a bourgeois landowner, her manners and attitude help in the misconception of her identity, whereby Mary Crawford's confusion leads to the question "Pray is she out, or is she not?" (*MP* 56). Her ambivalent position in the house also adds to her attraction. On the one hand, Sir Thomas is attracted to the model woman Fanny

has become and on the other hand, considering her inferior status, Sir Bertram could wield his power over her as if she were a prostitute. According to Stone, "this easy-going attitude to sexual promiscuity among the higher aristocracy persisted, and may have even become more common, throughout the eighteenth century," since "men from elite society were intensifying their efforts to seduce lower-class girls" (533-532). Power and control are motivators for men who mistreat women. Jeffrey Weeks confirms that "James Boswell in the eighteenth century was generally impotent the first time he slept with women of his own class, though sex with lower-class girls he could easily prove his manhood … Sex within one's own class was too hemmed in by respect and propriety" (39). Boswell's need to exert his superiority and power validate his masculinity. But, while sexual libertism became increasingly more important, Perry also reminds us that "[s]exual intercourse with a virgin was supposed by some to cure impotence as well as venereal disease. According to Anthony E. Simpson, widespread belief in this remedy accounts for many cases of child molestation and child rape in eighteenth-century London" (*Novel Relations* 251). Fanny's position at Mansfield is therefore problematic because she is a servant who has now grown to exhibit womanly characteristics.

Puberty takes on crucial significance during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Insofar as it is the indication separating childhood from adulthood, the "child is that species which is free of sexual feeling or response; the adult is that species which has crossed over into sexuality" (Kincaid 7). The pubertal changes are especially evident in the female body. When Fanny arrives at Mansfield she is

ten; by the end of volume II she is eighteen. Having crossed over in adulthood, Fanny's body reveals her femininity and budding sexuality. Physical and mental development are intrinsically linked when Wiltshire contends that it is "impossible to separate Fanny's psychosocial development from her bodily and sexual condition" (*Body* 63-4). Her sexual knowledge increases as her body develops. No matter how much of a prude, prig or paragon Fanny is, she can never escape the sexual inferences of the body.

When Edmund reintroduces Sir Thomas' affectionate behaviour and comments, his personal intentions and his interest in Fanny's body become evident:

> 'Go to my father if you want to be complimented. He will *satisfy* you. Ask your uncle what he thinks, and you will hear *compliments* enough; and though they may be chiefly *on your person*, you must put up with it, and trust to his *seeing as much beauty of mind* in time.'Such *language* was so *new* to Fanny that it her quite *embarrassed* her. (230-1, emphasis mine)

Edmund claims that Sir Thomas is for the moment only interested in Fanny's physical appearance, but that with time, he will be attracted to her mind. Edmund's use of the word *satisfy* carries further sexual connotation. Through his speech, Edmund treats Fanny as a prostitute whose primary concern is to attract men's attention. In the Bertram household, intellectual beauty is second in importance; the first being physical beauty. Fanny's reaction corresponds to Despotopoulou's claim, that compliments to her physique are a great source of discomfort to her (578).

As the above exchange between the cousins continues, Edmund reveals his own impressions of Fanny:

> 'Your uncle thinks you *very pretty*, dear Fanny – and that is the long and the short of the matter. Anybody but myself would have made something more of it, and any body but you would resent that you had not been thought very pretty before; but the truth is, that your uncle never did admire you till now – and *now* he does. Your complexion is so *improved*! – and you have gained so much *countenance*! – and your *figure* – Nay, Fanny, do not turn away about it – it is *but an uncle*. If you cannot bear an uncle's *admiration* what is to become of you? You must really begin to *harden yourself to the idea of being worth looking at*. – You must try not to mind growing up into a pretty woman.'
> 'Oh! don't talk so, don't talk so,' cried Fanny, *distressed* by more feelings than he was aware of […] Your uncle is disposed to be pleased with you in every respect; and I only wish you would talk to him more.' (231, emphasis mine)

Edmund encourages men to leer at women. He praises Fanny's body outright without feeling that such comments are improper. Insofar as he appears to be repeating the comments Sir Thomas made, Edmund now uses them for himself. Hiding behind his father, Edmund can echo his own admiration of Fanny.[150] He is now the active observer as the dashes between clauses indicate. Indeed, they are used to create pauses, which draw the readers' attention to the language being used and more specifically, Edmund's mode of expression. The son is as abusive in his remarks as his father, but because junior's comments are less obvious, they are easily missed. Though Fanny is clearly uncomfortable in both instances, her blush nonetheless, also expresses a deeper satisfaction of being recognized as a sexual being – especially from Edmund whom she secretly loves. In fact, Mulvey argues that "there are circumstances in which looking itself is a source of

[150] Ruth Perry emphasizes the importance of the brother-sister relationship:

> In eighteenth-century society, brothers were expected to protect their sisters – both because they were representatives of patriarchal power under the older, feudal system, and because they were more obviously participants in the newer capitalist system. Sisters depended upon their brothers for financial support and occasionally an establishment, for legal advice and public negotiation, for mobility and escorted travel, and for social and sexual protection. (*Novel Relations* 154)

pleasure, just as, in the reverse formation, there is pleasure in being looked at" (24). Therefore, even though blushing is an example of feminine presence, it is also an awareness of sexuality.

Another source for Sir Thomas' attraction to Fanny is her clothing. As Alison Lurie contends, "fashion too is a language of signs, a nonverbal system of communication" (3). Austen, however, gives little description of the dresses her characters wear. Contemporary readers would be familiar with the dress codes pertaining to each class; however, it is more difficult for modern readers to know what the fashion of the time was. Aileen Ribeiro writes that from

> the earliest times, the Christian church handed down a code of morals, which included strictures on clothing. Individualism in this respect was frowned on, and it was not until the Renaissance that the fierce hold of the church on all aspects of morality, including dress, began to slip. Paradoxically, this was also the period when advances in the cut and construction of clothing revealed and enhanced the shape of the body for the first time since the ancient world. (13)

This shift in the emphasis of clothing corresponds to the time frame Foucault places the change in the discourse of sex. Stone reiterates this by claiming that "both fashions [those of 1780 and 1790] reflected an identical desire to advertise sexual attractions, the one representing unrealistic male sexual fantasies, the other exhibiting the real thing (536)." The two styles Stone refers to show the shift from tempting men through fantasy, to consciously dressing to arouse them.

The fashion at the time varied, "by 1800, women […] were wearing the sort of clothes they might have worn as children: low-cut, high-waisted white muslin dresses […] skirts had risen from the ground to reveal ankles clad in childish white stockings, and flat-heeled slippers were favored by both sexes"

(Lurie 62). The need to hide women's sexuality is reflected in their manner of dress. Dressing them as children is a further attempt to keep them childlike, free of sexual knowledge. While "[b]eing fashionable was a requisite 'model of conduct' for middle-class women" (Reid-Walsh 132), like the blush, it involved a difficult exercise to maintain a balance of chastity. Simultaneously, women wanted to appeal to the opposite sex. Though little emphasis is placed on Fanny's daily clothing, Austen repeatedly underlines the importance of the white dress. In Jack Tressider's *Dictionary of Symbols*, white is considered the "absolute colour of light, and therefore a symbol of purity, truth, innocence and the sacred or divine" (225). Fanny wears the white dress Sir Thomas offers her on three separate occasions: Maria's wedding, for which occasion Sir Thomas purchased it, dinner at the Grant's, and the ball at Mansfield Park for Fanny's coming out into society. These separate instances emphasize Fanny's virtue and her angelic nature. However, Fanny is very much concerned about wearing her white dress to the Grant's dinner. Her worry that she would be overdressed is genuine and important, since "clothes are not 'immoral' in themselves, but they become so when worn in inappropriate situations" (Ribeiro 12). Indeed, Fanny sees the need to alter the dress to enhance its beauty for the ball, yet its purity remains intact. Edmund, however, appeases her by telling her that a woman can never go wrong by wearing white. Fanny's real concern is the immorality of wearing the white dress for this second event. Ironically, Edmund considers the dress fitting for the occasion, and what primarily interests him is whether Mary Crawford has a similar dress. Edmund is sexually attracted to Mary and thus, blinded by her

appeal. By asking Fanny "Has not Miss Crawford a gown something the same?" Edmund transposes any sexual thought Fanny's dress creates in him onto Mary, therefore endangering Fanny and her reputation (222). While Fanny's dress goes unnoticed at Maria's wedding, it is at the Grant's dinner that Henry Crawford notices Fanny for the first time. In a different setting, a more formal gathering, where Fanny is overdressed for a simple dinner, the same dress becomes immoral since it attracts Henry's sexual attention.[151]

Fanny's dress and her mature body are also subjects of scrutiny when Fanny encounters her biological father back at Portsmouth. Mr. Price's "acknowledgement that he had quite forgot[ten] her" dismisses the filial bond, and his next observation "that she was grown into a woman" destroys the threat of incest (*MP* 440). With one statement, he succeeds is removing any trace of relation, and consequently, erasing any possible guilt for finding her attractive. Furthermore, for Mr. Price, Fanny's womanhood and her return to Portsmouth are cause for financial strain. Now at a marriageable age, Fanny "would be wanting a husband soon" (*MP* 440) thus, requiring Mr. Price to provide a dowry for his daughter. For this reason, he is "very much inclined to forget her again" (*MP* 440). He tries to wash his hands of his responsibilities as a father and, as a result, ignores Fanny, who has been craving parental love and concern.

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[151] According to David Monaghan in "From 'Jane Austen and the Position of Women,'"

> It is only when Fanny begins to involve herself in the world by attending dinners and balls and when she acquires a little charm that she is able to make her presence felt. Henry Crawford is so attracted to this new Fanny Price that he falls in love with her. Fanny is thus at last given the opportunity to grapple actively with the forces of evil. By resisting his attempts to make her marry him, Fanny eventually exhausts Henry's patience and compels him to reveal his own and, indirectly, his sister's moral turpitude. As a result they are both discredited and Mansfield Park is saved. (66)

Amy Pawl also concurs that "Henry Crawford's "unwanted attentions make [Fanny] more valuable in the eyes of her family" (Pawl 294).

In "The Politics of Seduction in English Popular Culture, 1748-1848," Anna Clark argues that the

> most vivid radical attacks on the evils of aristocratic rule used the metaphor of incest to expose paternalism's fallacies. As fathers were supposed to protect their daughters, noblemen were supposed to protect the poor; in the incest metaphor, fathers who raped their daughters symbolized rulers who exploit their subjects. (50)

Clark's remark points to the parallel between a patriarch's abuse at home and in society: Sir Thomas misuses Fanny, just like he exploits his slaves in Antigua. Drawing these similarities, Clark emphasizes the corruption of leaders and patriarchs: "virtue of the maiden illustrated bourgeois claims to moral and eventually political hegemony while the immorality of the aristocrat seducer shadowed his suitability to rule" (Clark 50). Clark stresses the importance of female virtue to maintain social and political stability. Fanny's virtue is important when set up against the dishonest ruler, who, as Clark suggests, will only corrupt his inferiors, and by extension the state. Austen, who claims "pictures of domestic life in country villages" to be the subject matter of her novels (Chapman, *Facts* 452), takes these issues and ads her own critical, often ironic view of society. The need for finesse and subtlety is crucial for the publication of her novels. This, however, does neither exclude, nor alter Austen's treatment of sexuality. Austen astutely succeeds in portraying alternatives to what she considers corrupt social practices. By pointing to the dangers, Austen attempts to inconspicuously reform society.

Epilogue

Adapting Abuse

> An adaptation is always, whatever else it may be, an interpretation. And if this is one way of understanding the nature of adaptation and the relationship of any given film to the book that inspired it, it's also a way of understanding what may bring such a film into being in the first place: the chance to offer an analysis and an appreciation of one work of art through another.
>
> (Joy Gould Boyum 62)

Adapting novels into movies has raised questions of validity over the years. Vachel Lindsay (*The Art of the Moving Picture*, 1915), Virginia Woolf ("The Movies and Reality," 1926), George Bluestone (*Novels into Film*, 1968), to name a few, have all voiced their concerns about manipulating literature for entertainment because there is the preconceived notion that film does not do literature justice.[152] Film, an important visual medium, is as Joy Gould Boyum contends "a form of literature itself" (20). Different interpretations will appeal to some audiences and not others, because, as individuals, we have different preferences, and criteria, but most importantly, we have our own unique mental re-creation of the novel:

> Ultimately we are not comparing book with film, but rather one resymbolization with another – inevitably expecting the movie projected on the screen to be a shadow reflection of the movie we ourselves have imagined. Not only do we come to an adaptation with the hope of reliving a past experience, but we often tend to come with the hope of having the *same* experience. (Boyum 50)

[152] For recent and contemporary debates on adapting literature to the screen, see for instance, Linda Hutcheon's *A Theory of Adaptation* (2005), Jocelyn Harris's "'Such a transformation!': Translation, Imitation and Intertextuality in Jane Austen on Screen" (2003) or Cartmell and Whelehan's *Adaptations: From Text to Screen, Screen to Text* (1999).

As readers, we are prejudiced before we even watch any film based on a work of literature we have read. We judge an adaptation by our (fluctuating) preset notions of what (and how it) should be represented.

In *A Theory of Adaptation*, Linda Hutcheon repeats Boyum's statement but adds to it the importance of innovation: "[p]art of [the] pleasure [… of adaptations] comes simply from repetition with variation, from the comfort of ritual combined with the piquancy of surprise. Recognition and remembrance are part of the pleasure (and risk) of experiencing an adaptation; so too is change" (4). Mixing the old and the new, the familiar and the unexpected (Hutcheon 114), movies challenge our own preconceived notion of a film or television presentation. We look for similarities, differences, omissions, and additions between, in this case, Austen's novels and their respective film versions.

The seemingly simple though intricate plots of Jane Austen's novels have been adapted for film and television numerous times.[153] On the one hand, her limited focus ("3 or 4 families" (Chapman, *Letters* 401)) ostensibly makes her an ideal candidate for adaptation. On the other hand, "Jane Austen is content to give us setting of her stories in brief and general terms, and leaves even the heroines' beauty mainly to the imagination of those who have wit and fancy to imagine it …" (Chapman, *Facts* 124). While Austen does not provide producers and directors with convoluted physical descriptions of her characters, "the sparse detail in no way diminishes the imaginative force of the characterization, for, […]

[153] The following is a list of Austen adaptations as compiled by Sue Parrill: *Pride and Prejudice* (1940; 1949; 1952; 1958; 1967; 1980; 1995; 2005); *Emma* (1948; 1954; 1960; 1960; 1972; 1996; 1996); *Sense and Sensibility* (1950; 1971; 1981; 1995); *Persuasion* (1961; 1971; 1995); *Mansfield Park* (1983; 1999); *Northanger Abbey* (1986). We should also add the 2007 A&E adaptations of *Sense and Sensibility*, *Mansfield Park,* and *Northanger Abbey*.

personality achieves a density of its own which, if not pictorial, is nonetheless highly effective" (Bluestone 119). Personality becomes the criteria and factor by which adaptations create characters. Austen's lack of physical descriptions at once allows a freedom for personal interpretation while also setting behavioural boundaries. For Bluestone, Austen's characters are round because of "a kind of thorough psychological delineation, […] a fidelity to 'the colour of the thought'" (119). As a result, "readers have retained powerful physical images of Jane Austen's characters" (Bluestone 124). Despite the lack of vividness of Austen's descriptions, adaptation is possible and successful.

What Austen writes – or does not – is equally free to interpretation. Referring to the 1940 Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer production of *Pride and Prejudice*, Bluestone admits "[i]n adapting Jane Austen to the screen, the wardrobe, coiffure, and art departments were able to fulfil their offices with an unusually clear conscience" (121). The little information Austen provides allows for liberties in the script and presentation; researchers must nonetheless provide viewers with an authentic production. The MGM production crew had "to dig back into its files for authentic styles, costumes, architecture, props, garden arrangements" (Bluestone 121) that correspond to that time frame. But equally important are the aural details: "[i]n the novel, we never learn the names of the books which fill the library at Pemberly, nor the selections which Elizabeth plays on the pianoforte" (Bluestone 121). Nevertheless these things need to be historically accurate. Indeed, music, voice and tone are crucial to viewers' participation and connection to a film. All this background information can help set the mood and express the

interior feelings of the characters. In fact, "[o]ur imaginations are permanently colonized by the visual and aural world of the films," Hutcheon observes (122). In order to elaborate on Austen's background, producers and directors enrich the movie with the socio-cultural information otherwise unknown to a twenty-first century audience. For instance, in the most recent *Pride and Prejudice* (2006) director Joe Wright has live-stock (never mentioned in Austen's novel) running freely around the Bennet property. Director Douglas McGrath also takes certain liberties in his film version of *Emma* (1996): in one scene, viewers see Emma playing archery, a popular sport in which women competed against men (Troost 11). Austen provides little detail on common things; case in point, servants are mentioned in her novels only a handful of times, and it is only when viewing the Lawrence/Davies adaptation of *Emma* (1996) that the viewer/reader is made aware of their presence.[154] Austen no doubt expected contemporary readers to be familiar with the living conditions of the gentry in specific parts of the country and therefore felt no need to elaborate on this point. Filmmakers recognise the need to bring this background information to life in order to captivate their audiences and provide them with a more complete understanding of eighteenth century England.

Hutcheon stresses that "[t]here is a kind of dialogue between the society in which the works, both the adapted text and adaptation, are produced and that in

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[154] For Carol M. Dole the abundance of servants serve to emphasize class distinction:

> Whereas the American version [McGrath] barely acknowledges the necessity of servants to produce an elaborate meal far from the road, the Lawrence/Davies telefilm points up the realities of such an outing. Servants are shown clinging to the outside of a lumbering cart full of hampers and other requisites, and a dramatic shot captures them struggling up the hill with chair and tables for their masters' comfort. […] The British telefilm provides constant visual reminders of the number of workers needed to sustain the leisure of its principal characters. (70)

which they are received, both are in dialogue with the works themselves" (149). This constant negotiation is also applied to Austen, as a writer, since she "seems to have been often dependent on the real world for a stimulus to set her fancy in motion" (Chapman, *Facts* 125). R. W. Chapman confirms that Austen "clings to reality in a way which might argue poverty of invention" (*Facts* 122). In fact, Chapman blames Austen for unoriginal descriptions and plot. While Austen's dedication to accuracy may be wanting, this reality may have the reverse effect in film. Reviewing Douglas McGrath's *Emma*, Mark R. Leeper testifies to the disruption the props cause: "[m]ore than once I found the sets upstaging the action with apple-filled harvest scenes, Christmas party scenes, crocheting rings, and views of odd decorations on yard furniture" (no pag.). In the novels, these details go undetected, unmentioned, yet they can become visually distracting, albeit instructive in movies. Moreover, Chapman warns that despite the verisimilitude of Austen characters, Austen herself is said to have "expressed a dread of what she called such an 'invasion of social properties.' She said that she thought it quite fair to note peculiarities and weakness, but that it was her desire to create, not to reproduce" (Chapman, *Facts* 126). Affected by the peculiarities, features, characteristics and manners of those she comes into contact with, Austen's interest in creating original characters does not exclude the fact that she applies to each of them a richness of personality and human characteristics that is easier to reproduce on screen.

Austen infuses some characters with an abusive nature, virtually without passing commentary. For instance, ordinary subjects such as live-stock, servants,

clothes and the mail are lumped together, in the same thought, with the taboo topic of abuse. The instances of abuse that Austen presents in her novels are primarily used as a narrative technique. Laughing at such characters as Mrs. Norris provides comic relief, but our laughter is also an acknowledgement of their unmerited severity. Indeed, an anonymous reviewer of *Sense and Sensibility* praises the novel for it

> It is well written; the characters are in genteel life, naturally drawn, and judiciously supported. […] It reflects honour on the writer, who displays much knowledge of character, and very happily blends a great deal of good sense with the lighter matter of the piece. (Southam, *Critical Heritage* 35)

This reviewer condones Austen's accurate portrayals of aristocracy, and the author's moral sense to mock what is wrong, namely characters, like Mrs. Norris's dreadful comportment.

Austen's novels delve into the topic of abuse and where there is abuse, there is a struggle for power. Interestingly enough, *Mansfield Park, Emma, Pride and Prejudice,* and *Sense and Sensibility*'s female protagonists share the power with male characters. Lindsay Doran, the producer of *Sense and Sensibility* (1995), was attracted to the fact that there are "two central female characters instead of the usual one" (Thompson 13). The female point-of-view, as film theorists such as Laura Mulvey have observed, deviates from the norm: women are usually the ones being watched. With women as their protagonists, all these films cater primarily to female viewers, hence Langton and Davies's need to cast an attractive male lead with Colin Firth to balance the focus.[155] On the other hand,

[155] For more on film catered to women, see for instance, Lisa Hopkins's "Mr. Darcy's Body: Privileging the Female Gaze."

Sir Thomas and Mr. Price have the power of observation when they lecherously watch Fanny. The viewers understand the full meaning of Mr. Price's attitude when they observe Fanny look up at Susan and her mother.[156]

In the 1999 film rendition of *Mansfield Park*, director and screenwriter Patricia Rozema insists on emphasizing the contemporary concerns Austen introduces in the novel. Influenced by contemporaries such as Samuel Johnson, William Blake, William Cowper, Thomas Clarkson, as well as Austen's letters, her juvenilia, and modern scholarly articles, Rozema's production addresses the cultural and moral implications of the Romantic period. Austen "[p]refering indirection, understatement, hints, and gleaning, […] would probably demure from the dramatic effect Rozema creates in the movie, but like most writers at the time, she would concur in the moral" (Johnson 5). Rozema intends on shocking the audience (Berardinelli, n. pag.) when she exposes the erotic undertones of the scene where the drunken Mr. Price minutely observes Fanny's body: "Turn around then. Let's look at ya" (Rozema 99). As Fanny unwillingly does, Mr. Price proceeds: "Lovely. Are the pretty boys already sniffing around then? Eh? While you tinkle on your pianoforte or titter away in French [… and he] *hugs her a bit much for her comfort*" (Rozema 99-100, emphasis mine). In this version, Mr. Price refers to the attractions of female accomplishments stipulated in conduct manuals. Many women, such as Wollstonecraft, disagree with the teachings of

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[156] Sue Parrill contends that Rozema's treatment of this romance suggests something of a modern disapproval of it:

> Her suggestion that a father may have a sexual interest in his daughter's appearance as he greets her upon her homecoming and embraces her, while shots of her mother's and Susan's reactions suggest an uneasiness perhaps deriving from their own experience. Even the scene in which Sir Thomas dwells on Fanny's improved beauty makes the viewer squirm with discomfort. (101)

such books. Wollstonecraft protests against "Rousseau, and most of the male writers who have followed his steps, [who] have warmly inculcated that the whole tendency of female education ought to be directed to one point: – to render them pleasing" (27). Thus, by allowing female behaviour and character to be shaped by men's fantasies, conduct manuals reinforce women's belittlement and their status as inferior beings, whose sexuality must be controlled. Using visual effect, including ocular and facial expressions Rozema exposes Mr. Price's pleasure in examining Fanny's body. The contact of the hug provides physical satisfaction to his scrutiny. The physical contact between Mr. Price and Fanny, no doubt a pretext on Mr. Price's part to get close to her, leaves her – and us – feeling uncomfortable, and the viewer is explicitly awakened to the issue of abuse. Moreover, Fanny's powerlessness to react to her father's attentions is doubly bound by contemporary behaviour and what Laura Mulvey describes the passive female (27). Fanny is an unwilling participant that must tolerate her father's comments. In an interview with Patricia Rozema, James Berardinelli confirms the same opinion:

> During the scene when Mr. Price is introduced, he is presented as a leering, lecherous character who may or may not be involved in a sexual relationship with one or more of his daughters. Rozema explains that her intention was to make the audience feel 'uncomfortable with the scene and the character [of Mr. Price]' without offering an explicit explanation. It's up to the individual viewer to decide how rotten things are in the Price household. However, Rozema does say that 'incest is a theme in the book. There's Fanny and Edmund – they're cousins. Then there's Fanny and Sir [Thomas]- niece and uncle.' (no pag.)

Rozema chooses to depict the otherwise discreet eroticism of *Mansfield Park*. In fact, for her, the abuse extends to the other female members of the family.[157] However, Rozema prefers to leave viewers to their discretion in judging the severity of incest, much like Austen, who never addresses the subject head on. This is additionally confirmed with the aggressive behaviour Mr. Price reveals with regards to Maria's elopement; when

> Fanny's father reads about his niece's disgrace in the newspaper, he swears 'by G– if she belonged to me, I'd give her the rope's end as long as I could stand over her,' a statement certainly not without erotic resonance, and which strongly suggests the context of slavery debates, where the sick brutality of such scenes were often invoked. (Johnson "Introduction," 7)[158]

In addition to the evident hostility, Johnson observes the colonial influence of the passage. In this particular adaptation of *Mansfield Park*, women's status alludes to that of the slaves. As Sue Parrill perceptively notices, "[w]omen moved from their parents' control to their husband's control. Those who were not able to find a husband found themselves enslaved by poverty or by the whims of relatives" (97).

Fanny's place as a potential servant at Mansfield Park is strengthened on her initial departure. Upon leaving her home for the first time, Fanny, afraid and already eager to return home, asks her mother to write to her when she is to come back. Mrs. Price gives Fanny little hope when she turns away, ignoring her request. Mrs. Price appears to have resolutely and insensitively given up her child. Uncaring and callous to her daughter's well-being, Rozema uses this scene to

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[157] Sue Parrill observes that "Rozema shows Fanny's father (Hilton McRae) as overly enthusiastic about his daughter's appearance as he greets her upon her home-coming and embraces her, while shots of her mother's and Susan's reactions suggest an uneasiness perhaps deriving from their own experience" (101).

[158] In *Jane Austen and Crime*, Susannah Fullerton reminds us that "whipping those caught in adultery was not uncommon. In the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries in England such behaviour was often punished by a public whipping or by time in marketplace stocks" (69).

depict a mother who is not concerned with her daughter's welfare, stressing, what is more, Fanny's insignificance. As a matter of fact, because Rozema wishes to emphasize the issue of slavery that is latent in the novel, she adds a scene, among many others, where Sir Thomas tells of his desire to have brought

> a young slave woman to England where she would have 'helped out' in the house. Whether this would have been at all possible and within the realm of verisimilitude in terms of English laws at the time, this decided departure from the novel […] designates the slave as an obvious figure of Fanny herself. (Pucci 150)

The sexual implications that stem from Sir Thomas's intentions are easily transferred to Fanny, since her role in the household has long been that of a servant.

Rozema also interprets important scenes where Sir Thomas comes into contact with Fanny. For Jan Fergus, Sir Thomas's "response to Fanny, […] is incestuous: he appears menacingly and unrecognized in darkness before her on his return from Antigua and, more fearsomely, looms over her in her bedroom when he enters, ostensibly to announce Henry Crawford's proposal" ("Two *Mansfield Parks*" 71). Rozema's script provides viewers with a consistent element of fear, but also, as Fergus points out, after his return, Sir Thomas is more attentive to Fanny. Jocelyn Harris goes further in her analysis to suggest that Rozema "represents Sir Thomas's dual functions as slave-owner and patriarch as indistinguishable. Attracted to Mary Crawford himself, he pushes Edmund to enjoy her as it were by proxy" ("'Such a transformation!'" 59). Fusing Sir Thomas's rule and his attraction, Harris emphasizes Rozema's portrayal of

women as commodities. Sir Thomas misunderstands and is confounded by Mary's (modern) behaviour and thus encourages his son to gratify himself.

Equally important to the screenplay is the visual medium that uses facial expressions and costume to covey thought and sentiment. Harris remarks that

> Mary's spiderwoman sleeves reveal her predatory nature in this speech [where Mary hopes Tom will die], […] while at the ball she circles hungrily in black around Edmund. Fanny, by contrast, dresses in white, but with a décolletage quite unlike her schoolgirl pinafores of dark blue – cinema conveys meaning through the semiotics of color of clothing. Tipsy and staggering slightly as she weaves her way from the ballroom, Fanny exults in her newly discovered sexuality. (62) [159]

While one wears black (evil/impure) and the other white (good/pure), Fanny shows her neckline at the ball where she is "coming out." Fanny is moving into the realm of sexuality; she is now eligible for marriage, and she signifies her availability through her lower *décolletage*. Although she shows skin, she remains nonetheless more pure than Mary Crawford who wears a colour that signifies evil. Rozema shows the dichotomy of Fanny's character: she is both an innocent girl and an alluring young lady whose consciousness of her sexuality has been awakened by Sir Thomas and Henry Crawford.

Rozema's adaptation is much more shocking to a viewer who is familiar with the novel. In fact, as Hutcheon has commented "[f]or an adaptation to be successful in its own right, it must be so for both knowing and unknowing audiences" (121). Rozema's decision to emphasize the issues that eighteenth

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[159] For Sue Parill, on the contrary, Fanny's dress at the ball is "a frock suitable for Cinderella. Indeed, the contrast between her previous clothing and this dress make her seem to be a Cinderella" (93). Indeed, Fanny is not accustomed to elegant clothing, much like Cinderella. Cinderella's transformation occurs with her desire to attend the ball from which the Prince will chose a bride. Her coming out is also enveloped in marriage and thus sexuality.

century England prevented Austen from addressing brings with it mixed reactions.[160] Even after Rozema's scandalous version, the 2007 A&E's *Mansfield Park* altogether ignores the subtleties the former screenwriter emphasizes, opting instead for a more tame version. Maggie Wadey has chosen to completely omit Sir Thomas's warm approbation and acknowledgement of Fanny, as well as her return to Portsmouth in her script. Removing these sexually charged scenes, the screenwriter and director ignore any abuse that may stem from these encounters. As a result, Sir Thomas is no longer a tyrant, but a gentle man whose love and affection is reciprocated by Fanny. Even Mrs. Norris, who remains competitive with Fanny in this adaptation, is much more genteel and composed in her commands and comments. Instead, the focus of this version is shifted to the romantic relationships between characters, and the sexual innuendoes, if, any, stem from the couples represented.

In the A&E television adaptation *Emma* (1996), director Diarmuid Lawrence preserves the scenes of embarrassment which are vital to the novel. Emma's (Kate Beckinsale) shameful attitude to Jane Fairfax (Olivia Williams), her flirting with Frank Churchill (Raymond Coulthard), as well as her rude comment to Miss Bates (Prunella Scales) are worthy of the Austen novel. These scenes, much like the ones in the novel, are successful because they cause the audience to cringe with uneasiness. Mr. Knightley's (Mark Strong) scolding and Emma's repentance are equally well done for the same reasons.

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[160] Claudia Johnson addresses this issue in "'Run mad, but do not faint': The Authentic Audacity of Rozema's *Mansfield Park*."

Adapting Austen's novels to television or the big screen proves especially difficult because of the narrative voice that pervades the literary text. It provides the reader with important information, feelings, and opinions. In *Recreating Jane Austen*, John Wiltshire addresses the issue of inner speech and acknowledges that "[i]f film were to reproduce that interiority […] it must adopt its own distinct means" (*Recreating* 88).[161] Wiltshire stresses the necessity of preserving such description no matter the method. But while there can be no way of knowing a character's thoughts or feelings, "film can show us characters experiencing and thinking, but can never reveal their experience or thought, except through that 'literary' device of the voice-over" (Hutcheon 58). Both the A&E and Miramax productions of *Emma* use a narrator because they felt the need to express Emma's interiority.

The voice-over might have been used to show that Emma's motivated interest for self-preservation is abusive. She places her own selfish pursuits and musings above the feelings and integrity of characters such as Harriet Smith and Miss Bates. Because Emma is "a social snob who wants everything done on her own terms, and she interferes (often with disastrous results) in other people's lives" (Birtwistle and Conkin 8), Davies admits that he included Emma's imagination on screen simply to make her "'more likeable'" (Birtwistle and Conklin 9). His intentions are to make Emma appear more human, and thus, equally prone to human error. This technique allows us insight into Emma's

[161] Johnson contends that "Rozema transforms Fanny into a version of the Austenina narrator we love" and applauds Rozema's decision to include "Austen's presence as a narrator" (no pag.).

nature and thoughts. She is a heroine with faults that realises her errors only so far as they impede on her own plans.

John Glenister, the director of the BBC television production of *Emma* (1972), creates an Emma (Doran Godwin) that is much more disrespectful than either the Lawrence/Davies or McGrath versions. Even though in the Lawrence/Davies Box Hill scene, Emma "feels bound to brazen it out" (Birtwistle and Conkin 138), where Emma unabashedly brushes off her comment to Miss Bates, Glenister presents a heroine that is especially discourteous to Miss Bates (Constance Chapman). Emma often ignores her, by either not paying any attention to her, moving away from her before she has had time to finish speaking, or even on several occasions by asking her to "attend to" Jane Fairfax's playing or any other matter that is happening to keep her quiet. But more than that, Jane Fairfax (Ania Marson) is also impolite to her aunt, often raising her voice and reproaching her. Douglas McGrath's version of *Emma*, on the other hand, depicts an Emma that is less abusive and much more charitable than in the other adaptations. Emma seems more annoyed at hearing Miss Bates speak of Jane Fairfax than of actually hearing her speak. Emma's kindness to the poor is especially emphasised. This differs from the BBC's version, where we get a sense that Emma is generous through necessity and not will: it is a class obligation instead of charitable will. McGrath's softer Emma, one who is considerate of the poor and who is with honest intentions reflects the goodness Joe Wright and Deborah Moggach attempt to represent in Mrs. Bennet.

In *Pride and Prejudice* (2006), screenwriter Deborah Moggach and director Joe Wright portray Mrs. Bennet (Brenda Blethyn) as being a mother truly concerned with the futures of her daughters. Wright believes that "Mrs. Bennet loves her daughters. I think she's an amazing mother. She would walk across hot coals for any of her daughters and is that love of them that drives her on and forward" (DVD commentary "Bennet family portrait")[162]. No doubt, Mrs. Bennet does come across as more caring and affectionate in this adaptation than in the novel. Moggach echoes Wright's sentiments: "Mrs. Bennet is not some broad dowager, silly creation. She's terribly funny. But she's a sort of heroic character because she's got five daughters and with a short period of time before they become date expired, she's got to marry them to save the family" (DVD commentary "Bennet family portrait"). In both these opinions, Mrs. Bennet is admired as a mother who would do anything for her children. She is portrayed as a parent who puts her daughters' interests first, wanting them to make good marriages of their own because of the entailment. However, most important is Moggach's inconspicuous remark that Mrs. Bennet's marrying her daughters, and marrying them well will ultimately save the family. There is a consensus that there is a real threat looming over the Bennet family, therefore, no matter how favourably the Wright/Moggach adaptation portrays Mrs. Bennet, her desperate need to marry her daughters makes her a fool and obtains the contempt of Caroline Bingley (Kelly Reilly) and Mr. Darcy (Matthew Macfadyen). For one reviewer, Wright's portrayal of Mrs. Bennet is successful: "Blethyn is marvellous

[162] June Sturrock also believes that Mrs. Bennet is favourably depicted. See, for instance, "Mrs. Bennet's Legacy: Austen's Mothers in Film and Fiction."

as the mother frantically trying to marry off her daughters, hugely funny and pathetic at the same time" (David Kaplan, no pag.), while for another, "the only significant misstep in the direction of the film, Mrs. Bennet is overplayed to the point of caricature" (Arthur Lazere, no pag.). These two descriptions portray, on the one hand, Mrs. Bennet's maternal desperation, and on the other Mrs. Bennet's character as over-exaggerated.

Likewise, looking and seeing play an important part in displaying meaning in a movie. Mrs. Bennet's desire to see the gentlemen at the ball, Kitty and Lydia wanting to look at the red coats and Elizabeth's visit to Pemberley all consist of ocular felicity. Reviewer Alen Dale contends that "Wright constantly makes us aware that the characters are reading each other, and framing their replies. The glances, and hand gestures, are as pointed and meaningful and yet as understated as in any movie" (no pag). Wright successfully and meaningfully incorporates visual art into his film. Similarly, in the BBC version (screenplay by Andrew Davies and directed by Simon Langton) the lengthy glance between Darcy (Colin Firth) and Elizabeth (Jennifer Ehle) serves to depict Elizabeth's growing affection towards Darcy. Belton argues that movies such as the BBC version of *Pride and Prejudice* simulate emotions by "establishing a physical distance between the hero and heroine that can only be bridged through what Austen refers to as the 'regard.' Austen's attempts at describing what is unspoken through looks, glances, and facial expressions [that] read like stage directions to her 'actors'" (Belton 187).[163] Hutcheon includes Belton's 'regard' into the film techniques

[163] Gene W. Ruoff, writing about *Pride and Prejudice*, in "The Dramatic Dilemma" refers to its "dramatic dimention" (52).

necessary to express the emotions a text would have described with words. For her,

> External appearances are made to mirror inner truths. […] visual and aural correlatives for interior events can be created, and if fact film has at its command many techniques that verbal texts do not. The power of that close-up, for example, to create psychological intimacy is so obvious […] that directors can use it for powerful and revealing interior ironies…" (Hutcheon 58-9)

Thus, Mrs. Bennet's (Alison Steadman) close-ups of her frowning show her childishness: she whines and fakes headaches in order to get what she wants. Moreover, Langton/Davies add to this difficult woman a piercing annoying voice. Combing the visual and aural dimensions Langton/Davies provide the viewers with the ultimate effect: she is also abusive to the ears. Similar to Mrs. Bennet, Mrs Jennings (Elizabeth Spriggs) in the Thompson/Lee 1995 adaptation of *Sense and Sensibility* produces noise from too much talk. Her incessant bragging and inappropriate comments accompanied by her shrilling laugh only annoy the viewer.

Many effects are required to make a viewer experience the feelings of characters. They could be physical, as when John Thorpe (Jonathan Coy) aggressively clutches Catherine Morland (Katharine Schlesinger) by the arm in Giles Foster's 1986 adaptation of *Northanger Abbey*. Otherwise, they could be facial with a focus on the eyes in particular and expressions in general, or aural with music to convey interior thoughts and emotions. Though adaptations vary in scope and focus, all of the movies mentioned above do more than just apply our modern susceptibilities towards abuse and inequality; they express a reality that Austen herself adapted into her novels.

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