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FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS IN THE NOVELS OF JANE AUSTEN

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Family Relationships
in the Novels of Jane Austen

by

Paula Bennett

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

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Doctoral Dissertation

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

E	<u>Emma</u>
MP	<u>Mansfield Park</u>
NA	<u>Northanger Abbey</u>
P	<u>Persuasion</u>
PP	<u>Pride and Prejudice</u>
SS	<u>Sense and Sensibility</u>
MW	<u>Minor Works</u>

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CHAPTER I: THE FAMILY UNIT

THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY FOUNDATION OF JANE AUSTEN'S VIEW

Jane Austen's novels explore how the heroine confronts problems caused by imbalances in her family and ultimately creates a new, healthier family unit through marriage. Jane Austen's view of the family corresponds to eighteenth century ideals of order and harmony in society and nature. Her novels reveal indirectly the need for proportion and balance in the family configuration by illustrating how imbalances in the family structure affect the social functioning of the family members. Whereas in modern novels the influence of the family is more likely to affect psychological or emotional matters, in Jane Austen's novels the impact of the family is felt in the social area, where it affects questions of occupation, marriage, position, and relationships with others. The family is the basic social unit to which an individual belongs; it is the primary source of moral education and the arena in which most moral choices are made. The death of a family member or the failure of a member to perform his or her proper role in the family distorts the natural order of the family and seriously impairs the ability of all family members to fulfill their appropriate roles in society. Natural order and symmetry in the family constellation enable its members to participate successfully

in the wider community. Because family order is the basis of social order, the process by which individuals choose their mates and form new family units through marriage is an issue of crucial importance.¹

At the same time, her novels show the transition in attitudes toward the family that began near the end of the seventeenth century. Gradually, the emphasis changed from seeing marriage as a socio-political alliance between lineages to recognizing that the emotional relationship between husband and wife was a major factor in the social viability of the family. Marriage came to be viewed as a relationship which should be based on personal affection and individual choice but which still had far-reaching social and economic consequences.

Jane Austen's concept of the ideal family unit reflects the process of social reform that took place during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. The wave of change was led by writers who believed that the quality of family life is essential to the quality of life generally--to the happiness of the individual, to the well-being and proper raising of children, and to the successful functioning of society as a whole. The social and political theories of John Locke produced widespread changes in the prevailing attitudes toward children and the role of parents in their upbringing, while Daniel Defoe, among others, advocated fundamental changes in the nature of the marriage relationship. These new beliefs contributed to the decline of the patriarchy and gave rise to "affective individualism" and the "companionate marriage."² This shift in the power structure of the family profoundly affected both parent-child and husband-wife

relationships, resulting in a more balanced and equitable distribution of authority and autonomy within the family unit. Jane Austen's novels portray the period of transition between the two value systems, and her viewpoint mirrors the enlightened opinions of these social philosophers. Without exception, the process through which her heroines and their future husbands choose one another, the kind of marriages they will have, and the way they will function as parents follow the recommendations of the eighteenth century reform movement and achieve the ideals set forth in the writings of Daniel Defoe and John Locke.

Jane Austen's concern with the social adaptability of the individual is a characteristically eighteenth century perspective; to the eighteenth century, ". . . society was the inescapable element in which the individual had to live, like the bird in the air or the fish in the water."³ The neoclassical philosophers reiterated Aristotle's belief that "Man . . . who is designed by nature as an essentially social being, can perfect his activity only in communal life. The natural and fundamental form of society is the family; the most perfect, however, is the state."⁴ In her novels, an individual must conform to the accepted behavior patterns and norms of society in order to maintain his or her proper place within the group; a person who disregards the rules and conventions of society may lose the acceptance and protection offered by the social unit.

At the same time, the novels examine the values and assumptions of society in terms of their impact on the quality of individual

lives, specifically in the domestic sphere. Much of the conflict in Jane Austen's novels revolves around the eighteenth century debate over parental wishes versus personal choice and over money and status versus affection as the basis for marriage. The traditional criteria for selecting a marriage partner--money, social connections, and physical attraction--are shown to be inadequate because they don't insure an acceptable quality of domestic life; marital decisions based solely on these considerations are detrimental to the individual person, to the marriage relationship, and to the offspring of the marriage. However, a union which fails to meet the basic requirements of society--social acceptance of the match and an adequate income--is likely to be equally unsatisfactory.

Consequently, the heroines and their future husbands must learn to evaluate the commonly held beliefs and widespread practices of their society, recognize the limitations of the prevailing attitudes of those around them, particularly their own parents, and strive for a higher level of self-knowledge and moral awareness. Whereas most members of the parent generation in her novels married for the traditional reasons fostered by the patriarchal system or out of physical attraction, Jane Austen's heroes and heroines always marry out of a deep and well-tryed mutual attachment. They overcome parental objections but don't disregard the dictates of their society. The most important task of the heroine as she approaches adulthood is to achieve a balanced union between her private emotional self and the requirements of her society. The marriage of the heroine at the end

of an Austen novel combines "the private sensibilities of the love-match with the good sense that deals realistically with the externally imposed rules of the social order."⁵

This emphasis on the role of individual choice and the necessity of love as a prerequisite for marriage clearly reveals Jane Austen's belief in the concept of the companionate marriage and family structure that was the goal of the reform movement. The patriarchal system that flourished during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was perpetuated by the brutal suppression of children and by arranged marriages. After 1640, the patriarchal emphasis declined, and the type of family that emerged during the eighteenth century

was the product of the rise of Affective Individualism. It was a family organized around the principle of personal autonomy, and bound together by strong affective ties. Husband and wife personally selected each other rather than obeying parental wishes, and their prime motives were now long-term personal affection rather than economic or status advantage for the lineage as a whole. More and more time, energy, money, and love of both parents were devoted to the upbringing of children, whose wills it was no longer thought necessary to crush by force at an early age.⁶

The increase in individual freedom within the family resulted from the popular impact of John Locke's theories regarding the nature of man and the relationship between individuals and their government. Locke maintained that all people are born free, equal, and good, and that they possess natural rights which neither their government nor their parents should violate. Although Locke opposed the harshly dictatorial paternal style of the patriarchal system, he did not

favor permissiveness either: "But whilst he is in an estate, wherein he has not Understanding of his own to direct his Will, he is not to have any Will of his own to follow: He that understands for him must will for him too; he must prescribe to his Will, and regulate his Actions." Locke asserted that the authority of parents, like that of governments, rests upon their responsibilities to those under their rule:

The Power, then, that Parents have over their Children arises from that Duty which is incumbent on them, to take care of their Off-spring, during the imperfect state of Childhood. To inform the Mind, and govern the Actions of their yet ignorant Nonage, is what the Children want, and the Parents are bound to.

Parental authority thus is temporary; it ends when the child no longer needs adult care and guidance: "But when he comes to the Estate that made his Father a Freeman, the Son is a Freeman too."⁷ Locke proposed a rational, humane approach to child-rearing in order to protect the rights of children and with the goal of producing rational, humane adults.

Jane Austen advocates a similarly moderate style of parenthood, which includes the use of precept, personal example, and reasonable discipline to guide children. In her novels, the excessively strict, domineering parents alienate their children, often provoking them to rebel or escape; the overly permissive, indulgent parents fail to protect their children from the natural lack of maturity and judgment, and they neglect to instill self-control and strong principles in their offspring. Very few members of the parent generation achieve a

satisfactory balance between adult supervision and personal freedom for their children.

Jane Austen's perception of the process of character development also shows the influence of the rise of science and the discovery of natural causes for phenomena. Newton's laws of motion contributed to the idea of a mechanical universe operating on rigid laws of cause and effect. Locke's concept of the mind as a blank page on which any kind of data can be imprinted assumes the same kind of direct cause-and-effect connection between parental and environmental influences and the type of personality a child will acquire. In his essay, "Of the Knowledge and Characters of Men," Alexander Pope expressed this assumed parallel between the processes of nature and the development of character: "'Tis Education forms the common mind,/Just as the Twig is bent, the Tree's inclined."⁸

The assumption that bad marriages tend to produce bad children is pervasive in Jane Austen's fiction; the incompatibility between the husbands and wives of the parent generation diminishes their capacity to function as parents. The social reformers used this cause-and-effect correlation between the unhappiness of the marriage and the problems of the children to support their argument in favor of companionate marriages. In 1696, Mary Astell wrote, "It is this contrariety of wills that makes Matrimony so uneasy . . . and if both are bigotted to their own ways, it too often ruins not only themselves, but their innocent children, a sad effect of their Divisions which they are not aware of, and yet must dearly answer for hereafter."⁹ By the same

logic, Defoe concluded that a couple whose marriage is founded on solid, stable, mutual affection will produce healthy, well-adjusted children: "Their children are like their parents, as streams are from fountains, formed in the mould of virtue and modesty; not furies and little devils, that partake of the rage they were formed in." Thus, happily married couples "hand down virtue to their posterity by the due course of nature, and the consequence of due calmness and serenity in their own spirits; for it is certain that humour and temper descend in the line of families as well as diseases and distemper."¹⁰

In his discussion of the education of the heroes and heroines in Jane Austen's novels, Darrel Mansell describes "her predominantly mechanistic conception of character" and points out that the people in her novels "often discuss 'faults' as if 'character,' like machinery, could not be conceived to have anything like internal volition of its own, but instead lies inert until acted upon by specific environmental causes that have their specific, determinable effects on the mechanism."¹¹ Nevertheless, Jane Austen expects her characters to be more than just the products of external circumstances and events. She wants them to become aware of the negative effects of their upbringing on their perceptions and behavior patterns and to exercise their capacity to rise above those limitations. It is the ability to do this that distinguishes her heroines and heroes from the other young adults in her fiction, and it is through the choice of a marriage partner that each has the opportunity to become a cause in shaping

his or her future, rather than blindly continuing as an effect of the past.

Jane Austen's view of the marriage relationship adheres to the ideals of Daniel Defoe and the other social philosophers of the eighteenth century. In his treatise on marriage, published in 1727, Defoe described the importance of marriage in the life of the individual:

" . . . all that can be called happy in the life of man is summed up in the estate of marriage . . . it is the centre to which all the lesser delights of life tend, as a point in the circle." He argued that because the compatibility of the partners is necessary to the happiness of the marriage, and because domestic harmony is central to life satisfaction, only the two persons to be married can legitimately choose one another:

As marriage is a state of life in which so much of human felicity is really placed, and in which men may be so completely happy or miserable, it seems to me the most rational thing in the world that the parties themselves, and them alone, should give the last strokes to its conclusion; that they should be left to determine it, and that with all possible freedom.

Defoe vehemently criticized the patriarchal system of arranged matches and ridiculed the notion that two people who don't love one another before the wedding will learn to do so afterward. He quoted Milton's Paradise Lost--"And they shall be one flesh, one heart, one soul"--and asked, "Is this to be obtained after marriage, and that marriage made perhaps by the choice and at the imperious command of superiors?"¹² He was willing to grant parents only a negative voice in their chil-

dren's marriage choices--the right to forbid a particular match but not the right to insist on a match to which the child objected.

Defoe and other writers of his time considered a long period of courtship necessary to establish a strong foundation of friendship and love before marriage; they regarded both physical attraction and romantic love as inadequate bases for a lastingly happy marriage. In Some Reflections Upon Marriage, Mary Astell recommended mutual esteem and affection as the proper motives for marriage; she rejected money and beauty because " . . . the Man does not Act according to Reason in either Case; but is govern'd by irregular Appetites."¹³ According to Lawrence Stone, "Even those who were most ardent advocates of basing the choice on mutual affection were equally firm in condemning the two other possible personal motives for marriage: sexual desire and romantic love." Thus, during the eighteenth century,

The only wholly acceptable basis for marriage was personal affection, companionship and friendship, a well-balanced and calculated assessment of the chance of long-term compatibility, based on the fullest possible knowledge of the moral, intellectual and psychological qualities of the prospective spouse, tested by a lengthy period of courtship.¹⁴

This is the foundation upon which all of Jane Austen's heroines and heroes marry.

The rise of the companionate marriage and the change in parent-child relationships encouraged greater equality between men and women, with particular emphasis on better education for women. John Locke and Jonathan Swift believed that women should be sufficiently well-informed to educate their children during the early years of

life; both pointed out that women could not be competent parents if they were ignorant. Defoe's goal was to improve the relationship between husband and wife: "I would have men take women for companions, and educate them to be fit for it."¹⁵ Mrs. Hester Chapone wrote, "I believe . . . it absolutely necessary to conjugal happiness that the husband have such an opinion of his wife's understanding, principles, and integrity of heart as would induce him to exalt her to the rank of his first and dearest friend."¹⁶ Jane Austen views with pity such characters as Lucy Steele, whose natural abilities have not been improved by education, and she shows that a person who lacks the information and refinements provided by a proper education cannot be a satisfactory companion for a well-educated person, especially in a relationship as intimate and long-lasting as marriage.

In her novels, Jane Austen provides a true measure of the excellence and dignity of her characters by portraying them within the confines of their everyday lives. She uses the interaction of family members to illuminate her characters' personalities, and her characters are judged largely in terms of the degree to which they fulfill their familial obligations. Douglas Bush states that Jane Austen "is commonly and rightly credited with perfecting, if not inventing the novel of ordinary life, the kind of novel in which the smallest and most commonplace incidents are made significant in the consciousness of the heroine."¹⁷ In her fiction, the family is the natural milieu of everyday life, and as such, it becomes socially and morally significant.

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¹For a related discussion of the cultural significance of marriage and the family, see Julia Prewitt Brown, Jane Austen's Novels: Social Change and Literary Form (Harvard University Press, 1979).

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³Christopher Gillie, A Preface to Jane Austen (London, 1974), p. 142.

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⁶Stone, pp. 7-8.

⁷John Locke, Two Treatises of Government, ed. Peter Laslett (Cambridge University Press, 1960), pp. 348, 389.

⁸Alexander Pope, "Moral Essay: Of the Knowledge and Characters of Men," in The Best of Pope, ed. George Sherburn (New York, 1929), p. 162.

⁹Mary Astell, "An Essay of Marriage," in Six Familiar Essays upon Marriage (London, 1696), p. 11.

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¹¹Darrel Mansell, The Novels of Jane Austen: An Interpretation (New York, 1973), p. 56.

¹²Defoe, pp. 29, 30, 31.

¹³Mary Astell, "Some Reflections upon Marriage" (London, 1700), p. 19.

¹⁴Stone, pp. 281, 271.

¹⁵Daniel Defoe, "An Essay upon Several Projects" (London, 1702), p. 44, reprinted in The Works of Daniel De Foe, op. cit., vol. 111.

¹⁶Mrs. Hester Chapone, Posthumous Works (London, 1808), II, p. 151, quoted in Stone, p. 345.

¹⁷Douglas Bush, Jane Austen (New York, 1975), p. 57.

CHAPTER II: PARENTS AND CHILDREN

The errors in perception or judgment which Jane Austen's heroines must outgrow and the faults which make her negative characters morally deficient usually are the results of inadequate or improper parental leadership. Parents are responsible for providing their children's education and introduction into society. Jane Austen uses the term education not to refer to academic learning but to describe the process of socialization. Education therefore includes the skills necessary to function successfully in society--the acquisition of proper behavior patterns, the acceptance of social norms, and the development of socially responsible attitudes toward other people. Jane Austen writes about the process by which young adults separate from the families in which they have been raised and form new families in which they are the adult members. A major concern in her novels is the way the structure of the family affects the ability of the heroine to enter society, develop her own adult judgment, and marry successfully, especially when defects in her family distort this natural process. Most of Jane Austen's protagonists and antagonists share a common problem: they are the victims of faulty education because one or both of their parents or surrogate parents have failed to provide competent adult guidance.

Jane Austen begins each of her novels by introducing both her heroine, a young, unmarried woman, and the family group of which she is a part. In the course of the novel, the heroine is shown to be profoundly influenced by the pattern of relationships in her family and the position she holds within the family structure. The conflict which threatens to ruin the heroine's prospect of a happy and suitable marriage frequently is caused by a distortion in the natural order of her family; often, the difficulty the heroine must overcome in order to marry the right man is complicated by the failure of her parents or substitute parents to fill their necessary roles. In four of the six novels, the normal parent-child relationships are reversed so that the heroine or one of her siblings takes on a parental role in the family equation. This reversal of the natural roles represents a break in the Chain of Being as represented within the family; it is a negative situation with serious consequences for the family as a whole and for the heroine in particular. Even when the heroine has sufficient maturity and good sense to function as an adult herself, it is impossible for her to compensate for her parents' weaknesses or to re-establish equilibrium within the family structure.

Cristopher Gillie notes that for her heroines,

. . . there are no satisfactory parents in Jane Austen's novels. In three of them--Sense and Sensibility, Emma, and Persuasion--one parent is dead, and the survivor is inadequate. In Northanger Abbey Catherine is temporarily in the care of substitute parents throughout the story; one of these, Mr. Allen, is too self-preoccupied to take care of her interests, and his wife too foolish. The same, but more evi-

dently, is true of the real parents of the Bennet girls, and of the substitute ones--her uncle and aunt--of Fanny Price.¹

This lack of parental guidance and the resulting disruption of the natural order within the family comprises a major source of adversity for most of Jane Austen's heroines, and the harm which results from the absence of appropriate adult authority and discipline is a dominant theme throughout her fiction.

* * *

Of all Jane Austen's heroines, only Catherine Morland possesses two reasonably competent parents and comes from a happy, normal family. Mr. and Mrs. Morland have raised Catherine and her sisters and brothers in a relaxed, natural way. The only direct criticism of Mr. and Mrs. Morland is that in producing a family of ten children, they have placed an unnecessary strain on their income and have given their older children less education and guidance than they would otherwise have received: "Mrs. Morland was a very good woman, and wished to see her children every thing they ought to be; but her time was so much occupied in lying-in and teaching the little ones, that her elder daughters were inevitably left to shift for themselves" (NA, p. 15). Left to her own inclination, Catherine has concentrated on romantic poetry and gothic novels to the exclusion of more rational and informative works; as a result, she expects her life to resemble the plot of a gothic romance and trusts her overwrought imagination

instead of her common sense.

Mr. and Mrs. Morland consistently do all they reasonably can to promote their children's happiness and well-being. When Catherine is invited to go to Bath, her parents readily agree, trusting their daughter to the care of their respectable neighbors. Similarly, when the Tilneys invite Catherine to visit Northanger Abbey, "Mr. and Mrs. Morland, relying on the discretion of the friends to whom they had already entrusted their daughter, felt no doubt of the propriety of an acquaintance which had been formed under their eye, and sent therefore by return of post their ready consent to her visit in Gloucestershire" (NA, p. 140). When James and Isabella become engaged, Isabella fears his parents will object, but both James and Catherine have no doubt that their parents will give their approval. Catherine assures Isabella, "'It is impossible . . . for parents to be more kind, or more desirous of their children's happiness; I have no doubt of their consenting immediately.' 'Morland says exactly the same,' replied Isabella" (NA, p. 119). The Morlands not only give their consent but promise to assist James in every way possible; Mr. Morland offers to give James one of his own livings worth four hundred pounds a year, "no trifling deduction from the family income, no niggardly assignment to one of ten children" (NA, p. 135). The Morlands could be considered imprudent to approve an engagement between their son and a young woman they don't know, but their first concern is their son's happiness; they trust both their son's inclinations and Mrs. Allen's obvious approval of the Thorpes.

The loving warmth of Catherine's family is demonstrated when she arrives home unexpectedly after being turned out of Northanger Abbey by General Tilney. The sight of her family,

all assembled at the door, to welcome her with affectionate eagerness, was a sight to awaken the best feelings of Catherine's heart; and in the embrace of each, as she stepped from the carriage, she found herself soothed beyond any thing that she had believed possible. So surrounded, so caressed, she was even happy!
(NA, p. 233)

When Henry subsequently arrives and asks Catherine to marry him, her parents are initially surprised, but because they love and cherish her themselves, it seems to them that "nothing, after all, could be more natural than Catherine's being beloved" (NA, p. 249).

The Morlands' view of human nature is in some ways nearly as trusting and naive as Catherine's. Their reaction to Henry is as uncritical as their earlier reaction to Isabella had been: "having never heard evil of him, it was not their way to suppose evil could be told. Goodwill supplying the place of experience, his character needed no attestation." The Morlands have no objection to the match and require only that the General's consent also be obtained, which "their own heart made them trust . . . could not be very long denied" (NA, p. 249). They are so benevolent and reasonable themselves that they tend to assume a similar generosity and kindness of spirit in others.

The Morlands' unvaryingly prosaic, down-to-earth attitude toward life provides the sharpest possible contrast to Catherine's imaginative sensibility. When Catherine is getting ready to go to Bath, her

parents make all the necessary preparations "with a degree of moderation and composure, which seemed rather consistent with the common feelings of common life, than with the refined susceptibilities which the first separation of a heroine from her family ought always to excite" (NA, p. 19). Mrs. Morland's advice is calm and practical; she warns Catherine to stay warm and keep track of the money she spends. Catherine's father gives her only a modest sum of money and the promise of more when she needs it.

The Morlands' reaction to General Tilney's incomprehensible breach of hospitality is characteristically pragmatic. They can consider the potential "unpleasantness" of Catherine's unscheduled journey and ponder the strangeness of the General's behavior "without suffering any romantic alarm." Unlike Catherine, they do not torment themselves by trying to figure out the General's motives, deciding that it "is something not at all worth understanding" (NA, p. 234). Mrs. Morland's only worry is that Catherine may have forgotten something in one of the chaises. When Catherine continues to be listless and depressed for several days, her mother assumes that she is pining for the activities and amusements of Bath or is "getting out of humour with home because it is not so grand as Northanger;" her idea of a cure for Catherine's low spirits is "a very clever Essay . . . about young girls that have been spoilt for home by great acquaintance--'The Mirror'" (NA, pp. 240-41).

Mr. and Mrs. Morland are sensible and correct in their actions, but they are so unimaginative and unemotional that they are impercep-

tive of and insensitive to their children's feelings. Their reaction to James' broken engagement is thoroughly unromantic. They feel that the end of his engagement to a girl unknown to them and guilty of such reprehensible behavior is no real loss, and they believe he will learn a valuable lesson from the experience: "Just at present it comes hard to poor James; but that will not last for ever; and I dare say he will be a discreeter man all his life, for the foolishness of his first choice" (NA, p. 237). The Morlands consistently downplay the importance of emotions, and they exhibit moderate rather than intense feelings themselves, at times seeming unnaturally calm. Mrs. Morland's response to Catherine and Henry's engagement is almost unbelievably devoid of emotion: "'Catherine would make a sad heedless young house-keeper to be sure,' was her mother's foreboding remark; but quick was the consolation of there being nothing like practice" (NA, p. 249). Catherine's youthful devotion to romantic extremes may be, at least in part, a rebellion against her parents' excessively prosaic and unemotional behavior.

Catherine is in the care of the Allens throughout most of the novel, but their benign neglect has no lastingly harmful consequences and perhaps actually contributes to the growth of her own judgment and self-reliance. It is the desire to escape the ordinariness of her own neighborhood--the lack of opportunities for romantic or awful adventure--that makes Catherine eager to go to Bath, but the difficulties she faces there are not caused by unusual, extreme, or wicked treatment such as she had imagined would befall her, but through the

commonplace faults of being too busy, in Mr. Allen's case, and too mindlessly lazy, in Mrs. Allen's case, to provide her with sufficient adult guidance. Because she receives so little help from her surrogate parents, Catherine is forced to puzzle things through for herself, and her experiences with the Thorpes and the Tilneys contribute to a more intelligent awareness of other people's characters.

Mrs. Allen is as ordinary and well-intentioned as Catherine's mother, though less sensible. She is characterized by her "trifling turn of mind," her indolence, and her general lack of good judgment; however, she does have "the air of a gentle-woman" and "a great deal of quiet, inactive good temper" (NA, p. 20). She does not expose Catherine to censure as a result of her own behavior, but neither does she give her young guest any guidance.

Mrs. Allen's primary interests are her social contacts and her appearance: "Dress was her passion. She had a most harmless delight in being fine" (NA, p. 20). She is so completely absorbed in her interest in her clothes that she gives inappropriate responses to Catherine's questions and comments. Upon entering the Upper Rooms, Mrs. Allen is more concerned "for the safety of her new gown than for the comfort of her protegee" (NA, p. 21). When Catherine worries that they are intruding improperly at a table where there are no places set for them, Mrs. Allen thinks only about her hair and decides not to move, "for one gets so tumbled in the crowd" (NA, p. 22). Mrs. Allen is delighted to renew her acquaintance with Mrs. Thorpe because "the lace on Mrs. Thorpe's pelisse was not half so handsome as that on her

own." Mrs. Allen doesn't notice Mrs. Thorpe's lack of gentility; she perceives only that her own appearance is enhanced by the fact that her old school friend is "by no means so expensively dressed as herself" (NA, pp. 32, 36).

As Catherine becomes involved with John and Isabella Thorpe and Henry and Eleanor Tilney, she turns to Mrs. Allen for advice, but Mrs. Allen is incapable of giving her the guidance she needs and invariably leaves Catherine to follow her own judgment. When Catherine asks if she should go riding in Mr. Thorpe's carriage, "'Do just as you please, my dear,' replied Mrs. Allen, with the most placid indifference" (NA, p. 61). When Catherine is unsure if she should risk missing her engagement with the Tilneys by going out with the Thorpes, Mrs. Allen is equally vague and indecisive:

'Shall I go, Mrs. Allen?'
 'Just as you please, my dear.'
 'Mrs. Allen, you must persuade her to go,'
 was the general cry. Mrs. Allen was not
 inattentive to it:--'Well, my dear, said
 she, 'suppose you go.'

(NA, p. 86)

Because Mrs. Allen lacks clear judgment and firm principles, she is easily swayed by the urging of James and the Thorpes, and by siding with them, she works against Catherine's better impulse.

Mr. Allen's judgment is sound, but he is too preoccupied to notice what Catherine is or isn't doing, leaving her well-being entirely in his wife's care. Catherine receives his advice only when she requests it. Mr. Allen is a sensible, intelligent man who has married a woman greatly inferior to himself in judgment and under-

standing. The discrepancy has done him no material harm, however, because his wife has the appearance of a gentlewoman, is pleasant and agreeable, and is content with her situation in life. They are independently wealthy and have no children, so her "vacancy of mind" and "incapacity for thinking" (NA, p. 60) are not terribly injurious to their lifestyle. Mr. Allen is absorbed in his own affairs and scarcely seems to notice how limited his wife's understanding is; he is largely unaware of how little she exerts herself to guide Catherine.

When Catherine asks Mr. Allen for his opinion of the proposed trip to Blaise Castle, he immediately disapproves of the scheme: "It is not right; and I wonder Mrs. Thorpe should allow it. I am glad you do not think of going; I am sure Mrs. Morland would not be pleased." He asks his wife if she does not also object, but her reply demonstrates the inadequacy of her perceptions: "Yes, very much so indeed. Open carriages are nasty things. A clean gown is not five minutes wear in them. You are splashed getting in and out; and the wind takes your hair and your bonnet in every direction. I hate an open carriage myself" (NA, p. 104). Mr. Allen is tolerant of his wife's lack of understanding, and when he calmly explains his sense of the impropriety of the trip, she is quick to agree. Catherine is puzzled and dismayed by Mrs. Allen's apparent change in attitude: "'Dear Madam,' cried Catherine, 'then why did not you tell me so before? . . . I always hoped you would tell me, if you thought I was doing wrong.'" Mrs. Allen is incapable of distinguishing what is significant from what is trivial and does not know when she ought to

exert her adult influence or to what purpose: "You know I wanted you, when we first came, not to buy that sprigged muslin, but you would. Young people do not like to be always thwarted." Catherine is inexperienced in social skills, but her judgment is already superior to Mrs. Allen's: "But this was something of real consequence; and I do not think you would have found me hard to persuade" (NA, pp. 104-5).

One of the adjustments Catherine must make in adapting to life in Bath is in learning the differences between the straight-forward behavior she is accustomed to and the dishonest, manipulative behavior of John and Isabella. Catherine

had not been brought up to understand the propensities of a rattle, nor to know how many idle assertions and impudent falsehoods the excess of vanity will lead. Her own family were plain matter-of-fact people, who seldom aimed at wit of any kind . . . they were not in the habit therefore of telling lies to increase their importance, or of asserting at one moment what they would contradict the next.

(NA, pp. 65-65)

Like her parents, Catherine tends to trust people too readily; she assumes that most people are as open and honest as she is herself and imputes good motives to her friends even when their behavior is bad. Consequently, she is confused by Isabella's flattery and the inconsistency of her behavior; Isabella's coy hints and sly innuendoes pass over her head and she rarely has any idea what Isabella really means. Catherine does not know how to be coy, artificial, or evasive herself, and while this is one of her most admirable qualities, it does cause her to misinterpret the motives of others and to be excessively naive in assessing their behavior.

Henry Tilney is the primary source of rational judgment and clear thinking in the process of Catherine's enlightenment. After James breaks his engagement with Isabella, it is Henry who provides Catherine with a sensible and accurate perspective on the situation. He helps her make sense of the many bits of information she has previously disregarded, and he also helps her recognize the true nature and degree of her emotions. He gives a melodramatic description of what she supposedly should feel over the loss of her friend and asks, "You feel all this?" Catherine reflects on her feelings and acknowledges that despite her genuine hurt and disappointment, she does not feel "so very, very much afflicted as one would have thought." Henry guides Catherine to know herself and to understand the value of sincere, yet moderate, emotions over the exaggerated sensibilities of romances: "You feel as you always do, what is most to the credit of human nature.--Such feelings ought to be investigated, that they may know themselves" (NA, p. 207).

Henry also helps show Catherine how ludicrous and fantastic her romantic suppositions are. His light, irreverent attitude is an excellent antidote to Catherine's tendency to dramatize everything; he aptly exposes her folly to the light of reason, dispelling her desire to fantasize events so far outside the range of normal behavior. When he learns what her thoughts regarding his father have been, he exclaims in amazed disbelief and disapproval,

If I understand you rightly, you have formed a surmise of such horror as I have hardly words to -----Dear Miss Morland, consider the dreadful nature of the suspicions you have entertained.

What have you been judging from? Remember that we are English, that we are Christians. Consult your own understanding, your own sense of the probable, your own observation of what is passing around you . . .

(NA, p. 197)

Catherine learns that most of the suffering in life results from perfectly ordinary human failings--Isabella's heartless ambition and deceit, General Tilney's pride, avarice, and cruelty. Henry's father becomes the villain of the story, but on a very commonplace level. Catherine's marriage to Henry guarantees that she will continue to receive his guidance as her own judgment matures.

* * *

The Bennets and the Bertrams are much like the Allens; they have similar deficiencies but to a greater degree, and the consequences of their failures as parents are far more serious than the results of the Allens' negligence. Mr. Allen's lack of involvement and Mrs. Allen's incompetence involve Catherine in some minor embarrassments, but the Allens are only temporary custodians of her well-being; they are not responsible for her basic education, and their inadequacies have no long range effects on her. In contrast, the failure of the Bennets and the Bertrams to provide proper education, guidance, and restraint for their children involves their entire families in public disgrace and personal suffering. Mansfield Park is unique among the novels in that the heroine is more an observer than a participant in the events which devastate her family. Fanny is affected by the inadequacies of

her surrogate parents primarily because their condescending treatment of her heightens her natural lack of confidence and self-esteem.

Like Mrs. Allen, Lady Bertram is a mild, gentle woman, but she is so lethargic that "she might always be considered as only half awake" (MP, p. 343). She has abdicated her position as a parent and makes no effort to guide or teach her daughters because it takes less effort to indulge or ignore them than to supervise and correct their behavior:

To the education of her daughters, Lady Bertram paid not the smallest attention. She had not 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, but very indulgent to the latter, when it did not put her to inconvenience.
(MP, p. 19-20)

Lady Bertram is too lazy even to take pride in her daughters' popularity or to socialize herself; she leaves their care and training wholly to Mrs. Norris: "She was too indolent even to accept a mother's gratification in witnessing their success and enjoyment at the expense of any personal trouble, and the charge was made over to her sister" (MP, p. 35).

The result is that the attitudes and behavior patterns of her daughters have been shaped by Mrs. Norris, a thoroughly selfish and unprincipled woman. Mrs. Norris has taught Maria and Julia to be arrogant, vain, and self-centered. She has had more influence on Maria because Maria has been her personal favorite; Julia has been less seriously harmed by Mrs. Norris's influence because she has

"held but a second place" in Mrs. Norris's esteem. She has been "less flattered and less spoilt," so her education has not given her "so very hurtful a degree of self-consequence" (MP, p. 466).

Mrs. Norris continually stresses the gap between the position, rights, and expectations of the Miss Bertrams and the lowly status of Fanny Price. She is openly malicious in her treatment of Fanny, and by her example, she encourages Maria and Julia to treat their cousin with condescending rudeness. She relegates Fanny to the status of a servant, exhausting her with trivial errands and unnecessary chores. She actively argues against anything which could contribute to Fanny's comfort or happiness. Mrs. Norris "had no affection for Fanny, and no wish of procuring her pleasure at any time;" she "seemed intent only on lessening her niece's pleasure, both present and past, as much as possible" (MP, pp. 79, 219). One of the heavily ironic touches in the novel is the contrast between Fanny's overly humble, self-denying behavior and Mrs. Norris's ridiculous assumption that Fanny is proud, self-serving, and ungrateful; she repeatedly accuses Fanny of trying to elevate herself to the level of a Miss Bertram and reminds her that she must always be "the lowest and last" (MP, p. 221).

Mrs. Norris is completely lacking in moral sense. After Maria has run off with Henry Crawford, she is stupefied, but not with moral indignation. She feels that she has lost face because it was she who "contrived" the match between Maria and Mr. Rushworth. She angrily blames Fanny--"Had Fanny accepted Mr. Crawford this could not have happened" (MP, p. 448). Her affection for Maria seems to increase as

Maria's merits decrease. It is not a "moral irony," as some critics have suggested, that Mrs. Norris is the only person who forgives Maria; there is no forgiveness or even moral awareness in Mrs. Norris's attitude toward Maria or in her decision to join Maria in banishment from Mansfield.

Whereas Fanny Price is too "creep mouse" and self-abasing to try to evaluate or influence the behavior of her surrogate parents, Elizabeth Bennet is painfully aware of the impropriety of her parents' behavior, and she tries valiantly to change their habits of parental neglect. She tries to limit her mother's indulgence of Lydia and Kitty and to curb her mother's vulgar behavior. Elizabeth is frequently humiliated by her mother's bad manners and tries to persuade her to be more discreet. "Nothing that she could say, however, had any influence. . . . Elizabeth blushed and blushed again with shame and vexation" (PP, pp. 99-100). Elizabeth attempts to exert some influence over her younger sisters' unrestrained behavior, but her efforts are unsuccessful because Mrs. Bennet allows and encourages their indiscreet behavior: "Elizabeth had frequently united with Jane in an endeavor to check the imprudence of Catherine and Lydia; but while they were supported by their mother's indulgence, what chance could there be of improvement?" (PP, p. 213).

Part of the problem is that Mrs. Bennet identifies too strongly with her favorite children; she enters into the joys and distresses of Lydia and Kitty with an enthusiasm that leaves no room for mature judgment or adult discretion. When the regiment leaves Meryton,

Lydia and Kitty are inconsolable, and "Their affectionate mother shared all their grief; she remembered what she had herself endured on a similar occasion, five and twenty years ago" (PP, p. 229). When Lydia is invited to go to Brighton with the colonel's wife, Mrs. Bennet is as overjoyed as her ecstatic daughter and as insensible of any potential danger in the situation. Lydia's feelings "could have been understood only by her mother, who might have felt nearly the same. Lydia's going to Brighton was all that consoled her for the melancholy conviction of her husband's never intending to go there himself" (PP, pp. 232-33). Her only advice to Lydia is to enjoy herself as much as possible. Mrs. Bennet has no moral sense, and unlike Mrs. Allen and Lady Bertram, she refuses to be guided by her husband. After Lydia runs off with Wickham and belatedly marries him, Mrs. Bennet is "more alive to the disgrace, which the want of new clothes must reflect on her daughter's nuptials, than any sense of the shame at her eloping and living with Wickham, a fortnight before they took place" (PP, pp. 310-11).

More than any other Austen heroine, Elizabeth Bennet suffers as a direct result of her parents' inadequacies and the public contempt which is "self-attracted by the rest of her family" (PP, p. 209). In his letter to Elizabeth, Darcy explains that his strongest reason for convincing Bingley to break off his attachment to Jane is not the low connection of Mrs. Bennet's relatives in trade, but rather, the impropriety of Mrs. Bennet's own behavior and that of the rest of her family--"that total want of propriety so frequently, so almost uni-

formly betrayed by herself, by your three younger sisters, and occasionally even by your father" (PP, p. 198). Darcy acknowledges how much it is to their credit that she and Jane conduct themselves so as to receive no share of the censure directed toward the rest of their family. Nevertheless, he feels justified in influencing Bingley against Jane and believes that he has rescued his friend from "a most unhappy connection" (PP, p. 198).

Thus, despite their own genteel behavior, Jane and Elizabeth feel the impact of their family's improper behavior, and the crises that result from their parents' failures form most of the conflict of the novel. Elizabeth initially blames Darcy's pride for having separated Bingley and Jane, but after reading his letter, she realizes that "Jane's disappointment had in fact been the work of her nearest relations," and she grieves that "of a situation so desirable, in every respect, so replete with advantage, so promising for happiness, Jane had been deprived by the folly and indecorum of her own family!" (PP, pp. 209, 213). Jane and Elizabeth both nearly lose their most appropriate suitors--the mates most likely to enable them to achieve lasting marital happiness--because of their parents' unsuitable conduct and consistent failure to perform their necessary functions as parents. When Bingley and Darcy finally do marry Jane and Elizabeth, it is in spite of their mother and younger sisters and because of their own innate merit.

Mr. Bennet and Sir Thomas Bertram, Jane Austen's two most complex and interesting fathers, have many similarities. Both are men of

intelligence and moral integrity, but each has made a serious mistake in choosing his wife. Each has married a woman of substantially inferior intellect and character; each has become withdrawn from his family and, having left the most important aspects of raising his children to their mother (and aunt in Sir Thomas's case), each has been an inadequate and negligent father.

Many of the differences between them seem to stem from the differences between their wives. Lady Bertram is mindless and indolent, but she is gentle, quiet, and largely inoffensive. Mrs. Bennet is also lazy, but she is actively obnoxious, continually demonstrating her stupidity, ill-breeding, and lack of moral sense. Sir Thomas has not been so deeply affected by his wife's dullness, and he tolerates her vegetable-like existence with apparent indifference. His sternness and reserve are in part an attempt to counteract the easy indulgence of his wife and the open flattery and permissiveness of Mrs. Norris toward his daughters; until Maria's liaison with Henry Crawford and Julia's elopement with Mr. Yates, he has no idea how little he has known his daughters nor how much his severe manner has alienated them from him. Whereas Sir Thomas has been unaware of the emotional distance between him and his children, Mr. Bennet has consciously withdrawn from participation in the concerns of his wife and younger daughters. He has abdicated both his authority and his responsibility as head of his family and retired to the role of a sarcastic observer. Mr. Bennet's facade of indifference and ironic detachment is a defense against his frustration and grief; it is his only protection against

being hurt too deeply and constantly by being reminded of his own irrevocable error in his marriage choice.

Sir Thomas is perhaps more admirable and less blameworthy than Mr. Bennet, but he is much less warm and appealing. Although Sir Thomas is a man of strength and determination while Mr. Bennet is a weak and ineffectual one, Mr. Bennet possesses much greater depth, sensitivity, and self-awareness. Furthermore, Sir Thomas's strong moral principles and discipline are undermined and rendered useless--so far as his daughters' education is concerned--by his lack of perceptiveness and by his unhealthy pride. Also, Sir Thomas's gravity is never so endearing as Mr. Bennet's ironic humor, and one cannot but feel more pity for the husband of a Mrs. Bennet than that of a Lady Bertram.

Both Pride and Prejudice and Mansfield Park begin with scenes describing the personalities and circumstances of the adults, but in Pride and Prejudice the inappropriateness and incongruities of the marriage are more heavily emphasized because of the impact of the parents' incompatibility on the children. Mr. Bennet is shown teasing and baiting his wife by not bothering to conceal his indifference toward what she most delights in; his preference for his daughter "Lizzy" and his disapproval of the ignorance and foolishness of his other daughters is revealed, along with Mrs. Bennet's exactly opposite view of their children. Mr. Bennet enjoys using his wit to provoke and vex his wife, and he derives pleasure from puzzling and surprising her: "Mr. Bennet was among the earliest of those who waited upon Mr.

Bingley. He had always intended to visit him, though to the last always assuring his wife that he should not do so; and till the evening after the visit was paid, she had no knowledge of it" (PP, p. 6). The scene is humorous, but the tragic lack of harmony and understanding between them is immediately clear.

Disappointed in life because of his unhappy marriage, Mr. Bennet tries to view life as a joke; at one point he asks Elizabeth, "For what do we live, but to make sport of our neighbors, and laugh at them in our turn?" (PP, p. 364). He derives some satisfaction from laughing at the ridiculous qualities of others. When he meets Mr. Collins, for example,

Mr. Bennet's expectations were fully answered. His cousin was as absurd as he had hoped, and he listened to him with keenest enjoyment, maintaining at the same time the most resolute composure of countenance, and except in an occasional glance at Elizabeth, requiring no partner in his pleasure. By tea-time, however, the dose had been enough . . .

(PP, p. 68)

When he hears that Charlotte Lucas has accepted Mr. Collins' proposal, he sees that she is choosing the same kind of unequal marriage he made, but for economic reasons; he attempts to make a joke of her serious error in judgment: "it gratified him, he said, to discover that Charlotte Lucas, whom he had been used to think tolerably sensible, was as foolish as his wife, and more foolish than his daughter!" (PP, p. 127). Mr. Bennet's reaction to Wickham is similar to his response to Mr. Collins: "He is as fine a fellow . . . as I ever saw. I am prodigiously proud of him. I defy even Sir William Lucas to pro-

duce a more valuable son-in-law" (PP, p. 332).

That his sarcastic wit is primarily a defense mechanism is shown by his quite different reaction to men of intelligence, sensitivity, and good-breeding: Mr. Bennet "was much more agreeable than his companion [Mr. Bingley] expected. There was nothing of presumption or folly in Bingley, that could provoke his ridicule, or disgust him into silence; and he was more communicative, and less eccentric than the other had ever seen him" (PP, p. 346). His attitude toward Mr. Darcy is much the same once he becomes really acquainted with him, and although he tells Elizabeth, "I admire all three sons-in-law highly. . . . Wickham, perhaps, is my favorite; but I think I shall like your husband quite as well as Jane's" (PP, p. 379), he actually prefers people he can respect to those he can ridicule. C. L. Thomson describes him as

a sensitive, disillusioned man [who] consoles himself for his domestic trials by withdrawing to his library, and finds solace for his irritated nerves in sardonic jibes that are little understood by those who have provoked them. Indolent by nature, he has acquiesced in his fate instead of withstanding it, and has become so much detached from his wife and younger daughters that he tacitly views them from a pedestal of conscious superiority. Yet his attempts at indifference are not altogether successful, and if he smiles it is without entirely disguising his inward wound.²

Although Mr. Bennet is a very sympathetic character, he cannot be wholly absolved of responsibility for his marriage because an intelligent man ought to be sensible and perceptive enough not to marry a silly and characterless woman. Even Elizabeth is critical of his

marriage, not so much because of his original choice as because of his reaction to discovering his wife's numerous flaws:

Elizabeth . . . had never been blind to the impropriety of her father's behavior as a husband. She had always seen it with pain; but respecting his abilities and grateful for his affectionate treatment of herself, she endeavoured to forget what she *could not overlook*, and to banish from her thoughts that continual breach of conjugal obligation and decorum which, in exposing his wife to the contempt of her children, was so highly reprehensible.
(PP, p. 236)

Elizabeth's strongest criticism of her father is that when he realized he couldn't improve his wife's character, he gave up trying to educate his daughters as well. After she receives Darcy's first letter, she thinks regretfully of her younger sisters' unrestrained behavior: "They were hopeless of remedy. Her father, contented with laughing at them, would never exert himself to restrain the giddiness of his youngest daughters; her mother, with manners so far from right herself, was entirely insensible of the evil" (PP, p. 213). Elizabeth tries to persuade her father to forbid Lydia from following the officers to Brighton, pointing out the harmful consequences of his permissiveness:

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 gone beyond the reach of amendment. Her character will be fixed, and she will, at sixteen, be the most determined little flirt that ever made herself and her family ridiculous. . . . In this danger Kitty is also comprehended. She will follow wherever Lydia leads. Vain, ignorant, idle, and absolutely uncontrolled! Oh! My dear father, can you suppose it possible that they will not be

censured and despised wherever they are known, and that their sisters will not be often involved in the disgrace?

(PP, p. 231)

Elizabeth tries in vain to convince him of "the very great disadvantage to us all, which must arise from the public notice of Lydia's unguarded and imprudent manner; nay, which has already arisen from it." Mr. Bennet tries to assure her that she and Jane will be valued and respected for their own merits, regardless of their sisters' behavior. Unaware of how deeply Jane is suffering from the loss of Mr. Bingley, Mr. Bennet jocosely asks Elizabeth, "What, has she frightened away some of your lovers? Poor little Lizzy! But do not be cast down. Such squeamish youths as cannot bear to be connected with a little absurdity are not worth a regret" (PP, p. 231).

Mr. Bennet is mistaken; intelligent, well-bred men like Mr. Bingley and Mr. Darcy are reluctant to connect themselves to low, common, ill-bred in-laws, and despite their own gentility and good sense, Elizabeth and Jane find their respectability materially diminished by their family's impropriety. Mr. Bennet is indifferent to society and its forms, and as a result, he doesn't comprehend the impact on his two older daughters of his and his wife's failure to provide adult guidance and supervision for their younger daughters. He assumes that Lydia will make a fool of herself anyway, so she may as well do it in Brighton as at home. He seems convinced that her character, like his wife's, is beyond curing, and he cannot see the importance of controlling her behavior even if her basic nature can't be improved.

Mr. Bennet's most serious error has been his withdrawal from active involvement in his role as a parent; he has failed to do all he could to compensate for his wife's deficiencies. When Elizabeth learns of Lydia's elopement, she blames it on the combination of her mother's mindless indulgence and her father's abdication of his parental responsibility:

. . . she had never felt it so strongly as now, the disadvantages which must attend the children of so unsuitable a marriage, nor ever been so fully aware of the evils arising from so ill-judged a direction of talents; talents which rightly used, might at least have preserved the respectability of his daughters, even if incapable of enlarging the mind of his wife.

(PP, pp. 236-37)

Despite his previous claim that no possible folly of his wife or younger daughters could surprise him, Mr. Bennet is both stunned and deeply anguished by Lydia's immoral conduct. In a letter to Elizabeth explaining what has occurred, Jane writes, ". . . as to my father, I never in my life saw him so affected. . . . What he means to do, I am sure I know not; but his excessive distress will not allow him to pursue any measures in the best and safest way" (PP, p. 275). Later, in describing his reaction to Lydia's farewell note, Jane says, "I never saw anyone so shocked. He could not speak a word for full ten minutes" (PP, p. 292).

Mr. Bennet's weakness of will and lethargy are demonstrated by his efforts to find his wayward child in London; he is totally ineffectual and quickly becomes "spiritless" due to his lack of success. He returns home, leaving Mr. Gardiner to accomplish his task. Mr.

Bennet's "chief wish at present, was to have as little trouble in the business as possible. When the first transports of rage which had produced his activity in seeking her were over, he naturally returned to all his former indolence" (PP, p. 309). He is unable even to repay the money used to induce Wickham to marry Lydia because in spite of the entail on his estate, he has always spent (or allowed Mrs. Bennet to spend) his whole income, and he has built up no savings: "Had he done his duty in that respect, Lydia need not have been indebted to her uncle, for whatever of honour or credit could now be purchased for her" (PP, p. 308).

Mr. Bennet's indifference to his family has not only allowed Lydia's immoral behavior but has also encouraged Wickham's irresponsibility and disrespect toward her and her family. Mr. Gardiner is optimistic at first that Wickham would not have run away with Lydia without intending to marry her because she "is by no means unprotected or friendless." Elizabeth points out that this objection

will hardly hold good. Lydia has no brothers to step forward; and he might imagine, from my father's behaviour, from his indolence and the little attention he has ever seemed to give to what was going forward in his family, that he would do as little, and think as little about it, as any father could do, in such a matter.
(PP, pp. 282, 83)

Wickham's apparent assumption proves correct; it is through the unexpected efforts of Mr. Gardiner and Mr. Darcy, not those of Mr. Bennet, that he is finally persuaded to marry Lydia.

Due to Lydia's escapade, Mr. Bennet is finally forced to recognize his responsibility for the way his daughters have been raised.

When Elizabeth sympathizes with him for all he has endured, he answers, "Say nothing of that. Who should suffer but myself? It has been my own doing, and I ought to feel it." She admonishes him not to blame himself too much, but he replies, "No, Lizzy, let me once in my life feel how much I have been to blame. I am not afraid of being overpowered by the impression. It will pass away soon enough" (PP, p. 299). Mr. Bennet painfully recognizes his share of the guilt for what has happened, but once the matter is settled as well as it can be, he goes back to his old pattern of detachment and humour. He is firm in refusing to allow money to be spent for "wedding" clothes for Lydia, however, and he establishes a new firmness and discipline in handling Kitty.

Mr. Bennet's unfortunate marriage has shaped his personality and habits; the cynicism it has engendered in him adversely affects even his relationships with his two older daughters, whom he truly likes. He seems very unfeeling toward Jane following her apparent loss of Mr. Bingley because he does not perceive the depth of her affection for Bingley. He treats the whole matter "indifferently" and speaks of Jane in the same light, sardonic tone he uses regarding his younger daughters, treating Jane as if she were as shallow and insensitive as Lydia or Kitty. He grows in his understanding of his eldest daughter, however, and when Jane and Mr. Bingley become engaged, "his voice and manner plainly shewed how really happy he was." He congratulates Jane, saying, "You will be a very happy woman. . . . You are a good girl . . . and I have great pleasure in thinking you will

be so happily settled. I have not a doubt of your doing very well together. Your tempers are by no means unlike" (PP, p. 348). He knows that a good marriage requires a similarity of character and outlook, and he is sincerely delighted by the prospect of his daughter's happiness in marriage.

Of all his children, Mr. Bennet loves Elizabeth best. His talk with her on the subject of Mr. Collins' proposal is one of the most amusing yet significant moments in the novel; he steps out of his passive role to protect his child from a lifetime of misery: "An unhappy alternative is before you, Elizabeth. From this day you must be a stranger to one of your parents.--Your mother will never see you again if you do not marry Mr. Collins, and I will never see you again if you do" (PP, p. 112). He speaks humorously, but it is clear that he intends to support his favorite daughter's good judgment and protect her from the kind of unequal marriage he has endured. His homelife is scarcely tolerable in her absence, and when she visits Charlotte at Rosings, Mr. Bennet writes her a note urging her to come home soon. After she returns, ". . . more than once during dinner did Mr. Bennet say voluntarily to Elizabeth, 'I'm glad you are come back, Lizzy'" (PP, p. 222).

According to Henrietta Harmsel, "The final irony . . . of Elizabeth's congeniality with her father comes when he ridicules the possibility of her ever loving Mr. Darcy. . . . his cynicism has so blinded him that he completely misinterprets the feeling of the daughter whom, of all people, he should have been able to understand."³

Elizabeth is "cruelly mortified" by her father's description of Darcy's "perfect indifference" and her "pointed dislike;" she is distressed by his glee over what he sees as a ludicrous idea of Mr. Collins and wonders if he has lacked perceptiveness or if she has over-estimated Darcy's attentions to her since her first refusal of him. She conceals her feelings, and Mr. Bennet misunderstands her entirely.

When Mr. Darcy asks his permission to marry Elizabeth, Mr. Bennet becomes very much concerned. Unable to believe that Elizabeth loves the seemingly proud and disagreeable Mr. Darcy, he begs her to reconsider her choice before it is too late, urging her to marry out of love and admiration, not for money or social advancement:

. . . let me advise you to think better of it. I know your disposition, Lizzy. I know that you could neither be happy nor respectable unless you truly esteemed your husband, unless you looked up to him as a superior. Your lively talents would place you in the greatest danger in an unequal marriage. You could scarcely escape discredit and misery. My child, let me not have the grief of seeing you unable to respect your partner in life. You know not what you are about.

(PP, p. 376)

Mr. Bennet sees himself in his daughter--his potential and his fate--and he desperately wants to save her from the hopeless misery he has suffered throughout his adult life. When she has convinced him of her love for Darcy and of the permanence and sincerity of Darcy's affection for her, Mr. Bennet says, "If this be the case, he deserves you. I could not have parted with you, my Lizzy, to anyone less worthy" (PP, p. 377). He wants to know and like Elizabeth's future

husband and immediately begins "taking pains to get acquainted with him" (PP, p. 379). After she and Darcy are married, "Mr. Bennet missed his second daughter exceedingly; his affection for her drew him oftener from home than anything else could do" (PP, p. 385).

* * *

A frequent comparison made between Mr. Bennet and Sir Thomas Bertram is to contrast Mr. Bennet's "leniency" in dealing with Lydia with Sir Thomas's "harshness" toward Maria. Neither of these descriptions nor the comparison as a whole is valid. Mr. Bennet's first response to his wife's request to have Lydia and Wickham visit them is negative; after it is decided that the Wickhams will live in the north, Jane and Elizabeth persuade their father to allow Lydia to visit them before leaving. Mr. Bennet's reception of the impudent pair "was not quite so cordial [as his wife's]. His countenance rather gained in austerity; and he scarcely opened his lips" (PP, p. 315). In other words, his readmission of Lydia to his household is not so willing nor uncritical as is often implied.

Similarly, Sir Thomas's judgmental severity is frequently exaggerated; he is by no means rigidly moralistic and unforgiving. In the first place, Maria's offense isn't really comparable to Lydia's; there is a significant difference in the degree of guilt involved. At the time Maria ran off with Henry Crawford, she could have had no honorable expectations; there was no possibility of his marrying her

since she was already married to Mr. Rushworth. She rejects her father's pleas that she leave Crawford, and until their mutual animosity causes them to separate, she continues to live with him, hoping that he will marry her after Rushworth obtains a divorce. Sir Thomas is willing to support and protect his daughter, but from a distance. He will not take her back into his home nor "offer so great an insult to the neighborhood" (MP, p. 465) as to expect it to receive her as a part of his household. Sir Thomas accepts Julia back into his home without strong censure or reproach after her elopement with Mr. Yates because both are humble and willing to accept his guidance. He is glad to help his daughter make the best of her hasty marriage.

The Bertrams are one of the few families in Jane Austen's fiction that correspond to the traditional, patriarchal family structure, with the father as the strong, authoritative head of the family unit. Sir Thomas expects to have unquestioned authority in his home: "'advise' was his word, but it was the advice of absolute power" (MP, p. 273). Sir Thomas assumes the role of dominance in his home, but his power and authority do not work to his children's advantage. The severity and remoteness of his manner have simply driven his children's spirits underground; they don't behave naturally in front of him, so he is unaware of what they really think and feel and what they need. He is in many respects a nominal rather than a functional head of his family, unwittingly leaving most of the practical management of his children and household to his idle and incompetent wife and her hypocritical sister. For example, the lack of a fire in Fanny's room

comes as a complete surprise to him, although the condition has existed as long as she has lived there. He has left her comfort-- indeed everything--to Lady Bertram and Mrs. Norris: "Nobody meant to be unkind (least of all Sir Thomas), but nobody put themselves out of their way to secure her comfort" (MP, p. 14). Sir Thomas is basically a just man, but he allows injustice to exist in his home by not paying enough attention. Sir Thomas has been described as "one of those men who judge rightly, and act wisely, when a case is fairly put before them, but who are quite destitute of discernment and adroitness of conduct."⁴ His motives are generous and sincere, but unless all sides of an issue are set before him clearly, he lacks perceptiveness and common sense.

Most of all, Sir Thomas's judgment is distorted by his excessive class consciousness and pride in his estate. Sir Thomas

has a false standard of values. He is blinded and confused by the sense of his own importance. Mansfield, to him, embodies the Good. . . . So that, although he believes that he is bringing up his children to serve God, he is really more bent upon fitting them to serve Mansfield Park. 'How to preserve in the minds of my daughters the consciousness of what they are' is one of his great occupations.⁵

Sir Thomas is first persuaded to invite Fanny to Mansfield Park as much out of fear of her possible future attractiveness to his sons as out of generosity. He wants to prevent any potential marriage between them by raising them as siblings, but at no time does he intend to make Fanny a genuine, equal member of his family. She is always to be inferior and educated with her lowly expectations in mind. He is

convinced that she and his daughters "cannot be equals," and he knows it would be unwise and unfair to raise her as a gentlewoman and then send her back to her old situation.

'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.'

(MP, p. 10)

This attitude on his part unintentionally opens the way for Mrs. Norris's mistreatment of Fanny and his daughters' haughtiness toward her. Sir Thomas is unaware of the underlying arrogance in his assumptions.

Despite his pride and stern reserve, Sir Thomas is a generous and kindly man. He would have helped Mr. and Mrs. Price "from principle as well as from pride, from a general wish of doing right, and a desire of seeing all that were connected with him in situations of respectability" (MP, p. 3-4). Although his pride causes him to err in his initial view of Fanny's status within his household, he intends to do well by his niece and her family. He helps Mrs. Price educate her sons and finds jobs for them as they grow up; when he becomes aware of Fanny's closeness to her brother William, he allows the young man to visit her at Mansfield Park.

Upon his return from Antigua, Sir Thomas exhibits a marked increase in his attention and affection toward his niece. He treats her "with a kindness which astonished and penetrated her, calling her his dear Fanny, kissing her affectionately, and observing with decided

pleasure how much she had grown." Sir Thomas is pleased with the improvements in her health and appearance, and inquires with sincere interest about her family, especially William. Fanny, accustomed to being terrified by his grave countenance, is overwhelmed by his affectionate attention toward her. "He had never been so kind, so very kind to her in his life. His manner seemed changed; his voice was quick from agitation of joy, and all that had been awful in his dignity seemed lost in tenderness" (MP, p. 178). She feels guilty for not loving him more, and observes how tired and thin he has grown overseas. Edmund later informs Fanny, ". . . your uncle never did admire you till now--and now he does" (MP, p. 198). Sir Thomas also begins to recognize Fanny's real worth; he later tells his wife, ". . . she is now a very valuable companion. If we have been kind to her, she is now quite as necessary to us" (MP, p. 285).

Sir Thomas is genuinely devoted to his family, and he would have been "deeply mortified" if he had known the joy his departure for Antigua gives his daughters, and the intense disappointment and dissatisfaction they feel over his return. His unexpectedly early arrival is greeted with "absolute horror" by all his children, who know he will not approve of their theatricals. Sir Thomas, however, is grateful to be home at last and feels inclined to be lenient. He is unusually talkative and relaxed with his children and wants only to be left alone with his family. The intrusion of Mr. Yates thus is especially unwelcome to him, and it is Mr. Yates who forces the issue of the theater into immediate consideration--Sir Thomas just wishes to

end the matter and forget it. "My indulgence shall be given . . . but without any other rehearsal."--And with a relenting smile he added, 'I come home to be happy and indulgent'" (MP, p. 185). He is surprised and disappointed by his family's indiscretion during his absence, but he prefers to remove all reminders of the theater from his home with as little disturbance as possible. He desires "to forget how much he had been forgotten himself," and he is "more willing to believe they felt their error than to run the risk of investigation" (MP, p. 187).

Sir Thomas's return makes a striking change in the easy ways his family has developed during his absence; he withdraws his household from most of their new social contacts except the Rushworths. His family feels that his presence has brought "all sameness and gloom compared with the past" (MP, p. 196). Actually, as Fanny points out to Edmund, nothing is really different than it was before Sir Thomas left, but only seems so in contrast to the liveliness and laughter during his prolonged absence. Maria and Julia are especially restless under the renewed restrictions, and both rush into marriage to escape their father's oppressive control.

As he becomes acquainted with Mr. Rushworth, Sir Thomas realizes that he is in every way an ignorant and inferior young man. Perceiving that Maria is at best indifferent to her fiance, he resolves to break off the engagement if she wishes him to do so: "Advantageous as would be the alliance, and long-standing and public as was the engagement, her happiness must not be sacrificed to it" (MP, p. 200).

With this honorable intention, he consults his elder daughter, but she assures him that she is content with her choice, and he accepts her statement at face value:

Sir Thomas was satisfied; too glad to be satisfied, perhaps, to urge the matter quite so far as his judgment might have dictated to others. It was an alliance which he could not have relinquished without pain. . . . He was happy to escape the embarrassing evils of a rupture, the wonder, the reflections, the reproach that must attend it, happy to secure a marriage which would bring him such an addition of respectability and influence, and very happy to think any thing of his daughter's disposition that was most favorable for the purpose.

(MP, p. 201)

Sir Thomas does not know his daughters' temperaments at all "because, though a truly anxious father, he was not outwardly affectionate, and the reserve of his manner repressed all flow of their spirits before him" (MP, p. 42). After his conference with Maria, he reassures himself that there is no necessity of her marrying for love, so long as she does not mind marrying without affection or esteem, and he decides that she may as well have material benefits anyway: ". . . her feelings probably were not acute; he had never supposed them to be so; but her comforts might not be less on that account, and if she could dispense with seeing her husband a leading, shining character there would certainly be everything else in her favor" (MP, p. 201).

As Marvin Mudrick points out, Sir Thomas is satisfied in knowing his daughter will gain "money, rank, security, and power over a weak, stupid man," while overlooking or dismissing those vital elements that are missing in his own marriage--"love, sympathy, and respect."⁶ It is

in this attitude that Sir Thomas is most dissimilar to Mr. Bennet, but he does not know Maria as well as Mr. Bennet knows Elizabeth, and he does not suffer over Lady Bertram's deficiencies as Mr. Bennet does over Mrs. Bennet's defects of character. Sir Thomas holds the traditional, patriarchal values of money and social advancement above the affective values of personal attachment and respect; he has far lower expectations of marriage as an intimate relationship and has therefore been less hurt and disappointed by the emptiness of his own marriage.

Mudrick accuses Sir Thomas of viewing marriage only in terms of convenience and material advantage, and this is substantiated by his treatment of Fanny. Sir Thomas actively promotes a romance between Fanny and Henry Crawford, and when he learns that Fanny has refused Crawford's proposal, he is furious. His anger increases as he finds her attitude increasingly incomprehensible. He is still fearful of an attachment between Fanny and Edmund and must be assured that Edmund is in love with Mary Crawford to quiet his fear. Accustomed to his daughters' apparent lack of deep feelings, he cannot understand his niece; she can articulate no reason except personal dislike for not wishing to marry Henry, and he cannot comprehend how any young woman in her position could not like to marry a rich and generally agreeable young man. He can see no reason why anyone would turn down a chance to gain both wealth and status. He thinks of Fanny only as being "willful and perverse," and he accuses her of being ungrateful and intractable toward those whom she should allow to "guide" her actions.

Sir Thomas is accustomed to having complete authority in his home, and he doesn't hesitate to pressure and manipulate Fanny in any way that seems advantageous for her in his eyes. He reminds Fanny of her lowly origin and the consequent obligation of marrying well; he points out that neither of his daughters would have turned down such a rich and advantageous match and berates her for having failed both her natural family and the family that has raised her. Sir Thomas decides to send Fanny to visit her impoverished and vulgar family on the assumption that her understanding of the value of money has become "disordered" by the years she has spent enjoying the luxuries of his home. He hopes that the sordid ugliness of her family's situation will teach her the true value of Henry's proposal: "His prime motive in sending her away, had very little to do with the propriety of seeing her parents again, and nothing at all with any idea of making her happy" (MP, p. 369).

Jane Austen clearly disapproves of Sir Thomas's attempts to persuade Fanny to marry a man she doesn't love; like Defoe, Jane Austen rejected the patriarchal belief that parents were entitled to pressure a child into accepting an unwanted suitor. Fanny "had hoped that to a man like her uncle, so discerning, so honorable, so good, the simple acknowledgement of a settled dislike on her side, would have been sufficient. To her infinite grief she found that it was not" (MP, p. 318). Although he closes his diatribe by gently assuring her that he would not try to persuade her to marry against her inclinations, this is not true. He has just failed to accept the lack of

affection as a legitimate reason for refusing to marry a rich suitor. Sir Thomas does not want Fanny to marry against her inclinations; he wants her to change them.

Sir Thomas's disillusionment, like Mr. Bennet's, results from the immoral action of one of his daughters. Too late, he realizes how injurious the contrast between the flattery and indulgence of Mrs. Norris and his own solemnity and strictness have been to his children. More importantly, he discovers that even this "grievous mismanagement" has not been the most damaging error in his plan of education. He at last perceives that he has emphasized social graces while neglecting to instill self-control, responsibility, and moral rectitude:

To be distinguished for elegance and accomplishments--the authorized object of their youth--could have had no useful influence that way, no moral effect on the mind. He had meant them to be good, but his cares had been directed to the understanding and manners, not the disposition, and of the necessity of self-denial and humility, he feared they had never heard from any lips that could profit them.

(MP, p. 463)

Despite the cost and care expended on their training, his daughters have grown up without acquiring the most fundamental ethical values. Unlike Mr. Bennet, Sir Thomas is not "overpowered" by the shock of his child's escapade; ". . . he is still able to think and act" (MP, p. 442), but his daughter is incorrigible.

Like Mr. Bennet, Sir Thomas is deeply grieved and humiliated by his daughter's behavior, and his awareness of his own failure causes him lasting pain and regret:

He felt that he ought not to have allowed the marriage, that his daughter's sentiments had been sufficiently known to him to render him culpable in authorizing it, that in so doing he had sacrificed the right to the expedient, and been governed by motives of selfishness and worldly wisdom. . . . the anguish arising from the conviction of his own errors in the education of his daughter, was never entirely done away with.

(MP, pp. 462-63)

Sir Thomas is consoled by Tom's recovery from his illness into a more mature and dependable person, by the tractability of Julia and Mr. Yates, and by Mrs. Norris's voluntary departure from Mansfield. Ironically, his greatest happiness is in the marriage of Edmund and Fanny; he is now as glad to see the union of the two as he earlier would have been angry and disappointed by it. He has become "sick of ambitious and mercenary connections, prizing more and more the sterling good of principle and temper" (MP, p. 471).

Sir Thomas has wanted to be a good father, but his strict, authoritarian approach to child-rearing has alienated his children from him and he has never really known them. He has blindly accepted his daughters' social accomplishments as evidence of their worthiness and has set a bad example for his offspring by his excessive pride. Mr. Bennet also cares about his children, but because his wife's company is extremely unpleasant to him, he chooses to remain aloof from his family. He closes his eyes to the growing danger of his detachment, and his younger daughters turn out worse than they would have if he had made an effort to curb and redirect their unrestrained energy. If Mr. Bennet and Sir Thomas Bertram had chosen suitable

wives, their faults might have been compensated for or alleviated altogether, but joined to women of little activity and no character or intelligence, their inadequacies have been grossly exaggerated and have proved disastrous for their children.

* * *

Although Mrs. Dashwood is not so lazy or senseless as Mrs. Bennet and Lady Bertram, neither does she handle her adult responsibilities adequately. It is obvious from the outset that the reversal of parent-child roles between Mrs. Dashwood and Elinor is not the result of Mr. Dashwood's death, but is a well-established pattern of behavior:

Elinor, this eldest daughter whose advice was so effectual, possessed a strength of understanding, and coolness of judgment, which qualified her, though only nineteen, to be the counsellor of her mother, and enabled her frequently to counteract, to the advantage of them all, that eagerness of mind in Mrs. Dashwood which must generally have led to imprudence. . . . her feelings were strong: but she knew how to govern them: it was a knowledge which her mother had yet to learn, and which one of her sisters had resolved never to be taught.
(SS, p. 6)

The contrast between Elinor and her mother and sister is first demonstrated through their reactions to Mr. Dashwood's death. Instead of trying to cope with the crisis following the death of her husband, Mrs. Dashwood makes no effort to perform the duties which confront her. She and Marianne immerse themselves in grief and leave to

Elinor the responsibility of handling their difficult situation. Like the rest of her family, Elinor is "deeply afflicted," but unlike them, she struggles to exert herself and tries "to rouse her mother to similar forbearance" (SS, p. 7). It is Elinor's good sense that prevents her mother from leaving Norland precipitately and thus perhaps causing a breach with the John Dashwoods, whose help they otherwise have every reason to expect. It is Elinor's discretion that prevents Mrs. Dashwood from renting several houses which are too expensive for their reduced income and persuades her to sell the carriage which they can no longer afford to maintain or use. "Her wisdom, too, limited the number of servants to three" (SS, p. 26).

Although she is fairly successful in guiding her mother in matters involving money, Elinor is unable to convince Mrs. Dashwood to take precautions where Marianne's attitudes and behavior are concerned. Like Elizabeth Bennet, Elinor has the judgment and common sense her parent lacks without having the authority to effect much change. Just as Mrs. Bennet enters into all Lydia's feelings, Mrs. Dashwood empathizes Marianne's emotions. Elinor recognizes the potential dangers of Marianne's excessive sensibility, but Mrs. Dashwood values and encourages Marianne's extravagant emotionalism; her temperament is very similar to Marianne's and she readily identifies with whatever Marianne feels. This contributes to Mrs. Dashwood's inadequacy as a parent; she cannot teach Marianne the fallacy of her romantic philosophy because she believes in it herself. Like Marianne, she relies on her feelings instead of using common sense; consequently,

she is unable to judge people and events accurately, and she fails to exercise the necessary parental discretion to provide a healthy check on Marianne's unguarded behavior.

Because Willoughby is handsome, charming, graceful, and gallant, neither Marianne nor her mother can see any faults in him; Mrs. Dashwood views him with as little insight as Marianne, who stoutly maintains that "It is not time or opportunity that is to determine intimacy: it is disposition alone" (SS, p. 59). Both trust him unquestioningly. Only Elinor perceives Willoughby's lack of moderation, his lack of caution, and his disregard of propriety.

Elinor is alarmed by Marianne's public absorption in her relationship with Willoughby, but her warnings go unheeded because "Mrs. Dashwood entered into all their feelings with a warmth which left her no inclination for checking this excessive display of them" (SS, p. 54). With her mother as her staunchest ally, Marianne ignores Elinor's advice, and soon she and Willoughby are on such intimate terms that their friends simply assume that they are engaged. Elinor tries to convince Mrs. Dashwood of the need to clarify the status of Marianne's relationship with Willoughby, but her mother believes that their behavior has declared their engagement as surely as if they had announced it formally:

'I want no proof of their affection,' said Elinor; 'but of their engagement I do.'
 'I am perfectly satisfied of both.'
 'Yet not a syllable has been said to you on the subject, by either of them.'
 'I have not wanted syllables where actions have spoken so plainly . . .

(SS, pp. 79-80)

Elinor finally suggests that her mother just ask Marianne directly whether or not she and Willoughby are engaged, but Mrs. Dashwood emphatically refuses; "common sense, common care, common prudence, were all sunk in Mrs. Dashwood's romantic delicacy" (SS, p. 85).

Like Mr. Bennet, Mrs. Dashwood disregards the formalities of social custom. Mr. Bennet does so out of cynical contempt while Mrs. Dashwood's reason is sentimental idealism, yet the problems are essentially the same. In Jane Austen's view, an individual cannot ignore the norms and rituals of society without reducing his or her ability to function as a member of society. Both Mr. Bennet and Mrs. Dashwood fail to insist that their younger daughters conform to the rules of well-bred behavior in their society, and their children suffer as a result.

When Mrs. Jennings invites Elinor and Marianne to go to London with her, Elinor immediately sees the danger of Marianne's being in London without even the limited guidance she receives at home. Like Elizabeth Bennet, Elinor knows how little effect her efforts to prevent the visit are likely to have because "Whatever Marianne was desirous of her mother would be eager to promote--she could not expect to influence the latter to cautiousness of conduct in an affair respecting which she had never been able to inspire her with distrust" (SS, p. 155). Elinor's chief objection is that Mrs. Jennings is incapable of providing them with the protection of an adequate chaperone; her own behavior is not genteel, and the propriety of other's behavior doesn't concern her. Mrs. Dashwood is aware of Mrs. Jennings'

deficiencies, but "with that happy ardour of youth which Marianne and her mother equally shared," she brushes aside the cautions of her "dear prudent Elinor" (SS, p. 156). Once in London, Marianne writes openly to Willoughby, thereby convincing everyone of their engagement, while Mrs. Jennings gossips about their engagement until, as Colonel Brandon tells Elinor, "their marriage is universally talked of" (SS, p. 173) even among people they don't know. This intensifies Marianne's pain and embarrassment when Willoughby's engagement to the wealthy Miss Grey is announced.

In allowing the appearance of an engagement between Marianne and Willoughby to continue without ever inquiring into its validity, Mrs. Dashwood has tacitly encouraged Marianne to assume that she has a commitment from Willoughby which in fact has not existed. The indulgence of feeling which Mrs. Dashwood has cherished and fostered in her daughter now results in Marianne's throwing herself completely into her heart-broken suffering; when she carelessly catches cold, her depressed and weakened condition makes it a serious rather than a minor illness. After Marianne has recovered, she perceives how self-destructive her behavior has been; Mrs. Dashwood also realizes that she has been negligent in not fulfilling her responsibility as a parent to guide Marianne's behavior and curb her adolescent folly.

Mrs. Dashwood later discovers that she has neglected her eldest daughter, too, by being exclusively engrossed in Marianne's more visible sorrows. Elinor has been very careful to avoid adding to her mother and sister's suffering while they have been coping with the

trauma of Willoughby's inexplicable behavior; she has controlled her reaction to Edward's secret engagement so carefully that her family is unaware of how deeply she has been suffering. When Edward's engagement to Lucy Steele becomes public knowledge, "Elinor was to be the comforter of others in her own distresses, no less than in theirs" (SS, p. 261). Only later does Mrs. Dashwood realize that

. . . everything had been expressly softened at the time, to spare her from an increase of unhappiness, suffering as she had then suffered for Marianne. She found she had been misled by the careful, the considerate attention of her daughter, to think the attachment which once she had so well understood, much slighter in reality than she had been wont to believe, or than it now proved to be.

(SS, pp. 355-56)

When the servant announces that Mr. Ferrars is married, Mrs. Dashwood is "shocked to perceive by Elinor's countenance how much she really suffered," but for once Mrs. Dashwood controls her own feelings and exerts herself on Elinor's behalf, inquiring discreetly for more details so that Elinor "had the benefit of the information without the exertion of seeking it" (SS, p. 353).

Because Elinor has always been so self-controlled, her mother is at a loss to know how to comfort her now, but Mrs. Dashwood becomes more sensitive to Elinor's feelings and more willing to curb the inappropriate expression of her own. Like Marianne, she begins to see that emotions can be deep and genuine without being dramatized and exaggerated. When Edward unexpectedly arrives at the cottage, Mrs. Dashwood treats him in as composed and gracious a manner as she can, "conforming as she trusted, to the wishes of that daughter by whom she

then meant, in the warmth of her heart, to be guided in everything" (SS, p. 359). Despite her lack of parental judgment, Mrs. Dashwood is a very warm and loving mother who truly desires the happiness and well-being of her daughters, and she seems to have learned from her errors.

* * *

Jane Austen's two motherless heroines--Emma Woodhouse and Anne Elliot--are at the opposite extremes among her heroines in several ways: Emma errs in being too self-willed and manipulative, while Anne nearly forfeits her happiness by submitting to the guidance of others; Emma is the adored favorite and dominant member of her family, while Anne is "nothing" to her father and sister; Emma will not leave her father to marry Knightley and only marries him when the two families can be combined into one household, while Anne willingly leaves her family to marry Wentworth, regretting only that she has no relatives worthy of her husband's esteem.

In the deaths of their mothers, Emma and Anne each lost the one person most like herself. In Emma's case, her mother was the one person as strong, quick, and intelligent as herself, and therefore capable of guiding and controlling her. As Knightley points out to Mrs. Weston,

Emma is spoiled by being the cleverest of her family. At ten years old she had the misfortune of being able to answer questions which puzzled

her sister at seventeen. She was always quick and assured; Isabella slow and diffident. And ever since she was twelve, Emma has been mistress of the house and of you all. In her mother she lost the only person able to cope with her. She inherits her mother's talents, and must have been under subjection to her.

(E, p. 37)

Mrs. Weston possesses the qualities of good breeding, good sense, high principles, and education that should have made her an ideal surrogate parent. However, ". . . the mildness of her temper had hardly allowed her to impose any restraint," and she "had such an affection for her as could never find fault" (E, pp. 5, 6). Rather than imposing the adult judgment and discipline needed to guide Emma, Mrs. Weston (then Miss Taylor) has treated her as an equal, and Emma has been free to do whatever she liked, "highly esteeming Miss Taylor's judgment, but directed chiefly by her own" (E, p. 5). In any disagreement between them, "Mrs. Weston was the most used of the two to yield" (E, p. 227).

Emma's father exerts even less influence over Emma than Miss Taylor does. He is "a most affectionate, indulgent father," but he is not strong-minded or perceptive enough to provide Emma with the parental guidance she needs or even the companionship of an equal: "He could not meet her in conversation, rational or playful. . . . though everywhere beloved for the friendliness of his heart and his amiable temper, his talents could not have recommended him at any time" (E, pp. 5, 7). Mr. Woodhouse lacks the necessary insight to assess Emma's behavior accurately or to govern her behavior properly. For example, when Knightley warns Emma of the dangers of manipulating

other people, Mr. Woodhouse, "understanding but in part," can see only Emma's virtues: "Emma never thinks of herself, if she can do good to others" (E, p. 13). He can see no faults in Emma and cannot imagine that she seems imperfect to anyone. This encourages Emma "to think a little too well of herself" (E, p. 5). Her father never doubts the superiority and rightness of Emma's conduct, and consequently, she is not inclined to be self-critical or to examine her own motives too closely. She is unaware of the "real evils" of her dominant position in the Woodhouse family, and the central conflict in the novel arises out of her egotistical delight in manipulating people, which blinds her to the real motives and feelings of those around her.

Far from exercising any parental authority over his younger daughter, Mr. Woodhouse is childlike in his dependence on her. When it begins to snow lightly while they are visiting at Randalls, his first reaction is "'What is to be done, my dear Emma? What is to be done?' . . . To her he looked for comfort; and her assurances of safety . . . revived him a little" (E, pp. 126-27). He relies on Emma to soothe and cheer him: "His spirits required support. He was a nervous man, easily depressed; fond of everybody he was used to, and hating to part with them; hating change of every kind" (E, p. 7).

Like Miss Taylor, Mr. Woodhouse is easily manipulated by Emma; she knows his many fears and worries--his dislike of anything sudden or unusual, his excessive concerns about health and safety--and she knows exactly how to present an idea to get the response she wants. When the Coles invite the Woodhouses to their dinner party, Emma con-

vinces her father that she should go, but "As for his going, Emma did not wish him to think it possible; the hours would be too late, and the party too numerous. He was soon pretty well resigned" (E, p. 208-09).. With equal finesse, she presents the plans for the ball to her father in carefully graduated steps until he is brought at last to approve the whole venture.

The absence of any strong adult authority in the Woodhouse family has allowed Emma to assume an adult role long before she has had the maturity, judgment, and self-awareness to handle its privileges and responsibilities. One of the consequences of Miss Taylor's leniency is that Emma has never had to apply herself to her studies; Emma is not inclined to impose discipline on herself to practise piano, read widely, or otherwise improve herself and therefore has never really developed her innate abilities: ". . . steadiness had always been wanting; and in nothing had she approached the degree of excellence which she would have been glad to command, and ought not to have failed of" (E, p. 44). According to Knightley, Emma "would never submit to anything requiring industry and patience, and a subjection of the fancy to the understanding" (E, p. 37). Emma is aware of the limits of her skills, but she enjoys a reputation which exceeds her level of accomplishment.

Jane Fairfax is an example of what Emma could have become through proper adult guidance; under the supervision of right-minded and well-informed foster parents, Jane has cultivated her natural talents. Knightley points out to Emma that her antipathy toward Jane,

who is ideally suited to be her close friend, is the result of her envy of Jane's accomplishments which create an unflattering comparison to her own. Knightley maintains that Emma dislikes Jane because she sees in her "the really accomplished young woman which she wanted to be thought herself." Emma consistently slights Jane and chooses instead a friend to whom she can feel superior in every way and whose "improvement" she plans to undertake.

Emma's decision to befriend Harriet Smith is an expression of her sense of personal superiority: "She would notice her; she would improve her; she would detach her from her bad acquaintances, and introduce her into good society; she would form her opinions and her manners" (E, pp. 23-4). Because she is accustomed to having a parental role in her family, she adopts a parental role toward Harriet. She uses much the same approach in persuading Harriet to reject Robert Martin as she does in manipulating her father, but with slightly less success: ". . . it was heavy work to be for ever convincing without producing any effect; for ever agreed to, without being able to make their opinions the same" (E, p. 267). Ultimately, Emma uses more direct methods to coerce Harriet into doing what she wants--she accuses Harriet of ingratitude and even threatens Harriet with the loss of her friendship. The result of Emma's influence is that Harriet begins to develop Emma's faults, becoming less humble and more vain.

Emma also expects to have a dominant role in Highbury society, and much of her behavior is motivated by snobbish class consciousness

and a desire for distinction. She disregards the excellence of Robert Martin's character and capabilities because he is a farmer and therefore beneath her notice. She seldom visits Mrs. and Miss Bates because she wishes to avoid associating with "the second and third rate of Highbury, who were calling on them for ever" (E, p. 155). When the Coles, who have become wealthy through trade, plan a dinner party, Emma intends to decline the invitation she expects to receive in order to teach them "that it was not for them to arrange the terms on which the superior families would visit them" (E, p. 207). When her invitation is long in coming, Emma worries that she may not have the opportunity to exercise her "power of refusal." Similarly, in her relationship with Frank Churchill, she fully expects to have the chance to refuse his proposal.

At the same time, Emma never seriously considers that Mr. Elton may be courting her. When she observes his solicitous attention to her comfort, she momentarily wonders if he might be shifting his attention from Harriet to her, but she immediately dismisses the idea as "Absurd and insufferable!" (E, p. 118). When Mr. Elton proposes, Emma is stunned; she can't believe he would be so presumptuous as to address her. She sees as great a gap between herself and Mr. Elton as he sees between himself and Miss Smith; she feels that while he may not have been capable of perceiving the superiority of her talents and "elegancies of mind," he should at least have recognized the disparity between their fortunes and social levels--the Woodhouses are part of "a very ancient family," while the Eltons are "nobody."

Because Emma is more intelligent than the other members of her family, she has become vain about her mental abilities; she thinks she has a rare degree of insight into other people's feelings. She feels that her superior judgment entitles her to manipulate them for their own good. She has absolute confidence in her own view and consistently misinterprets the behavior of those around her to support her preconceived ideas. Despite Mr. Knightley's well-considered and perceptive warning that Mr. Elton is not a man to make a socially or economically imprudent match, Emma convinces Harriet to think of Mr. Elton as her suitor; she talks to Harriet as if his courtship were a settled matter: "It is a certainty. Receive it on my judgment" (E, p. 74). When John Knightley tries to open her eyes to the real meaning of Mr. Elton's behavior and to her apparent encouragement of his attentions, she is irked by her brother-in-law's attempt to advise her; she resents the implication that she is "blind and ignorant, and in want of counsel." She consoles herself by musing over "the blunders which often arise from a partial knowledge of circumstances, of the mistakes which people of high pretensions to judgment are for ever falling into" (E, p. 112). When Knightley tries to tell Emma that there is a private understanding between Frank and Jane, she flatly rejects his warning, saying emphatically, "'I will answer for the gentleman's indifference.' She spoke with a confidence which staggered, with a satisfaction which silenced Mr. Knightley" (E, p. 351). Knightley can only assume that she and Frank have a private understanding to make her so certain of his feelings.

Like her father, Emma is absorbed in her own feelings to the extent that she is imperceptive of and insensitive to the feelings of others. Mr. Woodhouse laments the happy and fortunate marriages of his elder daughter and Miss Taylor, assuming that whatever is sad or unsettling to him is sad and unsettling to everyone else. Emma is unable to take seriously the feelings of people she considers inferior to herself; she blithely absolves herself of blame for the unhappiness she has caused by assuming that Mr. Elton, Harriet, and Robert Martin are so shallow and changeable that they won't suffer much from their respective disappointments. Even after Knightley tells her of the depth of Robert Martin's feelings and Harriet proves herself to be "more resolutely in love than Emma had foreseen" (E, p. 112), it is still her own discontent and not theirs that concerns Emma: "She could not repent. They must be separated; but there was a great deal of pain in the process--so much so to herself at this time, that she soon felt the expediency of a little consolation" (E, p. 187).

Knightley tries to give Emma the adult guidance she needs but does not get from her own family. He immediately recognizes the dangers of her relationship with Harriet and warns her of the mistake she is making. He is very angry after she persuades Harriet to reject Robert Martin's proposal; he tries to show her how distorted her perception of their relative merits is and how much harm she is doing to Harriet, but only after Harriet reveals her attachment to Mr. Knightley does Emma believe his assertion, "You have been no friend to Harriet Smith, Emma" (E, p. 63). Mr. Knightley is also aware of the

harm to Emma herself in playing the role of mentor to the uninformed girl; as he tells Mrs. Weston,

I think her the very worst sort of companion that Emma could possibly have. She knows nothing herself, and looks upon Emma as knowing everything. She is a flatterer in all her ways; and so much the worse because undesigned. Her ignorance is hourly flattery. How can Emma imagine she has anything to learn herself, while Harriet is presenting such a delightful inferiority?

(E, p. 38)

Knightley repeatedly tries to show Emma the errors in her assumptions about the people around her, accurately and objectively describing the characteristics and probable behavior of Robert Martin, Harriet, Mr. Elton, and Frank Churchill, but she is too wrapped up in her own fantasies to listen.

Although he has no actual authority over Emma, Mr. Knightley is the closest thing to a parent that she has. He is the only effective source of clear thinking and mature judgment in Emma's life, and she has a "habitual respect for his judgment" (E, p. 65). She frequently disregards his advice when it conflicts with her own opinions, but she cannot manipulate or charm him into agreeing with her when she is wrong, and his disapproval always makes her uneasy. Unlike her family and other friends, he never flatters her, but rather, tells her the truth about herself. He is "one of the few people who could see faults in Emma Woodhouse, and the only one who ever told her of them" (E, p. 11).

Emma often rejects his insights, but she cares too deeply about Mr. Knightley to be untouched by his criticism. Following the outing

to Box Hill, Mr. Knightley emphatically states his disappointment in her behavior to Miss Bates, and in his comments he expresses his sense of parental responsibility for Emma:

Emma, I must once more speak to you as I have been used to do; a privilege rather endured than allowed, perhaps, but I must still use it. I cannot see you acting wrong, without a remonstrance. . . . This is not pleasant to you, Emma--and it is very far from pleasant to me; but I must, I will--I will tell you truths while I can; satisfied with proving myself your friend by very faithful counsel and trusting that you will some time or other do me greater justice than you can do now.

(E, pp. 374-75)

Emma is profoundly affected by his censure: "She was most forcibly struck. The truth of his representation there was no denying. She felt it at her heart. . . . Emma felt tears running down her cheeks almost all the way home, without being at any trouble to check them, extraordinary as they were" (E, p. 376). She is genuinely contrite and begins the next day to make amends.

Emma has always felt secure in Mr. Knightley's esteem and has taken her position in her life for granted; only when she fears that she may be supplanted by Harriet does she recognize "how much of her happiness depended on being first with Mr. Knightley, first in interest and affection" (E, p. 415). She finally sees the value of his concern for her and understands that he has given her something no one else has; he has not only loved her, he has also "watched over her from a girl, with an endeavor to improve her, and an anxiety for her doing right, which no other creature had at all shared" (E, p. 415). Emma later tells Knightley that she has escaped the usual fate

of spoiled children only because he has cared enough to try to counteract the indulgence of other people. Knightley credits Emma's basic intelligence and Miss Taylor's good principles with counteracting the effects of over-indulgence, but Emma is right when she assures him, "I was very often influenced rightly by you--oftener than I would own at the time. I am very sure you did me good" (E, p. 462).

By the end of the novel, Emma has discovered that she has deceived herself and that her perceptions have been shaped and limited by her false assumptions and expectations, but her education still seems incomplete. She is more self-aware than previously, but her tendency toward self-importance, snobbery, and pride are very little changed; she is less arrogant and perhaps less manipulative, but her moral values are still limited by her sense of social and economic superiority. Although she at last understands the merits of Robert Martin's character, she assumes that her personal friendship with Harriet must end; it is ironic that Emma feels she cannot continue her friendship with Harriet, since Knightley is "a very warm friend of Robert Martin" (E, p. 63). When she learns of Harriet's parentage, Emma is aghast that she has been promoting a connection in which "The stain of illgitimacy, unbleached by nobility or wealth, would have been a stain indeed" (E, p. 482).

* * *

Sir Walter Elliot is not only one of Jane Austen's least pleasant characters, he is one of her worst parents as well. She defines his personality in one sentence: "Vanity was the beginning and end of Sir Walter's character: vanity of person and vanity of situation" (P, p. 4). All his values and behavior patterns reflect this one trait; he is narrow-minded, hypocritical, self-absorbed, and arrogant. The worst result of his defects of character is that two of his daughters--Elizabeth and Mary--have absorbed these qualities from him, and his attitudes toward his children also reflect his vanity. He values Elizabeth most because she is "very handsome, and very like himself" (P, p. 5), and he assumes that she will marry well, thereby bringing further importance to the family. He values Mary a little, but only because her husband is a member of the second most prestigious family in their neighborhood. Anne is a child "of very inferior value" in Sir Walter's view; her beauty has never resembled his, and now that she has lost her youthful bloom, he can see no possibility that she will ever enhance his prestige. Consequently, her happiness and comfort are of no importance to him and he has no affection for her. Anne thus holds an exactly opposite position in the Elliot family to that held by Emma in the Woodhouse family.

It is Elizabeth who holds a position comparable to Emma's, and she resembles Emma in many ways. All the negative aspects of Emma's situation and personality are fully developed in Elizabeth Elliot, who possesses none of Emma's redeeming qualities. Like Emma, Elizabeth is accustomed to having her own way; her father esteems her as

esteems neither of his other children; for her "he would really have given up anything, which he had not been very much tempted to do" (P, p. 5), the closest thing to unselfishness of which Sir Walter is capable. Elizabeth resembles Emma in holding a dominant position within her family circle; with her father, "her influence had always been great," and upon the death of Lady Elliot, "Elizabeth had succeeded at sixteen to all that was possible of her mother's rights and consequence. . . . Thirteen years had seen her mistress of Kellynch Hall. . . . For thirteen years had she been doing the honors, and laying down the domestic law at home" (P, pp. 5, 6-7). Just as Miss Taylor has had little authority over Emma, Lady Russell has had scarcely any influence with Elizabeth; she has tried to guide and counsel Elizabeth, "but always in vain: Elizabeth would go her own way" (P, p. 16).

Ten years older than Emma, Elizabeth is becoming discontent that she is still single and has no appropriate suitors; like Emma, she considers few people worthy to address her. Just as Emma expects Frank Churchill to fall in love with her, Elizabeth expected to be courted by William Elliot, heir to her father's estate. When Mr. Elliot married someone else, she felt slighted and deprived; no one else seems so fully her equal as another Elliot.

Unlike Emma, Elizabeth has no good qualities to temper the egotism, self-importance, and selfishness she has learned from her father and developed through his indulgence and her personal status as an Elliot. Unlike Emma, she has no one to counteract the negative

effects of her family situation, no one whose opinion she respects enough to learn and grow through his influence; consequently, she is as cold and shallow as Sir Walter is.

Among the Elliot daughters, only Anne resembles her mother, and because of her closeness first to her mother and later to Lady Russell, she has not been influenced by Sir Walter's bad example. Lady Elliot was "an excellent woman, sensible and amiable, whose judgment and conduct, if they might be pardoned the youthful infatuation that made her Lady Elliot, had never required indulgence afterwards" (P, p. 4). In the death of her mother, Anne lost the one person in her family who could appreciate her worth and who could maintain balance and stability within the Elliot household. While she lived, Lady Elliot curbed the excesses of her husband and compensated for the deficiencies of his judgment and principles by the steadiness of her own, but her death destroyed this equilibrium:

She had humoured, or softened, or concealed his failings, and promoted his real respectability for seventeen years. . . . While Lady Elliot had lived, there had been method, moderation, and economy, which had just kept him within his income; but with her had died all such right-mindedness; and from that period he had been constantly exceeding it.
(P, p. 9)

Although Anne possesses not only her mother's sweet disposition but also her good sense, steady principles, and practical capability, she has no influence over either her father or her older sister:

"Anne, with an elegance of mind and sweetness of character, which must have placed her high with any people of real understanding, was nobody

with either father or sister; her word had no weight, her convenience was always to give way--she was only Anne" (P, p. 5). Anne is accustomed to having her wishes ignored and her needs disregarded; despite her superiority of judgment, their preferences invariably take precedence over hers. In contrast to Emma, who errs in having too great a sense of personal power and trying to control others, Anne's tendency is toward submissiveness. It is not surprising that Anne is strongly influenced by Lady Russell because she is Anne's only source of familial affection.

Like Miss Taylor, Lady Russell seems ideally suited to be a substitute mother; she is sensible, intelligent, genteel, and loving. However, she believes in the traditional, patriarchal considerations in marriage; she has "prejudices on the side of ancestry . . . a value for rank and consequence" (P, p. 11), and this blind spot causes her to give Anne faulty advice on more than one occasion. Lady Russell persuaded Anne not to marry Captain Wentworth in spite of their deep mutual love because she felt that Anne would be throwing herself away in marrying a man with no fortune, no nobility of birth, and no connections to insure his promotion in his profession--in short, " a young man, who had nothing but himself to recommend him" (P, p. 26). Lady Russell felt sure that Anne would be able to make a more "equal" match, and because Lady Russell had been little short of a mother to her, Anne simply couldn't ignore her sincere, well-intentioned advice. Lady Russell's advice was so calmly, consistently, and lovingly given that Anne "was persuaded to believe the engagement a

wrong thing: indiscreet, improper, hardly capable of success, and not deserving it" (P, p. 27). She is further convinced that it is in Wentworth's best interest for her to end their engagement. Even after Wentworth, through his energy and ability, has earned distinction in his career and amassed a fortune, Lady Russell still does not doubt that she was right in causing Anne to end the engagement.

Her reverence for status also caused Lady Russell to urge Anne to marry Charles Musgrove in spite of his obvious inferiority in everything except wealth and rank, and for the same reason, she is delighted when Mr. William Elliot becomes interested in Anne. She hopes to see Anne established as her mother once was as Lady Elliot of Kellynch Hall. Ironically, Lady Russell cannot see that Lady Elliot's youthful infatuation with the handsome Sir Walter did not give her a truly equal or happy marriage. Joined to a man inferior to herself in every important way, Lady Elliot found her only sources of personal fulfillment were "her duties, her friends, and her children" (P, p. 4). Lady Russell does not perceive that Anne would be repeating her mother's error if she married Mr. Elliot; she sees only the advantages of rank and money that the marriage would give Anne. Her perception of Mr. Elliot's character is distorted by her respect for his position and by his polished and discreet manners. She assumes that because he is outwardly pleasing and graceful, he must be inwardly correct and honorable as well. When Anne finally shares the private information about Mr. Elliot which she received from Mrs. Smith and also reveals her renewed engagement to Captain Wentworth,

Mrs. Russell begins to realize that she has been "unfairly influenced by appearances in each." She truly loves Anne and wants her to be happy, so she is willing "to admit that she had been pretty completely wrong, and to take up a new set of opinions and hopes" (P, p. 249).

Unlike the problems of most other Austen heroines, the broken engagement that has "clouded every enjoyment of youth" and caused "an early loss of bloom and spirits" (P, p. 28) for Anne was the result of her prudent obedience to adult authority. In the intervening eight years, Anne has developed her own mature, independent judgment, and throughout the novel, she consistently displays sensitivity, insight, common sense, and capabilities superior to nearly everyone around her. For example, when Sir Walter seeks Lady Russell's help in solving his financial difficulties, Lady Russell is overly concerned for his desire to save face and to maintain a style of living suitable to his rank. She has the good sense to consult Anne, whose suggestions are all "on the side of honesty against importance" (P, p. 12), based on high principles rather than the privileges of rank. Anne also tries to warn Elizabeth that Mrs. Clay is an unsuitable companion who may have designs on Sir Walter, but Elizabeth rudely rejects Anne's insight. Anne can only hope her warning will make Elizabeth more observant.

Anne also demonstrates her presence of mind and competence under stress. She handles the crisis of Mary's injured child, seeing that all necessary tasks are done and then caring for the boy herself. Similarly, in the emergency of Louisa's fall, she is the only one who

fully keeps her wits--Henrietta faints, Mary becomes hysterical, and the men are temporarily immobilized by shock. Charles and Captain Wentworth "Both seemed to look to her for directions" (P, p. 111). When Charles frantically asks Anne what to do, she directs the actions of the others very effectively. Both men later acknowledge Anne's competence: "no one so proper, so capable as Anne" (P, p. 114).

Anne is the oldest of Jane Austen's heroines, and she is aware that her adult values are markedly different from those of her family and even of Lady Russell: "It was now some years since Anne had begun to learn that she and her excellent friend could sometimes think differently" (P, p. 147). Anne has also gained a mature perspective on the past, and while she blames neither Lady Russell for giving the advice nor herself for following it, she feels strongly that she herself would never give any advice "of such certain immediate wretchedness, such uncertain future good." She now believes in "early warm attachment, and a cheerful confidence in futurity, against that over-anxious caution which seems to insult exertion and distrust Providence! --She had been forced into prudence in her youth, she learned romance as she grew older;--the natural sequence of an unnatural beginning" (P, pp. 29-30).

Whereas Lady Russell admires the polish and discretion of the well-born, Anne

prized the frank, the open-hearted, the eager character beyond all others. Warmth and enthusiasm did captivate her still. She felt that she could so much more depend upon the sincerity of those who sometimes looked or

said a careless or hasty thing, than of those whose presence of mind never varied, whose tongue never slipped.

(P, p. 16)

Even before she learns the truth about Mr. Elliot's character, Anne suspects that he is not all that he appears to be. Unlike Lady Russell, she perceives that he is not open, warm, or sincere. His ability to please everyone equally casts doubt on his honesty and genuineness; he is "too generally agreeable" (P, p. 161). Although Anne is aware how differently she and Lady Russell view the importance of social status, she has a moment of self-doubt when she wonders with an inward shudder if she might have been induced to marry Mr. Elliot if she hadn't found out about his unethical treatment of the Smiths; ". . . it was just possible that she might have been persuaded by Lady Russell" (P, p. 211). However, she had in fact decided against him before Mrs. Smith's revelation, and it is her insistence that she does not intend to marry Mr. Elliot that encourages Mrs. Smith to tell her of his dishonorable behavior.

At this point in her life, Anne knows very clearly what is important to her and what she wants from life. By the time she and Wentworth renew their vows, they know themselves and each other more fully than before; they now have "the advantage of maturity of mind, consciousness of right, and one independent fortune between them" (P, p. 248). Anne feels that she can now marry Wentworth with a clear conscience and no just recriminations from anyone.

Of all Jane Austen's heroines, only Anne Elliot really severs herself from her family when she marries. Throughout the novel, Anne

is more similar to and more comfortable with the naval officers than she is with her own family; the warmth, openness, and enthusiasm of their behavior corresponds much more closely to her own than the cold, haughty, ostentatious behavior of Sir Walter and Elizabeth. Only Elizabeth Bennet's distaste for her mother's behavior and the distance between them after her marriage is really comparable to the incompatibility between Anne and the other Elliots. Of her original domestic circle, Anne adds only Lady Russell to their mutual friends. Her one source of regret as she marries Captain Wentworth is that she has "no relations to bestow on him which a man of sense could value. . . . no family to receive and estimate him properly, nothing of respectability, of harmony, of goodwill, to offer in return for all the worth and all the prompt welcome which met her in his brothers and sisters" (P, p. 251).

* * *

Consistently throughout the novels, the most important cause of faults of character and fundamental errors of judgment in the young adults is the failure of the parent generation to set a positive example of personal behavior and to provide appropriate guidance and discipline for their children. With few exceptions, the influence of their parents or surrogate parents is a negative force which the young people either overcome or allow to dominate their own lives. Knightley seems to speak for Jane Austen when he tells Emma, "It is a great

deal more common than one could wish, that a young man, brought up by those who are proud, luxurious, and selfish, should be proud, luxurious, and selfish, too" (E, p. 145). The truth of this observation is demonstrated in all her novels, and Knightley's statement describes many other young people as accurately as it does Frank Churchill.

Raised by his wealthy, class-conscious maternal grandmother, Frank has learned "to be above his connections, and to care very little for anything but his own pleasure, from living with those who have always set him the example of it" (E, p. 145). The Churchills cast off Miss Churchill when she married Captain Weston against their wishes, and Frank, following their example, fails to seek and maintain a proper relationship with his father. He never visits Highbury, not even on the occasion of his father's remarrying, until it serves his own selfish purpose to do so. Mrs. Churchill's selfish, manipulative behavior is echoed in Frank's delight in manipulating others. He derives considerable pleasure from charming and deceiving Emma and the rest of Highbury with his cleverly implied falsehoods. His vanity is satisfied by feeling that he can outwit the people around him and make them believe whatever suits his purpose.

Many of the young adults perpetuate their parents' faults. Fanny Ferrars Dashwood and Robert Ferrars have absorbed their arrogance, selfishness, and greed from their mother, and Captain Tilney is the much more probable product of a father like General Tilney than either Henry or Eleanor. The similarity between Darcy's initially haughty manners and Lady Catherine's behavior has often been noted,

and Darcy finally sees that although his parents were not proud or self-centered themselves, they inadvertently helped him to become so; as he confesses to Elizabeth, they "allowed, encouraged, almost taught me to be selfish and overbearing, to care for none beyond my own family circle, to think meanly of all the rest of the world" (PP, p. 369).

Too close an identification between parent and child increases the probability that the faults and weaknesses of the parent will be perpetuated by the child. The child who naturally resembles the parent the most is the one most likely to be a favorite, and being favored causes the child to become more and more like the parent. This is true of Marianne and Mrs. Dashwood, Elizabeth and Sir Walter Elliot, Lydia and Mrs. Bennet, Henry and Admiral Crawford, Mary and Mrs. Crawford, Robert and Mrs. Ferrars, and Betsey and Mrs. Price. Although Emma does not so closely resemble her father, Mr. Woodhouse's blind approbation of his younger daughter lays the foundation for her own uncritical self-acceptance and personal complacency; she is as imperceptive and self-centered in her way as he is in his. The consequence of this mutual identification is that the parent cannot provide objective guidance or supervision for the child, and the child faces an almost insurmountable obstacle to becoming a responsible adult.

Among those who suffer the most injurious effects of misdirected adult authority are Henry and Mary Crawford. Both possess intelligence and talents superior to any of the other young people in the novel, but both have been "spoilt" by the immoral example of their uncle and by the bitter cynicism of their aunt. Both have been close to their

surrogate parents and each has absorbed the faults of the parent with whom he or she has been closest: "The Admiral delighted in the boy, Mrs. Crawford doated on the girl" (MP, p. 40). Henry has obviously learned his irresponsible and predatory attitude toward women from the Admiral, "a man of vicious conduct, who chose, instead of retaining his niece, to bring his mistress under his own roof" (MP, p. 41). The Admiral "hated marriage, and thought it never pardonable in a young man of independent fortune" (MP, p. 292). As Mary laughingly warns Mrs. Grant, "If your Miss Bertrams do not like to have their hearts broke, let them avoid Henry. . . . I assure you he is very detestable--the admiral's lessons have quite spoiled him" (MP, p. 43).

Mary does not take Henry's dishonorable behavior seriously; like Maria Bertram, she lacks strong principles to distinguish right from wrong, folly from vice, and having always lived in an atmosphere of license, she takes behavior such as Henry's for granted, scarcely seeming to be aware of any other style of behavior. Edmund and Fanny agree that Mary's shortcomings, particularly her lack of respect for the Admiral, result at least in part from her aunt's failure to teach her properly: "Yes, we must suppose the faults of the niece to have been those of the aunt; and it makes one more sensible of the disadvantages she has been under" (MP, p. 64). Her view of marriage is cynical and mercenary because she has "been in a bad school for matrimony in Hill Street" (MP, p. 46), simultaneously seeing her uncle's actions and empathizing with the suffering and anger of her embittered

aunt. Mary's view of marriage as a personal relationship is so thoroughly pessimistic that the best she will predict for Fanny as Henry's wife is that he will love her "as nearly for ever as possible" and that he will behave with "the liberality and good breeding of a gentleman" (MP, p. 363, 292) after he has ceased to love her. Mary's expectations for Henry and Fanny reveal her profound disillusionment with the quality both of human behavior and of human relationships; it is not surprising that money and social position seem to be more reasonable motives for choosing a mate than love; in the context of her upbringing, this attitude makes sense.

Those who see Mary and Henry as dark, sinister intruders who invade and contaminate the atmosphere of Mansfield Park ignore the good potential revealed by both Henry and Mary. Both are still susceptible to good influences; neither is totally hardened and unfeeling yet. Henry falls in love with his intended victim, and Mary chooses Edmund over Tom out of genuine feeling. Mary also demonstrates "the really good feelings by which she was almost purely governed" (MP, p. 147) through her sincere kindness to Fanny after one of Mrs. Norris's scathing verbal attacks. When Mary realizes that Henry truly loves Fanny, she is relieved and delighted; despite her grim view of marriage, she is convinced that Henry will never treat Fanny as the Admiral treated her aunt, and like Edmund, she believes that marriage to Fanny will cure Henry's restlessness and irresponsibility. She is sure that being separated from the Admiral will save Henry from becoming more like his surrogate father:

My dearest Henry, the advantage to you of getting away from the Admiral before your manners are hurt by the contagion of his, before you have contracted any of his foolish opinions . . . You are not sensible of the gain, for your regard for him has blinded you; but in my estimation, your marrying early may be the saving of you. To have seen you grow like the Admiral in word or deed, look or gesture, would have broken my heart.

(MP, pp. 295-96)

Mary does not realize how greatly the atmosphere of the Admiral's home has already affected Henry, nor does she see the impact on her own attitudes and values. She is a product of the worldly values to which she has been exposed, corrupted by "the habits of wealth" and "the influence of the fashionable world" (MP, p. 421); she has been led astray by her mercenary friends and by the unhealthy family situation in which she grew up. Her reaction to Henry and Maria's affair is a product of this environment, in which it was "natural to her to treat the matter as she did. She was speaking only, as she had been used to hear others speak, as she imagined every body would speak" (MP, p. 456). Edmund's appraisal of Mary's potential and the consequences of her flawed upbringing is accurate: "This is what the world does. For where, Fanny, shall we find a woman whom nature had so richly endowed?--Spoilt, spoilt!" (MP, p. 455). Mansell considers Edmund's view generous, but given the assumptions about character development in the novels, Edmund has every reason to imagine "how excellent she would have been, had she fallen into good hands earlier" (MP, p. 459). His lament--"What a pity . . . that she should have been in such hands" (MP, p. 112)--is justified.

The commonest problem for the young men in the novels is that they have too much personal freedom too soon because their parents fail to provide the guidance and discipline they need. Their parents impose few limits or restraints, if any, on their behavior, and they have no duties, responsibilities, or goals to give purpose and direction to their lives. This lack of constructive outlets for their energy leads to errors that arise out of idleness and boredom and to habits of negligence and irresponsibility that can block their potential to achieve lasting personal happiness in adulthood. Edward Ferrars describes his foolish adolescent engagement to Lucy Steele as

the consequence of ignorance of the world-- and want of employment. Had my mother given me some active profession when I was removed at eighteen from the care of Mr. Pratt . . . it would never have happened. . . . But instead of having any profession chosen for me, or being allowed to choose any myself, I returned home to be completely idle . . . I had therefore nothing in the world to do but fancy myself in love.

(SS, p. 362)

Edward nearly loses the chance to make an equal and happy marriage as a result.

Idleness and lack of direction also have serious consequences for Wickham, Willoughby, and Henry Crawford. After receiving 3000 pounds in lieu of the church living intended for him by the late Mr. Darcy, Wickham had both money and freedom, "and being now free from all restraints, his was a life of idleness and dissipation" (PP, p. 201). He had no reason even to conceal his indiscretions since both his own and Darcy's father were dead. His extravagant lifestyle

quickly depleted his money, and he proceeded to leave a trail of bad debts behind him wherever he went, tried to elope with Georgiana Darcy to gain her fortune and get back at Darcy, and finally goes off on a lark with Lydia Bennet. Induced to marry her by an offer of money, he has a wife toward whom he is soon indifferent and whose character is almost as irresponsible and unprincipled as his own. The "vicious propensities--the want of principle"--which developed during his undisciplined youth are fostered by his marriage to Lydia, and he thereby forfeits any chance of stability or personal happiness.

Like Wickham, Willoughby has had complete freedom from an early age, and he has followed a similar pattern of irresponsibility and dissipation. His character is less hardened and vicious than Wickham's, however; he seduced Colonel Brandon's ward Eliza with an indifference more casual and heedless than intentionally malicious. He light-heartedly trifles with Marianne's affection because her undisguised adoration pleases his vanity. Like Henry Crawford, Willoughby has all the natural abilities that could have made him both honorable and happy, but because he is idle and expensive in his habits, he assumes that he must marry a wealthy woman to support his costly lifestyle. Elinor contemplates

the irreparable injury which too early an independence and its consequent habits of idleness, dissipation, and luxury, had made in the mind, the character, the happiness of a man who, to every advantage of person and talents, united a disposition naturally open and honest, and a feeling, affectionate temper. The world had made him extravagant and vain; extravagance and vanity had made

him cold-hearted and selfish. . . . Each
 faulty propensity, in leading him to evil,
 had led him likewise to punishment.
 (SS, p. 331)

In betraying Marianne and marrying for money, he earns his own punishment--he regains the favor of Mrs. Smith and with it the knowledge that "had he behaved with honour towards Marianne, he might at once have been happy and rich" (SS, p. 379). He gains all the wealth even he could require but loses the option of true domestic happiness.

Of all the "false heroes" (Mansell's term), Henry Crawford has the greatest degree of freedom because he is the only one who is independently wealthy. He has no restrictions on his time, activities or money; ". . . excepting what might be due his uncle, his engagements were all self-imposed" (MP, p. 193). Unlike the capricious or judgmental relatives who control the purse-strings for most of the other young men, the Admiral indulges Henry and encourages Henry's irresponsible behavior by his own example. Henry is unaware of having been harmed by this lack of right-minded guidance, and staunchly defends the Admiral against Mary's criticism: "The Admiral has his faults, but he is a very good man, and has been more than a father to me. Few fathers would have let me have my own way half so much" (MP, p. 296).

Henry fails to comprehend the nature and scope of the Admiral's failings as a surrogate father, but he is drawn irresistibly to activity and achievement; he desperately needs some purposeful outlet for his superior abilities and youthful energy. Henry is able to discuss the church service intelligently and thoughtfully, with taste

and judgment, and he says that he would like to be a really skilled preacher: "I never listened to a distinguished preacher in my life, without a sort of envy." He goes on to admit that he would like to preach to an educated London audience capable of appreciating his aesthetic presentations, but that he would not wish to preach often; "now and then perhaps, once or twice in the spring, after being anxiously expected for half a dozen Sundays together; but not for a constancy; it would not do for a constancy" (MP, p. 341). He feels the same sort of envy and yearning for genuine accomplishment when he hears Fanny's brother describing life as a sailor:

The glory of heroism, of usefulness, of exertion, of endurance, made his own habits of selfish indulgence appear in shameful contrast; and he wished he had been a William Price, distinguishing himself and working his way to fortune and consequence with so much self-respect and happy ardour, instead of what he was! The wish was rather eager than lasting.
(MP, p. 236)

Henry has talents and energy straining to find some direction or purpose, but none is given to him by his surrogate father and he seems incapable of finding any for himself. Part of his wish for achievement is a wish for recognition and admiration, but there are easier ways to satisfy his vanity than the conscientious effort and self-control required by a profession. He soon recalls how much an occupation would diminish his freedom, and contemplates the pleasures of wealth and leisure. Henry is caught in a struggle between the need for accomplishment generated by his innate abilities and the habits of self-indulgence acquired through years of idle dissipation.

Most of Henry's behavior is the result of boredom and the need for some sort of challenge. He is always restless, needing constant change and stimulation. His cruel flirting with Maria and Julia is merely a temporary diversion to drive away ennui: "The sisters, handsome, clever, and encouraging, were an amusement to his sated mind" (MP, p. 115). Henry trifles with Maria and Julia out of boredom and vanity, but they aren't enough of a challenge to sustain his interest. His pursuit of Fanny begins precisely because her indifference presents a greater challenge to the power of his charm. After he falls in love with Fanny, Henry resolves to win her by constancy and devotion, yet when he encounters Maria in London, he cannot resist the challenge her apparent hostility offers; he cannot resist the temptation to see if he can rekindle the feelings she had for him before her marriage. As before, it is a case of his vanity meeting an obstacle: "Curiosity and vanity were both engaged, and the temptation of immediate pleasure was too strong for a mind unused to make any sacrifice to right. . . . He was entangled by his own vanity, with as little excuse of love as possible, and without the smallest inconstancy of mind towards her cousin" (MP, pp. 467-68).

Because of his wealth, Henry Crawford has the greatest opportunity to change; unlike the others, he is not bound by the wishes of any other person. Unlike Frank Churchill or Willoughby, he has nothing to lose by being steadfast in his pursuit of the woman he loves. Despite Fanny's resistance, the novel insists that had he been steadfast, he would have proven himself worthy of her, and Fanny must

have been his prize for such constancy, much as Marianne is Colonel Branson's "reward" for virtue and devotion: "Would he have deserved more, there can be no doubt that more would have been obtained . . . Would he have persevered, and uprightly, Fanny must have been his reward--and a reward very voluntarily bestowed--within a reasonable period from Edward's marrying Mary" (MP, p. 467).

Frank Churchill has also enjoyed virtually unrestricted freedom; he is subject only to the occasional whims of his maternal grandmother. As Knightley puts it, Frank has "all the advantages of sitting still when he ought to move, and of leading a life of mere idle pleasure, and fancying himself extremely expert in finding excuses for it" (E, p. 148). Frank, however, does not feel free; prevented from marrying Jane Fairfax by the fear of losing his inheritance, he feels restless and frustrated. He insists to Emma, "I am sick of doing nothing. I want a change" (E, p. 365).

Frank is saved from the potential harm of his situation and its habits of selfishness and inactivity by his attachment to Jane, whom he nearly loses through his flirtation with Emma. When Mrs. Churchill's sudden death enables him to announce his engagement to Jane, he avoids the fate which the end of their relationship would have meant for him. Jane has been the only stabilizing force in his life; had their mutual commitment ended permanently (as it did temporarily), there is little doubt that he would have turned out pretty much like Wickham and Willoughby. He has already demonstrated his willingness to use other people to promote his own ends, and he has played a very

dangerous game with Emma, carelessly assuming that she and he understood one another's indifference. Although Emma has indeed cared little for him, she has not at all understood his elaborate game, and had the woman been nearly anyone but Emma, he could have caused lasting harm by dissembling more affection than he felt. Of all the false heroes, only Frank Churchill is reformed. Frank's devotion to Jane has stood the test of time despite his bad behavior toward Emma, so to some degree at least, he has earned the privilege of marrying a woman so far above him in sense, delicacy, and honor.

While the lack of responsible parental supervision is the most common problem for the young people in Jane Austen's novels, discipline which is overly strict and oppressive also causes problems. A father whose control is unnecessarily rigid and restrictive builds an invisible barrier between himself and his children. His children may indulge in covert rebellion when the opportunity arises, and their marriage choices, like those of Maria and Julia Bertram, may be motivated by the desire to escape from his authority. Too much control can be nearly as harmful as too little.

Like the Bertrams, the Tilneys have order and regulation in their home life, but as a family, they lack the closeness and warmth that helps a family function in the best interest of all members. General Tilney has the same faults as Sir Thomas but to a much greater degree because he lacks Sir Thomas's basic uprightness. Like Sir Thomas, General Tilney is a domineering father who casts a pall over his children's spirits; Catherine notices that Henry and Eleanor

are oppressed by his presence: " . . . General Tilney, though so charming a man, seemed always a check upon his children's spirits" (NA, p. 183). When the General leaves Northanger Abbey,

His departure gave Catherine the first experimental conviction that a loss may sometimes be a gain. The happiness with which their time now passed, every employment voluntary, every laugh indulged, every meal a scene of ease and good-humour, walking where they liked and when they liked, their hours, pleasures and fatigues at their own command, made her thoroughly sensible of the restraint which the General's presence had imposed, and most thankfully feel their present release from it.

(NA, p. 253)

General Tilney oppresses his children by his unnecessary restrictions on their behavior and by his attempts to impose his flawed values on them. In public he expresses all the proper sentiments, but his children well know what his real opinions are. Catherine is frequently puzzled by the discrepancy between what he says and what he means; " . . . why he should say one thing so positively, and mean another all the while, was most unaccountable! . . . Who but Henry could have been aware of what his father was at?" (NA, p. 243). Just as Sir Thomas pressures Fanny to accept Mr. Crawford, General Tilney orders Henry to secure Catherine's affection if he can. Henry complies because he already has a preference for Catherine quite apart from any possible monetary advantages of the match. When the General reverses his orders, Henry defies his father because he has committed both his honor and his heart to Catherine. In disobeying his father and behaving honorably, Henry demonstrates that he, unlike his brother, has not been corrupted by his father's false values but has developed

his own ethical standards. This, more than any other characteristic, qualifies him to be an Austen hero and marry the heroine.

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Despite her "mechanistic" cause-and-effect view of character development, Jane Austen does not absolve her characters of responsibility for their actions and attitudes. They are expected to learn from experience, to grow in knowledge and awareness, and to make intelligent, well-informed choices. They are never merely victims of their upbringing or environment. Julia Prewitt Brown maintains that "The psychological tension of character in Jane Austen is frequently based on the battle between will and origin. . . . The achievement of 'rational happiness' seems to depend on one's ability to separate oneself from a defective origin."⁷ This is the crucial factor that distinguishes the heroes and heroines from most of the other young adults in the novels. Most of the "false heroes" have brief flashes of insight into their problems, but they lack the strength of character to make lasting changes in their behavior. Because of their habits of self-indulgence, they are unable to resist temptation and opportunity. The capacity to change requires not only the intelligence and good sense to perceive the deficiencies of the parent generation, but also the strength and determination to change.

Fanny's visit to her parents' home in Portsmouth provides one of the few glimpses of a family with pre-adolescent children in Jane

Austen's novels, and the episode reveals how character is formed and what distinguishes those who will rise above their "defective origins" from those who will not. It shows a family situation that produces failure and the qualities that enable some of the children to overcome the limitations of their upbringing.

Sir Thomas sends Fanny to visit her parents in the hope that she will learn the value of wealth by being exposed to poverty, but what Fanny sees is the importance of order and propriety. What shocks Fanny is not the smallness or plainness of the rooms but the incessant noise and chaotic disorder of the household. Fanny finds the Price home "the very reverse of what she could have wished. It was the abode of noise, disorder, and impropriety. Nobody was in their right place, nothing was done as it ought to be. She could not respect her parents, as she had hoped" (MP, pp. 388-89). She immediately perceives the superiority of Mansfield, where "there would have been a consideration of times and seasons, a regulation of subject, a propriety, an attention towards every body which there was not here" (MP, p. 383).

Fanny finds her father to be negligent of his family, vulgar, dirty, and gross. He makes no effort to guide or discipline his children or to maintain order in his home; he ignores his children and sets a bad example by his own behavior. With the exception of William, his sons are well on their way to growing up in their father's image. William has an advantage over his brothers because as the oldest child, he began growing up before his father became dis-

abled and before there were too many children for his parents to support and educate properly. The level of chaos in the Price home undoubtedly increased with the size of the family and the loss of income.

Fanny is even more disappointed in her mother, who has "neither leisure nor affection to bestow on Fanny." She discovers that her mother is "a partial, ill-judging parent, a dawdle, a slattern, who neither taught nor restrained her children, whose house was the scene of mismanagement and discomfort from beginning to end" (MP, pp. 389-90). Mrs. Price is devoted to her sons and indulgent to her youngest daughter Betsey; she has no time or interest to spare for her other two daughters. The result is that the three younger sons are "untameable"--loud, boisterous, and unmanageable--and Betsey is a spoiled child. Her mother's "darling," Betsey will perpetuate her mother's failings with no awareness of any other style of behavior, much as Lydia follows Mrs. Bennet's example.

Mrs. Price contributes to the rivalry and antagonism among her children by her blatant favoritism as well as by her failure to teach and control them properly. She inadvertently encourages the contentious behavior between Betsey and Susan by allowing the younger child to violate the property rights of her older sister. Mrs. Price neither understands nor respects Susan's feelings, and by breaking her promise to Susan about the letter opener, she increases the irritation between Susan and Betsey.

Susan has not acquired her mother's faults, in part because her

mother gives her so little attention or affection: "The blind fondness which was for ever producing evil around her, she had never known" (MP, p. 396). Susan is a particularly interesting character because she could be a heroine in the making--a much more typical Austen heroine, in fact, than Fanny. Although Fanny is alarmed by the "determined character" of Susan's behavior toward her mother and siblings, she gradually discovers that Susan has "an innate taste for the genteel and well-appointed," an open temper, and delicacy of feeling. Fanny begins to realize that Susan is "very little better fitted for home" than she is herself, and "That a girl so capable of being made every thing good, should be left in such hands, distressed her more and more" (MP, p. 419). Susan recognizes the superiority of Fanny's knowledge and training, and she looks to her for guidance.

Like Elizabeth Bennet, Elinor Dashwood, and Anne Elliot, Susan is superior to her parents in taste, intelligence, and common sense, and like them, she tries to improve both the condition of her home and the behavior of the rest of her family: "Susan tried to be useful . . . and that Susan was useful she could perceive; that things, bad as they were, would have been worse but for such interposition, and that both her mother and Betsey were restrained from some excesses of very offensive indulgence and vulgarity" (MP, pp. 395-96). Fanny acknowledges that she would not have been nearly so helpful; in similar circumstances, " . . . she could only have gone away and cried." At fourteen, Susan is younger than any of Jane Austen's heroines; her judgment is still in an early stage of development, and until Fanny

comes, she has no guidance superior to her own natural sense:

Susan saw that much was wrong at home, and wanted to set it right. That a girl of fourteen, acting only on her own unassisted reason, should err in the method of reform was not wonderful, and Fanny soon became more disposed to admire the natural light of the mind which could so early distinguish justly, than to censure severely the faults of conduct to which it led. . . . Her greatest wonder on the subject soon became--not that Susan should have been provoked into disrespect and impatience against her better knowledge, but that so much better knowledge, so many good notions, should have been hers at all; and that, brought up in the midst of negligence and error, she should have formed such proper opinions of what ought to be--she, who had no cousin Edmund to direct her thoughts or fix her principles.

(MP, pp. 395, 396)

This capacity is a significant characteristic of most of Jane Austen's heroines; like them, Susan is drawn to those who can give her the right-minded guidance she doesn't receive from her parents. The timely intervention of Sir Thomas's invitation for her to come to Mansfield with Fanny assures that the best qualities in Susan's nature will benefit from a more adequate education.

The most nearly perfect parents in all of Jane Austen's novels are Colonel and Mrs. Campbell. They offer to care for and educate the orphaned child of one of the Colonel's men out of a truly benevolent kindness. The Campbells take Jane Fairfax into their family as an equal member, loving and cherishing her "as another daughter." Unlike the Bertrams' attitude toward Fanny, it never occurs to the Campbells to treat Jane as an inferior. Their devotion to her and their daughter's fondness for Jane are all the more remarkable because of Jane's

greater beauty and talent; Miss Campbell is so well-adjusted and secure that she harbors no jealousy or resentment against her more attractive and accomplished foster sister.

The Campbells show unselfish good sense in preparing Jane to be self-supporting; the Colonel cannot endow her with a fortune, "but, by giving her an education, he hoped to be supplying the means of a respectable subsistence hereafter" (E, p. 164). The Campbells prepare Jane for her lower expectations in life without implying that she is less loved or less worthy. They combine sensitivity, high principles, practical foresight, and warm affection in their treatment of Jane. When she resolves to find a situation, they understand that she must begin her vocation in order to be economically secure after their deaths, even though they would gladly have given her a home throughout their lives: "The good sense of Colonel and Mrs. Campbell could not oppose such a resolution, though their feelings did" (E, p. 165).

As the Campbells' foster daughter, Jane has received not only love and kindness, but an excellent education as well. She has had "every advantage of discipline and culture" and has shared "all the rational pleasures of an elegant society, and a judicious mixture of home and amusement" (E, p. 164). When her secret engagement to Frank is made public, she hastens to explain that her foster parents should receive no share of the blame for her behavior: "Do not imagine . . . that I was taught wrong. Do not let any reflection fall on the principles or care of the friends who brought me up. The error has been all my own" (E, p. 418). After her engagement is known and approved,

Jane loses the one flaw in her behavior, her aloofness and reserve, becoming as natural and open in her behavior to others as she has always been with the Campbells. The Campbells are successful parents because they achieve a balance combination of love and discipline in their education of both their daughters.

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CHAPTER III: HUSBANDS AND WIVES

In Jane Austen's novels marriage profoundly affects the quality of life--economically, socially, and emotionally--of the two persons united and of their children. Much has been written about Jane Austen's view of marriage and the family, but the bulk of this critical analysis concentrates on the practical aspects of the marriage market--the economic and social consequences of courtship and marriage. In his introduction to her novels, Mark Schorer states that "The cruel economics of marriage is Jane Austen's persistent concern in all her work."¹ However, an equally vital and pervasive issue is the quality of the relationships within the family and the resulting impact of marriage on the character of the individual and on the capacity of the new family unit to perform its primary function, the proper education of children. Consistently throughout her novels, an individual's choice of spouse is the crucial factor that shapes the growth of his or her adult personality, his degree of private happiness, and his ability to function as a parent--and, consequently, the happiness and well-being of his children as well.

Daniel Defoe's treatise on the nature and purpose of marriage described husband and wife as being joined "in an equal yoke," having different duties but the same goals:

. . . the end of both [husband and wife] should be the well-ordering their family, the good-guiding their household and children, educating, instructing, and managing them with a mutual endeavour, and giving respectively good examples to them, directing others in their duty by doing their own well, guiding themselves in every relation, in order to the well guiding all that are under them; filling up life with an equal regard to those above them and those below them, so as to be exemplar to all.²

Jane Austen would accept this statement of the purpose of matrimony without amendment.

The ideal marriage which all her heroines strive to achieve requires certain conditions and characteristics. The couple must have a sufficient income to live, not in luxury, but in moderate comfort and security. Both persons must be of good character and possess common sense and an amiable temper. Between them there must be a general equality of social rank, and their union must be reasonably acceptable to their community. They must share a basic compatibility of temperament and a genuine mutual attachment. These elements are essential to domestic happiness. In addition, husband and wife should possess complementary strengths such that they can compensate for each other's minor weaknesses and provide an opportunity for improvement. An ideal union is also balanced so that neither overpowers the relationship.

When all these qualities come together in a marriage, husband and wife have a sense of closeness and a mutuality of interest and effort; the character and well-being of each is improved by their association. The family unit is balanced and stable, with husband

and wife fulfilling their natural roles. Defoe's definition of the companionate marriage emphasizes a similar sense of unanimity:

Upon the whole, the matrimonial duty is all reciprocal; it is founded in love, it is performed in the height of affection; its most perfect accomplishment consists not in the union of the sexes, but in the union of the souls; uniting their desires, their ends, and consequently their endeavours, for completing their mutual felicity.³

In Jane Austen's novels the best marriages achieve this goal. They establish a dynamic equality between husband and wife, stimulate positive growth in both, and provide a healthy environment in which children can grow and develop as well.

In contrast, a bad marriage damages character and disposition. A couple whose natures and needs are badly mismatched stunt each other's adult development and create an unhealthy and unbalanced family unit. Mr. Bennet eloquently describes the danger of an unequal marriage when he urges Elizabeth not to marry Mr. Darcy: "Your lively talents would place you in the greatest danger in an unequal marriage. You could scarcely escape discredit and misery" (PP, p. 376). His statement applies not only to himself and his own marriage but to many other marital unions in the novels as well. Jane Austen repeatedly depicts the consequences of inappropriate marriages; the most disastrous is Maria Bertram's brief union with Mr. Rushworth. It results in the worst punishment possible for a young woman: a life of banishment from home and community "which could allow no second spring of hope or character" (MP, p. 464). The other mismatched combinations are less catastrophic, but they are still destructive, and in a few

cases, the fact that husband and wife are well-matched in their deficiencies merely serves to magnify those faults in both.

In many ways, the most far-reaching and harmful consequence of an unsuitable marriage is the failure of husband and wife to perform their functions as father and mother adequately. Julia Prewitt Brown points out that

All Jane Austen's novels involve three generations: past, present, and future. The past is exposed for its connection with the present, and in the decisions of the present the future is implied. . . . The moral center of the novel lies in the connection between the parent generation and the present generation; the latter's actions are the subject of the novel's action. In the choice of spouse the men and women of the present either comprehend the lessons of the past or perpetuate its defects.⁴

Since the family is the base from which a young adult enters society and pursues the "business" of finding a spouse, any imbalance in the family structure may diminish the ability of the emerging adults to make appropriate marriages. Thus, the problem becomes self-perpetuating: a bad marriage relationship causes a distortion of the family unit; this inadequate home environment impairs the functioning of the family members in society, which in turn lessens the opportunity of the children to make good marriages.

If the parents in Jane Austen's novels fail to provide a positive example or adequate advice for their children, neither does society offer valid guidelines for selecting a mate, and in fact, the attitudes and pressures of society actually encourage marriages based on erroneous values and assumptions. Jane Austen's dissatisfaction

with the traditional notions about marriage resembles Defoe's lament that most people marry for the wrong reasons--money or physical attraction--because they are ignorant of the proper foundation and purpose of matrimony, and that the result is a majority of bad marriages:

Not one in five hundred of those that now marry really understand what they marry for . . . Hence it follows that we have such few happy and successful matches. How much matrimony, how little love; how many coupled, how few joined; in a word, how much marriage, how little friendship.⁵

The young adults thus can rely neither on their parents nor on their culture for any real help in making the decision which will shape the rest of their lives.

Those who accuse Jane Austen of equating courtship and marriage with a business venture, in which beauty is a marketable commodity that can be bartered for wealth or social status, ignore the fact that the numerous marriages based on these factors are shown to be inadequate in important ways; the marriages based solely on physical attraction or the desire for wealth and prominence are always unsatisfactory. It isn't that Jane Austen rejects these factors as unimportant. A man and woman who marry without having both an adequate income and a sincere mutual attraction run a terrible risk, and the happy marriages do meet these criteria. The problem is that neither of these is an adequate basis for a successful marriage, and even together, they don't guarantee a truly satisfying union, as the marriage of Mr. and Mrs. Bennet amply demonstrates. Jane Austen

brings vivid fictional life to Samuel Johnson's description of the results of marriage based on the wrong considerations: "Marriage is the strictest tie of perpetual friendship, and there can be no friendship without confidence, and no confidence without integrity, and he must expect to be wretched, who pays to beauty, riches, or politeness that regard which only virtue and piety can claim."⁶

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In each of her novels, Jane Austen surrounds her heroine with a small community of married couples and eligible single people. She uses the established couples to illustrate a wide range of successes and failures in marital harmony. In the course of each of the novels, nearly all of the single men and women marry, forming new families with differing levels of potential for fulfillment. Jane Austen devotes a substantial portion of her novels to evaluating what qualities and circumstances make a good marriage and which do not. She seems to wonder, along with Elinor Dashwood, at "the strange unsuitableness which often existed between husband and wife" (SS, p. 118), and she seems intent on explaining how such matches occur. There are a few extreme examples, such as the coercion of Eliza by her mercenary guardian to marry his eldest son, but most of the unhappy matches are fully voluntary: "When any two young people take it into their heads to marry, they are pretty sure by perseverance to carry their point, be they ever so imprudent, or ever so little likely to be necessary to

each other's ultimate comfort" (P, p. 287). This truth is demonstrated again and again in her fiction.

The marriage of Maria Bertram and Mr. Rushworth is a paradigm of how two really ill-suited young people can wind up married to each other. He is attracted to her beauty, she to his money:

Mr. Rushworth was from the first struck with the beauty of Miss Bertram, and being inclined to marry, soon fancied himself in love. . . . Being now in her twenty-first year, Maria Bertram was beginning to think matrimony a duty; and as a marriage with Mr. Rushworth would give her the enjoyment of a larger income than her father's, as well as ensure her the house in town, which was now a prime object, it became, by the same rule of moral obligation, her evident duty to marry Mr. Rushworth if she could.

(MP, pp. 38-39)

Their entire neighborhood, without giving any thought to the individual characteristics of the two young people, "had for many weeks past, felt the expediency of Mr. Rushworth's marrying Miss Bertram" (MP, p. 39); their suitability in temper or disposition simply isn't a consideration. Sir Thomas approves his daughter's choice in spite of Mr. Rushworth's obvious inferiority because of the social and economic advantages such a connection would give.

Had no unusual complication developed, Maria's marriage would have been much like that of her parents, whose union was based on essentially the same motives:

About thirty years ago, Miss Maria Ward, of Huntingdon, with only seven thousand pounds, had the good luck to captivate Sir Thomas Bertram, of Mansfield Park . . . and to be thereby raised to the rank of a baronet's

lady, with all the comforts and consequences
of an handsome house and large income.

(MP, p. 3)

Mr. Rushworth fares particularly ill in the marriage market, however. Ironically, whereas many of the men are disappointed to discover that their wives are stupid and lazy, Mr. Rushworth is sufficiently slow-witted himself to have been satisfied with a placid, mindless wife; a Lady Bertram or a Mrs. Allen would not have compensated for his deficiencies but would have been a compatible match for him. Unfortunately, his bride is not a docile creature like her mother, content in having "an handsome house and large income." Maria is torn between her "Rushworth feelings" and her "Crawford feelings;" her desire for money and social status is in direct conflict with her physical and emotional attraction to the man she loves.

Maria rushes into marriage with Mr. Rushworth to conceal her broken heart and wounded pride over Henry's rejection, and above all, to gain freedom from her father's oppressive control. After Sir Thomas returns from Antigua, she finds his restrictions intolerable:

She was less and less able to endure the restraint which her father imposed. The liberty which his absence had given was now become absolutely necessary. She must escape from him and Mansfield as soon as possible, and find consolation in fortune and consequence, bustle and the world, for a wounded spirit.

(MP, p. 202)

She is still highly susceptible to Henry's charm, but even so, if he had not pursued her when he did, her marriage would have survived, just as her parents' marriage endures, and she would have found solace for

her husband's dullness in the comforts of social prominence and a luxurious home. It is the disruption caused by Henry's intrusion, more than their own incompatibility, that ends the Rushworths' marriage.

Mr. Collins is quite similar to Mr. Rushworth, but unlike him, he fares exceptionally well in his search for a wife. Like Rushworth, as soon as he has a house and an income, Mr. Collins assumes that the next step is to find a wife. His only requirements are that the woman be handsome and amiable. Because no personal attachment or warm feeling is involved, he can easily shift the object of his quest from Jane to Elizabeth, and following her refusal, from Elizabeth to her more encouraging friend. Mr. Collins is lucky because his bride is completely pragmatic; she has no romantic illusions or high expectations to cause disappointment or dissatisfaction later. Charlotte is sensible and competent, and by accepting the limits of their personal relationship, compensating for his deficiencies, and making the best of what he has to offer, she is able to make their wedded life reasonably satisfactory to them both. Like Lady Elliot, she is destined to find her meagre share of personal happiness not in her marriage but in its attendant comforts; Elizabeth sees that "Her home and her house-keeping, her parish and her poultry, and all their dependant concerns, had not yet lost their charms" (PP, p. 216). About the time these pleasures begin to fade, her children will fill her time, her energy, and her heart. She had better not die young, however, or she, like Lady Elliot, will leave her children in the care of a thoroughly incompetent parent.

Despite the mutual benefits of their union, Elizabeth rejects the foundation of their marriage because of its effect on Charlotte as a "rational creature." The problem is that although Charlotte chooses her marriage "with her eyes open" (PP, p. 216), it requires that for the rest of her life, she close her eyes and her mind to her husband's presence in their home: "When Mr. Collins could be forgotten, there was really a great air of comfort throughout, and by Charlotte's evident enjoyment of it, Elizabeth supposed he must be often forgotten" (PP, p. 157). Charlotte's way of adjusting to her marriage is to ignore a large part of what is really happening around her: "When Mr. Collins said anything of which his wife might reasonably be ashamed, which was certainly not unseldom, she involuntarily turned her eye on Charlotte. Once or twice she could discern a faint blush, but in general Charlotte wisely did not hear" (PP, p. 156).

Charlotte not only does not "hear" Mr. Collins's opinions, she does not express her own. She has so successfully suppressed her real feelings, particularly her distaste for her husband's pomposity and bad taste, that he thinks she shares his views: "My dear Charlotte and I have but one mind and one way of thinking. There is in every thing a most remarkable resemblance of character and ideas between us. We seem to have been designed for each other" (PP, p. 216). Charlotte has gained her establishment, but at the cost of her own full awareness. Like Lady Elliot, she will compensate for some of her husband's faults, but like Sir Walter, Mr. Collins has little potential for improvement, and since there is no real communication or interaction

between him and his wife, there is no chance that Charlotte's character will improve his.

Most of the men in the novels are more sensible and intelligent than Mr. Rushworth and Mr. Collins, yet their method of choosing a wife is nearly as simplistic. Those who assume that beauty and an amiable manner in a young woman will assure future domestic harmony frequently are disillusioned by the discovery that their wives are vacuous and dull. Mr. Bennet is the most striking example of an otherwise sensible man who, in his youth, was "captivated by youth and beauty, and that appearance of good humour, which youth and beauty generally give." His better judgment temporarily suspended, he 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" (PP, p. 236).

Mr. Palmer is much like Mr. Bennet but without his intelligence, sensitivity, or humor. It is not surprising that his temper has been "a little soured by finding, like many others of his sex, that through some unaccountable bias in favour of beauty, he was the husband of a very silly woman (SS, p. 112). Elinor believes that "this kind of blunder was too common for any sensible man to be lastingly hurt by it," and she concludes that it is "a wish of distinction . . . the desire of appearing superior to other people" (SS, p. 112) that makes him antisocial and motivates his contemptuous treatment of the people around him. However, she has never experienced the continual grating

irritation of being locked in marriage with an incompatible partner, and while some men--such as Sir Thomas Bertram and Mr. Allen--seem little affected by the discovery of their wives' lethargy and stupidity, others are less able to cope with the disappointment. Knightley is right when he tells Emma, "Men of sense, whatever you may chuse to say, do not want silly wives" (E, p. 64).

Edward Ferrars is almost caught in the same sort of marriage by the same kind of bait; the necessity of waiting gives him time to see through his adolescent infatuation with the beauty and apparent good nature of Lucy Steele and to discover how much of importance is missing in her character. Elinor's assessment of the progress of his feelings is fair and accurate:

The youthful infatuation of nineteen would naturally blind him to everything but her beauty and good-nature; but the four succeeding years--years which, if rationally spent, give such improvements to the understanding, must have opened his eyes to her defects of education: while the same period of time, spent on her side in inferior society and more frivolous pursuits, had perhaps robbed her of that simplicity which might once have given an interesting character to her beauty.
(SS, p. 140)

Lucy saves Edward from the consequences of his imprudent engagement by finding a more prosperous prospect.

Similarly, Isabella Thorpe breaks James Morland's heart by pursuing the wealthier Captain Tilney and thereby saves James from his naive blindness to all but her superficial charm and beauty. James is so completely taken in by Isabella's maneuvering that he actually thinks she is "thoroughly unaffected and amiable" and pos-

esses "so much good sense" (NA, p. 50). His disappointment would have been severe when, had they married, he at last perceived her true nature.

Edmund Bertram is more mature than James Morland, but he is equally susceptible to the physical appeal of a pretty woman. The sight of Mary Crawford--young, lovely, and elegant--playing a harp against the backdrop of a summer landscape "was enough to catch any man's heart. The season, the scene, the air, were all favourable to tenderness and sentiment" (MP, p. 65). Within a week, both he and she have gone a long way toward falling in love. Fanny observes the growing closeness between Edmund and Mary and realizes that despite the depth of their basic differences in attitudes, values, and goals, their mutual attraction will unite them, even against their own doubts and reservations:

His objections, the scruples of his integrity, seemed all done away--nobody could tell how; and the doubts and hesitations of her ambition were equally got over--and equally without apparent reason. It could only be imputed to increasing attachment. His good and her bad feelings yielded to love, and such love must unite them.

(MP, p. 367)

Thus, his perception of her faults is progressively dulled by his physical attraction to her, and her distaste for his chosen profession and its quiet lifestyle also decreases. Only the violent upheaval caused by Maria and Henry's liaison, combined with Mary and Edmund's radically different perceptions of it, finally separates them.

Although the men in the novels are more likely to choose their

mates for beauty alone, the women are by no means immune to the physical attractiveness of the men. Lady Elliot's "youthful infatuation" with Sir Walter undoubtedly was the result of his having been an extraordinarily handsome and elegant young man; his deficiency in all other desirable attributes she discovered after their wedding: "His good looks and his rank had one fair claim on his attachment, since to them he must have owed a wife of very superior character to anything deserved by his own" (P, p. 4). All of the seducers in the novels are physically attractive young men. Most of the heroes are at least equally appealing; Henry Tilney, Mr. Darcy, Mr. Knightley, and Captain Wentworth are as physically magnetic as any of the false heroes. Only Edmund Bertram, Edward Ferrars, and Colonel Brandon belong to the "dull and unvirile crew" described by Brian Southam. Edward loses most of his stiffness and reserve after he is released from his oppressive commitment to Lucy Steele and is assured of Elinor's love, but Colonel Brandon and Edmund Bertram do seem incurably dull.

Physical attractiveness is a considerable advantage in the marriage market for men as well as for women. Encouraged by Emma's seemingly warm behavior, Mr. Elton doesn't hesitate to propose to her despite the fact that his family connections and fortune are greatly inferior to hers. His self-confidence comes from the easy popularity and widespread acceptance that his good looks and pleasant manners have given him. As Mr. Knightley warns Emma, "He is as well acquainted with his own claims as you can be with Harriet's. He

knows that he is a very handsome young man, and a great favourite wherever he goes . . . I am convinced that he does not mean to throw himself away" (E, p. 66). After his humiliating rejection by Emma, Mr. Elton hastily seeks a new prospect. His good looks assure his quick success with Miss Hawkins and her 10,000 pounds.

Whereas the men frequently choose wives for their beauty alone, the women have less power and freedom to follow their inclinations. Many of the relationships that result primarily from physical attraction on the woman's side don't end in marriage; these include the subplot seductions, Maria's liaison with Henry, and Marianne's attachment to Willoughby. Lydia's escapade with Wickham results in marriage only through outside intervention and payment of a bribe. Likewise, Willoughby's marriage to Miss Grey is the result of her attraction to him and his need for money; the inducement of her 50,000 pounds is a built-in bribe.

Although men have a greater range of alternatives to marrying for money, both men and women are victims of economic pressure in their choice of spouse. As a clergyman with a moderate living, Mr. Elton needs the income a wealthy wife will give him, and Willoughby forfeits love and honor to gain the money to support his expensive lifestyle. William Elliot "purchased" his independence from Sir Walter "by uniting himself to a rich woman of inferior birth" (P, p. 8). Mary Crawford's view of marriage seems dangerously cynical to those around her and many critics see her as really evil because of it, but her opinion--that "every body should marry as soon as they can do it

to advantage" (MP, p. 43)--is actually shared by most of the men and women in the novels except the heroes and heroines. One of the few opinions Lady Bertram ever expresses is her advice to Fanny regarding Henry Crawford's proposal: "And you must be aware, Fanny, that it is every young woman's duty to accept such a very unexceptionable offer as this" (MP, p. 333). Sir Thomas is in full agreement, and the marriage of Maria to Mr. Bertram carries out this dictum; it is one of her parents' and her society's assumptions that Maria takes for granted. When Emma (The Watsons) expresses shock at the idea of pursuing a husband "merely for the sake of situation," her sister states the more commonly held attitude: "I should not like marrying a disagreeable man any more than yourself; but I do not think there are very many disagreeable men; I think I could like any good-humoured man with a comfortable income" (MW, p. 318). This certainly is not praise of men but an expression of the fact that for a woman without an independent income, virtually any husband seemed preferable to the poverty of spinsterhood.

At twenty-seven, Charlotte Lucas has had plenty of time to weigh the alternatives to marriage. Too old and too plain to attract suitors, she pursues Mr. Collins "solely from the pure and disinterested desire of an establishment" (PP, p. 122). She accepts his proposal, knowing that he is "neither sensible nor agreeable," that his company is "irksome," and that he has no real attachment to her: "Without thinking highly of either men or of matrimony, marriage had always been her object; it was the only honourable provision for well-

educated women of small fortune, and however uncertain of giving happiness, must be their pleasantest preservative from want" (PP, p. 122-23).

Brown contends that Charlotte is on a moral par with Wickham in her calculated pursuit of Mr. Collins:

Wickham and Charlotte form perhaps the most harmful variation on the moral-intellectual scale in that both have totally inactive moral lives yet highly effective perceptual intelligence. Although Charlotte is a far more sympathetic character than Wickham, both are seducers, always a serious sin in Jane Austen, or to be more precise, both engage in a polite form of prostitution.

However repugnant Charlotte's decision may seem to modern readers, it represents her acceptance of the values and conditions of her society; she is trying to survive within the limits of her situation. Unlike the other "seducers," Charlotte harms no one (except, perhaps, herself), and she is only doing what Sir Thomas and Lady Bertram, Lady Russell, and so many others would advise her to do. And, in fact, the arrangement is fair to both: Mr. Collins seeks a wife on the assumption that every man should have one, and she accepts him on the assumption that every woman needs an establishment. The viewpoint of such women--young and old--expresses a profound pessimism not only about their options in life but also about marriage as a relationship between two people, and in her novels, Jane Austen shows that marriage based on physical attraction or economic necessity offers as little real happiness as even these women expect from it.

Although the desire for economic security is not a valid motive for marrying, those who marry without it risk far-reaching consequences; those women who marry to "disoblige" their families pay a high price in one way or another. Typically, such a marriage disrupts the normal family and community ties, leaving the new couple economically disadvantaged and socially isolated. Miss Churchill, for example, was cast off by her relatives and lost her claim to the family estate when she married Captain Weston. She had a sufficient fortune of her own and ought to have been satisfied, "for she had a husband whose warm heart and sweet temper made him think everything due to her in return for the great goodness of being in love with him" (E, p. 15). However, she constantly regretted her "loss" and missed the luxuries of her former home; although she and her husband "lived beyond their income . . . still it was nothing in comparison of Enscombe: she did not cease to love her husband; but she wanted at once to be the wife of Captain Weston and Miss Churchill of Enscombe" (E, pp. 15-16). She died after only three years of marriage, before their relationship had really been soured by her regrets and disappointments, but had she lived, her irritable discontent would eventually have eroded the love which first united them.

Miss Francis Ward also married "to disoblige her family" by eloping with Lieutenant Price of the Marines, a man "without education, fortune, or connections." The breach between herself and her sisters was "such as a very imprudent marriage almost always produces" (MP, pp. 3, 4). She winds up with numerous children, a husband who is

disabled for active service but who enjoys his liquor, and an inadequate income. When Fanny visits her parents after many years' absence, she sees how greatly the strain of poverty has affected her mother who, had she married well, would have turned out so differently:

Her disposition was naturally easy and indolent, like Lady Bertram's; and a situation of similar affluence and do-nothing-ness would have been much more suited to her capacity, than the exertions and self-denials of the one, which her imprudent marriage had placed her in. She might have made just as good a woman of consequence as Lady Bertram, but Mrs. Norris would have been a more respectable mother of nine children, on a small income.
(MP, p. 390)

It grieves Fanny to realize how much damage the stresses of being poor and necessitous have done to her mother, "to think that where nature had made so little difference, circumstances should have made so much, and that her mother, as handsome as Lady Bertram, and some years her junior, should have an appearance so much more worn and faded, so comfortless, so slatternly, so shabby" (MP, p. 408).

Even Miss Ward suffers from the contrast between her economic status after her marriage to Reverend Norris and that of her sister, Lady Bertram. Mrs. Norris's niggardliness--her excessive frugality in her domestic arrangements and the competitive spirit which makes her constantly put others down in order to feel superior--is the result of her having married a man with almost no fortune of his own, being indebted to her brother-in-law for her husband's moderate living at Mansfield, and then living year after year within sight of those who have so much more, both of money and prestige. Her eagerness to

direct the concerns of the Bertrams, "to dictate liberality to others" (MP, p. 8), and to usurp Lady Bertram's place socially in the role of Maria and Julia's chaperone, all reflect her dissatisfaction with her own lot in life and her envy of her sister's. Her frequent cruel reminders to Fanny that she must remember her "place" are a subtle reflection of her desire to forget her own lower status and of the fact that for many years she has been trying to put herself in her sister's place and to enjoy the prestige that rightfully belongs to Lady Bertram. Lady Bertram might be a little less indolent if Mrs. Norris were a little less eager to perform her duties in her place.

In the younger generation, Julia and Mr. Yates avoid the usual consequences of an imprudent marriage by seeking Sir Thomas's forgiveness and placing themselves under his guidance. This is particularly ironic since Julia's marriage, like Maria's, is precipitated in part by the desire to escape from Sir Thomas's control. Julia's elopement is an attempt to avoid the restrictions of her father's house and the consequences of Maria's disgrace, rather than the fulfillment of a real attachment: ". . . her increased dread of her father and of home, on that event--imagining its certain consequence to herself would be greater severity and restraint, made her hastily resolve on avoiding such immediate horrors at all risks." Without that urgent motive, ". . . it is probable that Mr. Yates would never have succeeded" (MP, pp. 466, 467). Julia and Mr. Yates seem to continue more as children than as adults, being guided by Sir Thomas. Mr. Yates' character is to become "less trifling" and "at least tolerably

domestic and quiet" (MP, p. 462) not through his relationship with his wife but through the guidance of his father-in-law.

Lydia and Wickham, on the other hand, are unrepentant; Lydia doesn't perceive the personal or moral significance of her actions. She and her husband are both immature and unstable, without principles or good sense to guide them, and their "unsettled" style of living, always "in quest of a cheap situation and always spending more than they ought" (PP, p. 387) reflects this. It also reveals the problems and stresses of having married without first having an adequate income. The minimal attraction which first brought them together is soon reduced to indifference.

When Lady Russell urged Anne to break her engagement to Captain Wentworth eight years before the action of the novel begins, she was motivated in part by improper pride, but she also sincerely meant to save Anne from the sort of fate that Fanny Ward met as Mrs. Price: "a state of most wearing, anxious, youth-killing dependence" (MP, p. 27). Captain Wentworth, like Lieutenant Price, began his career with no education, connections, or fortune. He was full of energy and self-confidence, but there was no guarantee that his expectations would be fulfilled. Although Anne, like Mrs. Norris, would have been capable of coping with the privations of a small income, she could not foresee that Wentworth would fare better than many of the other sailors.

Brown asserts that Anne was wrong not to follow her heart and marry Wentworth despite Lady Russell's strenuous objections and that Anne reveals her "true Elliot" nature at the end when she justifies

her submission to Lady Russell's authority: "Even Anne Elliot turns out to be a true Elliot in the end by persuading herself she was right in taking Lady Russell's advice. We have only to recall Sir Walter's adeptness at persuading himself of his financial stability and the disappearance of Mrs. Clay's freckles." Brown concludes that "Anne Elliot cannot take the final step in self-awareness by admitting that she was weak to take Lady Russell's advice."⁸ This seems really unfair, given the weight of evidence that imprudent marriages are very apt to produce long-lasting unhappiness. In his discussion of eighteenth century mores, Stone states that

There can be no doubt that at all times a few young people at all levels of society have defied the conventional wisdom of the day which condemned such mental disturbances and have fallen head over heels in love. But given the hostility towards socially or financially unbalanced matches, and given the great influence over choice of partners still exercised by parents, 'friends' and masters, it is hardly surprising that these love affairs often failed to end in a happy marriage.⁹

In Jane Austen's Art of Allusion, Kenneth Moler accurately describes Anne as the moral ideal of the novel and the source of improvement in both Captain Wentworth and Lady Russell:

The novel involves, not moral growth in Anne, but moral growth in Wentworth and, to some extent, in Lady Russell. Moreover, just as Anne combines 'art' and 'nature' in the proper proportions within herself, so does she bring about harmony between her modern philosopher and her over-cautious mentor.¹⁰

Anne has followed the line of conduct advocated by Defoe and widely accepted in Jane Austen's time by "allowing Lady Russell a 'negative

voice' in her affairs, but refusing to compromise her feelings or conscience by allowing herself to be persuaded into marrying against her inclinations."¹¹

Anne is the only Austen heroine who is strongly influenced in her matrimonial decision by a parent figure, and she soon realizes that Lady Russell's advice has cost as much of her personal happiness as even an imprudent marriage might have. Anne comes to understand that she would have been able to endure the potential social and economic hardships better than the emotional deprivation of his loss. This realization on her part does not negate her sense that she was right in submitting to the guidance of her surrogate mother, but rather, is a full, mature sense of her personal values, a level of self-knowledge gained through experience.

It turns out, furthermore, that Mrs. Croft, one of the most intelligent, sensible, and warm-hearted mature women in the novels, would also have discouraged Anne and Wentworth's long, "uncertain" engagement, though for different reasons than Lady Russell. As Mrs. Croft tells Mrs. Musgrove,

I would rather have young people settle on a small income at once, and have to struggle with a few difficulties together, than be involved in a long engagement . . . or an uncertain engagement which may be long. To begin without knowing that at such a time there will be the means of marrying, I hold to be very unsafe and unwise, and what I think all parents should prevent as far as they can.

(P, pp. 230-31)

At the time Anne and Wentworth became engaged, they had no means of

marrying and no way of knowing when they would be able to marry. Although Mrs. Croft and Mrs. Musgrove are discussing the engagement of Henrietta and Charles Hayter, Anne and Wentworth immediately feel the relevance of her words to their own painful separation:

Anne found an unexpected interest here. She felt its application to herself, felt it in a nervous thrill all over her; and at the same moment that her eyes instinctively glanced towards the distant table, Captain Wentworth's pen ceased to move, and he turned round the next instant to give a look, one quick, conscious look at her.

(P, p. 230)

Mrs. Croft's wise perspective vindicates Anne for her submission to Lady Russell's prudent warnings without validating the erroneous values on which they were based, and without invalidating the quality or worth of the love between Anne and Wentworth.

* * *

There are many loveless marriages in the novels; the vast majority of these do not end in divorce or disgrace, but in some form of compromise. Unfortunately, the adjustment usually involves a diminution of capability or of purposeful activity. According to Henry Fielding,

Domestic happiness is the end of almost all our pursuits, and the common reward of all our pains.--When men find themselves forever barred from this delightful fruition they are lost to all industry, and grow careless of their worldly affairs.--Thus they become bad subjects, bad relations, bad friends, and bad men.¹²

Jane Austen's view is less extreme, yet the same sense of wasted potential is shown in the destructive effects of poor marriage choices on the lives of her characters.

Juliet McMaster suggests that ". . . the Willoughbys and the Wickhams are apt to proceed to separation or divorce, like the Rushworths."¹³ It seems far more likely that they, like most of the mature couples around them, will find ways of adapting to one another that will enable them to coexist despite their mutual indifference. John Willoughby and Miss Grey marry without illusions. When Willoughby is explaining his betrayal of Marianne, he admits, "In honest words, her money was necessary to me, and in a situation like mine anything was to be done to prevent a rupture." Of his bride he reveals, "She does not deserve your compassion. She knew I had no regard for her when we married" (SS, pp. 328, 329). Miss Grey is attracted to Willoughby in spite of his lack of affection for her, and by marrying him, she gains not only a handsome husband with a lovely estate at Combe Magna, but also a means of leaving the home of her uncongenial guardians. Since they have both gained with they sought from their marriage, they derive some satisfaction from their bargain despite the things they forfeited in choosing it. Willoughby regrets his loss of Marianne,

But that he was for ever inconsolable--that he fled from society, or contracted an habitual gloom of temper, or died of a broken heart, must not be depended on--for he did neither. He lived to exert, and frequently to enjoy himself. His wife was not always out of humour, nor his home always uncomfortable! and in his breed of horses and dogs, and in sporting of every kind, he found no inconsiderable degree of domestic felicity.
(SS, p. 379)

Thus, a young man with the potential to be much more is shaped by his marriage to use the least of his abilities and to be content within those narrow limits.

The marriage of Charles Musgrove and Mary Elliot has had a similar influence on Charles' character. On the rebound following his rejection by Anne, Charles married her sister, for whom "being unwell and out of spirits was almost a matter of course" (P, p. 37). Mary is cross, peevish, and helpless, always "fancying herself neglected and ill-used." By marrying a woman inferior to himself, Charles has stunted his own growth:

. . . a more equal match might have greatly improved him . . . a woman of real understanding might have given more consequence to his character, and more usefulness, rationality, and elegance to his habits and pursuits. As it was, he did nothing with much zeal, but sport; and his time was otherwise trifled away without benefit from books or any thing else.

(P, p. 43)

Like Willoughby, Charles wastes his time in frivolous activities and maintains his own good spirits by ignoring his wife's irritability.

Sir John and Lady Middleton are an older couple whose marriage has fostered a similar pattern of development. The warm-hearted Sir Thomas and the coldly insipid Lady Middleton have found a common ground in their constant round of social engagements, which have become "necessary to the happiness of both." They are each so limited in their interests and abilities that they have nothing to offer one another directly, but their social life satisfies the needs of both:

Sir John was a sportsman, Lady Middleton a mother. He hunted and shot, and she humoured her children; these were their only resources. . . . Continual engagements at home and abroad, however, supplied all the deficiencies of nature and education; supported the good spirits of Sir John, and gave exercise to the good breeding of his wife.

(SS, p. 32)

Like Charles Musgrove, Sir John might have been improved by a wife of superior intelligence and character. To his naturally generous heart and congenial temper, greater depth and better taste might have been added, and his energies might have been directed into more worthwhile activities. Instead, Sir John and Lady Middleton have adapted to the extreme dissimilarity of their tempers by accepting the emptiness of their personal relationship and of their lives without giving either much thought.

Marriage has even more harmful effects on John Dashwood and Mr. Elton. Mr. Dashwood married Fanny Ferrars out of a genuine attachment, but the very depth of that attachment, like the closeness between parent and child, has worked against him, making him more susceptible to his wife's negative influence:

Had he married a more amiable woman, he might have been made still more respectable than he was; he might even have been made amiable himself; for he was very young when he married, and very fond of his wife. But Mrs. John Dashwood was a strong caricature of himself; more narrow-minded and more selfish.

(SS, p. 5)

More intelligent as well as more mean-spirited than her husband, Fanny Dashwood undermines her husband's better impulses, and by her shrewd and "irresistible" logic, she persuades him to think and act as ungen-

erously as herself. Thus, even a marriage that seems satisfactory to the two persons involved can be destructive if their relationship fosters the growth of their weaknesses instead of their strengths.

Although there is no genuine affection between Mr. Elton and his bride, the similarity of their faults unites them in a relationship which is agreeable to both but beneficial to neither. Mr. Elton is still smarting from his rejection by Emma and feels vindictive because of her humiliating assumption that he was wooing Harriet. His marriage helps him save face; even Emma must defer to the new bride he brings back with him to Highbury society, and he shares in his wife's special importance. Like John Dashwood, Mr. Elton is still young, and in his present state of mind, he is highly susceptible to his wife's influence. After witnessing his cruel behavior to Harriet at the ball and seeing Augusta's silent participation in it, Emma concludes that he is "not . . . quite so hardened as his wife, though growing very like her" (E, p. 328).

Robert Ferrars and Lucy Steele form a similarly compatible yet faulty union. Brought together by her mercenary self-interest and his vulnerability to flattery, they have a bond based on the defects of their characters. Unlike Mr. Elton or Mr. John Dashwood, Robert and Lucy's faults are already well-established, but like them, marriage mirrors and intensifies their worst qualities. United in their efforts to ingratiate themselves with Mrs. Ferrars, they each get what they want from marriage, and by their own limited standards and narrow perception, they achieve domestic "harmony:"

They settled in town, received very liberal assistance from Mrs. Ferrars, were on the best of terms imaginable with the Dashwoods, and setting aside the jealousies and ill-will continually subsisting between Fanny and Lucy, in which their husbands of course took a part, as well as the frequent domestic disagreements between Robert and Lucy themselves, nothing could exceed the harmony in which they all lived together.

(SS, p. 377)

The double vision inherent in this passage reveals both the deficiencies of their relationship and their inability even to perceive these defects. Jane Austen heightens the sense of the inadequacy of this extended family by drawing a strong parallel and contrast between it and the more ideal cluster at Delaford: "Among the merits and happiness of Elinor and Marianne, let it not be ranked as the least considerable, that though sisters, and living almost within sight of each other, they could live without disagreement between themselves, or producing coolness between their husbands" (SS, p. 380).

The potential impact of marriage on the development of a person's character is a frequently discussed issue in the novels. While marriage can reflect and magnify a person's faults, it can also be an expression of his or her best self and an opportunity for real personal growth. As Mansell explains in his discussion of education in Jane Austen's novels, "Faults of character are . . . generally isolable, avoidable, and sometimes even remediable."¹⁴ This is what a truly "prudent" marriage can do; it can help correct negative tendencies, add qualities that are lacking, and draw out and develop the person's best potential.

For Harriet Smith, marriage to Robert Martin not only offers happiness as the wife of a good-natured man, but will also provide protection from folly and temptation, plus "the hope of more, of security, stability, and improvement. She would be placed in the midst of those who loved her, and who had better sense than herself" (E, p. 482). Robert Martin's good sense, innate gentility, and steadiness of character will do more to enhance Harriet's character than all of Emma's efforts could have.

Frank Churchill has many of the same faults as Mr. Elton, but because he marries a woman of truly superior character, he escapes the fate of Mr. Elton and so many other selfish, irresponsible young men. His genuine and lasting attachment to Miss Fairfax, despite her being a portionless orphan, expresses his better self--the part of him that is not class proud, personally vain, unsteady, or mercenary. Frank's strong affection for Jane and his awareness of her finer nature increases the probability that his character will be shaped by hers. Knightley predicts that by "being constantly with her . . . his character will improve, and acquire from hers the steadiness and delicacy of principle that it wants" (E, p. 448).

Similarly, those who promote the match between Fanny and Henry Crawford feel confident that "He has no faults but what a serious attachment would remove" (MP, p. 116). Edmund, in particular, sees Crawford's attachment to Fanny as proof of his goodness and the source of his future improvement:

It does him the highest honour; it shews his proper estimation of the blessing of domestic

happiness, and pure attachment. It proves him unspoil't by his uncle. It proves him, in short, every thing that I had been used to wish to believe him, and feared he was not. . . . He has chosen his partner, indeed with rare felicity. He will make you happy, Fanny, I know he will make you happy; but you will make him every thing.

(MP, pp. 350-51)

Mary's expectations are not so high as Edmund's because she is deeply cynical about marriage, but she does hope that the marriage will rescue Henry from the Admiral's pernicious influence. Henry loses Fanny, "the woman whom he had rationally, as well as passionately loved" (MP, p. 469), by indulging the worst impulses of his character, and along with her he forfeits his best chance not only of happiness but of salvation from his vices as well.

Fanny, on the other hand, expects the worst from the union of Edmund and Mary. She sees Mary as having "a mind led astray and bewildered, and without any suspicion of being so; darkened, yet fancying itself light." She assumes that "if Edmund's influence in this season of love, had already done so little in clearing her judgment, and regulating her notions, his worth would be finally wasted on her even in years of matrimony" (MP, p. 367). Not only does she not foresee any improvement in Miss Crawford from Edmund's influence, she fears that her character may damage his: "He will marry her, and be poor and miserable. God grant that her influence does not make him cease to be respectable!" (MP, p. 424).

Fanny's view is biased by her frustrated love for Edmund, just as his view of Henry is softened by his love for Mary. The fact that

Mary chooses Edmund over Tom, in spite of his being a younger brother with limited prospects, shows that she can be changed for the better by love, and her lasting dissatisfaction with her more dashing and wealthy suitors--her inability to "put Edmund Bertram sufficiently out of her head" (MP, p. 469)--is evidence of the effect his better nature has already had on her view of marriage. The issue remains unsettled, however, since Mary is inclined to want whatever she doesn't have. Had she married Edmund, she might soon have begun to miss the fashionable world of London and to resent even the minor restrictions of a country clergyman's lifestyle.

Elinor is similarly pessimistic about the future of Marianne's romance with Willoughby because of the nature of their attachment to one another. During the eighteenth century, romantic love was viewed as "a disturbance in the mental equilibrium resulting in an obsessive concentration upon the virtues of another person, a blindness to all his or her possible defects, and a rejection of all other options or considerations, especially such mundane matters as money."¹⁵ This is the defect in Marianne's love for Willoughby; her feelings are not grounded in an accurate appraisal of his character nor in a realistic awareness of their chance of being happy together. Elinor believes the end of their attachment has saved Marianne from a disastrous marriage in which Willoughby's inevitable resentment of the privations of poverty would have undermined his affection for her and created problems which she couldn't have solved. Elinor points out that because Willoughby has plenty of money after his marriage to Miss Grey, he

sees only the flaws in his wife's temper, whereas if he had married Marianne, he would have been dissatisfied with his economic situation:

The inconveniences would have been different. He would have suffered under the pecuniary distresses which, because they are removed, he now reckons as nothing. He would have had a wife of whose temper he could make no complaint, but he would have been always necessitous--always poor; and probably would soon have learnt to rank the innumerable comforts of a clear estate and a good income as of far more importance, even to domestic happiness, than the mere temper of a wife.

(SS, p. 352)

Although Willoughby's character turns out to be less thoroughly vile than it at times appeared, had he married Marianne, they would both have been immature and immoderate. Despite her more honorable nature, Marianne would have been unable to curb his irresponsibility or to control his extravagance. Unlike Lady Elliot, she could not have compensated for her husband's deficiencies, and the problems of the situation might have sapped her strengths or soured her temper.

* * *

The few really happy marriages among the older couples in the novels provide insight into the conditions and qualities that contribute to domestic harmony. All of the families have a comfortable and secure income, but most are not wealthy. The personal traits of the men and women who achieve happiness in marriage are quite uniform. Typically, the husband is a sensible, well-bred man with a cheerful, open-hearted temperament; the wife is a rational, unaffected woman

who possesses good common sense and an amiable temper. When any of these qualities is lacking in one or both partners, their marriage, although happy, lacks the kind of balance that the heroines will attain in their marriages.

Mr. and Mrs. Parker in Sanditon are the most extreme example of a couple who manage to be happy together despite the lack of balance in their relationship. Because neither one is sensible or clear-sighted, neither can compensate for the poor judgment of the other or give rational direction to their lives:

. . . Mrs. Parker was as evidently a gentle, amiable, sweet-tempered woman, the properest wife in the world for a man of strong understanding but not of a capacity to supply the cooler reflection which her own husband needed; and so entirely waiting to be guided on every occasion that whether he was risking his fortune or spraining his ankle, she remained equally useless.

(MW, p. 372)

Mr. and Mrs. John Knightley and Mr. and Mrs. Weston are more subtle but important examples of happily married couples who lack some of the qualities that will contribute to the more "perfect" happiness of Emma and Mr. Knightley. Isabella is too much like her father to carry her half of a complete and balanced relationship. Like Mr. Woodhouse, she has an amiable and affectionate disposition but lacks intelligence, perceptiveness, and judgment: "She was not a woman of strong understanding or any quickness" (E, p. 92). The relationship between Isabella and her husband is much like the relationship between Mr. Woodhouse and Emma. Just as Mr. Woodhouse, "understanding but in part," cannot respond to Emma as an equal, so Isabella, "hearing and

understanding only in part" (E, pp. 13, 95), misses the point of many of her husband's comments and cannot respond appropriately. Mr. Woodhouse's inability to see Emma's faults or to correct the excesses of her behavior encourages the growth of Emma's weaknesses instead of curbing them. A similarly harmful imbalance results from Isabella's blind adoration of John Knightley; he is not an ill-tempered man, but his temper is not perfect, "and indeed, with such a worshipping wife, it was hardly possible that any defects in it should not be increased. The extreme sweetness of her temper must hurt his" (E, pp. 92-3). Everyone, child or adult, needs balance, not indulgence, to develop properly.

Although not perfectly balanced, the marriage of Isabella and John Knightley is a fairly happy one. With characteristic irony, Jane Austen reveals that Isabella's slowness, which annoys her husband and provokes him into occasional irritability toward her, also protects her from feeling the sting of his sharp comments: Isabella, "passing her life with those she doted on, full of their merits, blind to their faults, and always innocently busy, might have been a model of right feminine happiness" (E, p. 140). When Knightley goes to visit his brother "to learn to be indifferent" to Emma, he finds that he has chosen the wrong place to find comfort for his loss. There is "too much domestic happiness in his brother's house," and Isabella differs from Emma "only in those striking inferiorities which always brought the other in brilliancy before him" (E, pp. 432-33). Emma, so much more fully aware than her sister, will be a much better "model" of

"right feminine happiness," and her marriage with Knightley will be a much more equal alliance.

The marriage of Mr. and Mrs. Weston is better balanced than that of John and Isabella Knightley because Mr. Weston equals his wife in warm-hearted good nature, and Mrs. Weston, in addition to being truly amiable, is also well-judging and rational. Mr. Weston and John Knightley are at opposite extremes in their levels of sociability, and Emma's awareness of their excesses makes her more appreciative of Mr. Knightley's moderation. John Knightley's dislike of company and his intolerance of other people irritates Emma; his impatience toward Mr. Woodhouse is his worst failing in her eyes. She cannot be insensible, therefore, of how much real kindness and consideration for others, as well as devotion to herself, is expressed in Mr. Knightley's suggestion that he move to Hartfield after their marriage. As Mrs. Weston says, ". . . who but Mr. Knightley could know and bear with Mr. Woodhouse as so to make such an arrangement desirable!" (E, p. 467).

Mr. Weston's "unmanageable goodwill" teaches Emma the value of greater taste and discrimination in social relationships. Mr. Weston is "a straight-forward, open-hearted man" (E, p. 13), but he seems incapable of exercising sensible restraint in his socializing, including everyone indiscriminately. Initially flattered that he seeks her advice on plans for the ball, Emma later discovers that he has innumerable intimates and confidants: "She liked his open manners, but a little less of open-heartedness would have made him a higher character. General benevolence, but not general friendship, made a man what

he ought to be. She could fancy such a man" (E, p. 320).

Knightley is precisely that. As Emma tells Mrs. Weston, "I know no man more likely than Mr. Knightley . . . to do anything really good-natured, useful, considerate, or benevolent. He is not a gallant man, but he is a very humane one" (E, p. 223). The way he treats Mrs. Bates, Jane Fairfax, and Harriet Smith shows his sensitivity to the feelings and needs of others. While he is at all times courteous and civilized in his treatment of other people, he cultivates the personal friendship only of those people whose character and sense he respects. He has self-respect without being vain or inappropriately class-conscious. Mr. Knightley is a better example of masculine good nature and open-heartedness than either Mr. Weston or Mr. John Knightley.

In some instances, the happiness and compatibility of a married couple is implied more by the way they function as parents than by a direct portrayal of the way they interact with one another. The solid, steady warmth of the Morlands' relationship is implied by the calm, loving way they treat Catherine and James. We never hear them talk to one another but instead infer their unanimity from their treatment of their children.

Similarly, the Gardiners function primarily as temporary surrogate parents who assist the Bennet girls in ways their real parents cannot. Had it been left to Mr. Bennet's efforts, Wickham would never have married Lydia, and all the Bennet daughters would have suffered from an even more public and long-lasting disgrace. Although it is

Darcy who supplies the money to secure Wickham's compliance, it is clear that Mr. Gardiner would have done so if Darcy hadn't. Mansell describes the Gardiners as Elizabeth's "spiritual mentors;"¹⁶ certainly, they give her more right-minded guidance than her parents do. It is the Gardiners who persuade Elizabeth to visit Pemberley, and Mrs. Gardiner's opinions of Darcy as she becomes acquainted with him provide an objective viewpoint against which Elizabeth can verify her own new impressions of his character.

The Gardiners also teach Darcy an important lesson. Through the propriety of their own behavior, they show him that even people who live "by trade" can be "well-bred and agreeable" (PP, p. 139). Darcy's discovery that Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner possess intelligence, taste, and good manners helps him outgrow his unfounded distaste for Mr. Gardiner's profession. He is able to rise above the kind of improper pride and inappropriate class-consciousness exemplified by Lady Catherine de Bourgh and by the Bingley sisters, who choose to forget that their own fortune was also acquired through trade. Both Darcy and Elizabeth credit the Gardiners with bringing the two of them together. The novel gives only a momentary glimpse of the Gardiners' own home and their "troop of happy little boys and girls." We know more about them through the service they render Elizabeth and Darcy than through seeing their own family setting; we are told simply that in their home, "All was joy and kindness" (PP, p. 152).

There are three happy marriages among the older couples in Persuasion, more than in any of the earlier novels, and we see and

hear more about their actual domestic arrangements and styles of personal interaction than in the other novels. This is particularly true of Admiral and Mrs. Croft, who become the model for Anne and Wentworth's relationship.

Unlike the other happy families in Jane Austen's fiction, the Musgroves are "an old country family of respectability and large fortune" (P, p. 6); neither Charles nor his father has an occupation, which contributes to the triviality of their pursuits. The elder Musgroves are "not much educated, and not at all elegant" (P, p. 40). They are extremely partial parents, and like Mr. and Mrs. Morland, they approve their children's marriage choices without worrying about the greatness of the match. Like the Morlands, the Musgroves are not perceptive or sensitive, but they possess all the sincere mutuality and unpretentious warmth that is lacking in the Elliot family. Jane Austen repeatedly juxtaposes the two families to stress the contrast between the "heartless elegance" of Sir Walter and Elizabeth and the hearty warmth of the Musgroves, and to show of how much normal family feeling Anne has been deprived. Anne envies the loving atmosphere of the Musgroves' home, but "she would not have given up her own more elegant and cultivated mind for all their enjoyments" (P, p. 41).

Instead, Anne chooses the navy couples she meets--Captain and Mrs. Harville and Admiral and Mrs. Croft--as her ideal of domestic happiness. Captain Harville is "a perfect gentleman, unaffected, warm, and obliging" (P, p. 97). He is as eloquent in describing the tender emotions of a man for his family as Anne is on the subject of

woman's constancy. Like Lieutenant Price, Captain Harville has been disabled so that he can no longer be in active service, but in all other ways, Captain Harville presents a striking contrast to Mr. Price. Despite his poor health, Captain Harville spends his time in rational, productive ways that benefit his family:

His lameness prevented him from taking much exercise; but a mind of usefulness and ingenuity seemed to furnish him with constant employment within. He drew, he varnished, he carpentered, he glued; he made toys for the children; he fashioned new netting-needles and pins with improvements, and if everything else was done, sat down to his large fishing-net at one corner of the room.

(P, p. 99)

By his many "ingenious contrivances and nice arrangements" Captain Harville has made his family's rented lodgings comfortable and convenient; the mementoes he collected during his years of active duty fill their home with warm and lively memories. The fascinating diversity of Captain Harville's collection of artifacts from around the world expresses a very different stance toward life than the infinitely repeated sameness and inward-turning self-absorption of Sir Walter's house of mirrors. The busy usefulness of Captain Harville, despite his infirmity, contrasts dramatically with the mindlessly idle pursuits of Charles Musgrove and "the sameness and the elegance, the prosperity and the nothingness" (P, p. 9), of life in the Elliot household. This habit of useful activity appeals to Anne almost as strongly as the warmth of the relationships among the navy officers and their families.

The Harvilles' response to the crisis of Louisa's fall reveals their closeness and understanding--"a look between him and his wife decided what was to be done." Both think quickly and act purposefully: "Shocked as Captain Harville was, he brought senses and nerves that could be instantly useful." Mrs. Harville, who is "a very experienced nurse," has Louisa placed in her own room and insists on caring for the injured girl herself. Before the others have had time to stop and reflect, Captain and Mrs. Harville have "looked forward and arranged everything," and all their help is given "with a truth and sincerity of feeling" (P, p. 111) that Anne finds irresistible. The heart-felt friendship and hospitality of the Harvilles has a "bewitching charm" for Anne. She feels a sense of loss not only over Wentworth himself but over the opportunity to belong to this loving circle of his "brother-officers:" "'These would have been all my friends,' was her thought; and she had to struggle against a great tendency to lowness" (P, p. 98).

Admiral and Mrs. Croft are an equally happy and devoted couple, with the same qualities of friendliness, good humour, and good breeding that the Harvilles possess. Admiral and Mrs. Croft have truly shared their lives with one another. She has derived pleasure and interest from sailing with him overseas, and when he must walk for his health, "Mrs. Croft seemed to go shares with him in every thing, and to walk for her life, to do him good" (P, p. 168). Mrs. Croft is a sensible, intelligent woman who interacts with her husband as a full and equal partner in their life together. Admiral Croft really talks

to his wife, and when they encounter friends, Mrs. Croft is an equal participant in the conversation, "looking as intelligent and keen as any of the officers around her" (P, p. 168). Unlike most of Jane Austen's adult women, she is also a good listener.

Anne perceives that Mrs. Croft has keener powers of perception than her husband, and is charmed by the loving way she exerts her more cautious judgment for their mutual benefit, as exemplified by their mode of driving:

. . . by coolly giving the reins a better direction herself, they happily passed the danger; and by once afterwards judiciously putting out her hand, they neither fell into a rut, nor ran foul of a dung-cart; and Anne, with some amusement at their style of driving, which she imagined no bad representation of the general guidance of their affairs, found herself safely deposited by them at the cottage.

(P, p. 92)

Mrs. Croft is as capable and knowledgeable as her husband. When they are negotiating with the Elliots' lawyer to rent Kellynch Hall, Mrs. Croft "asked more questions about the house, and terms, and taxes, than the admiral himself, and seemed more conversant with business" (P, p. 22). He, like Wentworth, is more headstrong and impetuous, while she, like Anne, is more cautious and reflective. Their strengths are complementary and work for their mutual advantage.

Over and over, Anne is touched by the similarity between the Crofts' relationship and the relationship she once had with Wentworth. Just as the Crofts are always together, talking, "There had been a time, when . . . they would have found it most difficult to cease to

speak to one another" (P, p. 63). The Crofts' description of their courtship reminds Anne of her own romance with Wentworth, before outside intervention changed everything. She and Wentworth "were gradually acquainted, and when acquainted, rapidly and deeply in love" (P, p. 26). Mrs. Croft affectionately warns the Admiral that they had better not say too much about their courtship in front of Anne because ". . . if Miss Elliot were to hear how soon we came to an understanding, she would never be persuaded that we could be happy together. I had known you by character, however, long before" (P, p. 92). Anne well understands how much fond remembrance and present contentment are expressed in Mrs. Croft's words. Of all the couples Anne knows, only the Crofts seem as truly compatible as she and Wentworth once were; "With the exception, perhaps, of Admiral and Mrs. Croft . . . there could have been no two hearts so open, no tastes so similar, no feelings so in unison, no countenances so beloved" (P, pp. 63-4).

Mrs. Croft gives a rare insight into the healthful effects of loving togetherness and the injurious effects of loss or separation when she insists that life on board ship is far better for a navy wife than the pain of long separation. She tells Wentworth he is wrong to talk "as if women were all fine ladies, instead of rational creatures" (P, p. 70); she argues that the loneliness, fear, and boredom caused by separation are far more harmful to body and spirit than any of the dangers or discomforts at sea:

The only time that I ever really suffered
in body or mind, the only time that I ever
fancied myself unwell, or had any ideas of

danger--was the winter that I passed by myself at Deal, when the Admiral (Captain Croft then) was in the North Seas. I lived in perpetual fright at that time, and had all manner of imaginary complaints from not knowing what to do with myself, or when I should hear from him next; but as long as we could be together, nothing ever ailed me, and I never met with the smallest inconvenience.

(P, p. 71)

Anne is deeply moved by Mrs. Croft's words, and she feels the parallel to her own loss of bloom and spirits, energy and health, caused by her estrangement from Captain Wentworth.

The Crofts' "country habit of being always together" fires Anne's imagination and creates for her "a most attractive picture of happiness" (P, p. 168). Their relationship embodies the kind of loving closeness she yearns for, and in the final paragraph of the novel, we are assured that her "tenderness" is well-matched by Wentworth's "affection." Like the Crofts, Anne and Wentworth have a companionate marriage, and just as Mrs. Croft has delighted in sharing her husband's career, Jane Austen promises that Anne "gloried in being a sailor's wife" (P, p. 252).

* * *

Because Jane Austen sees the marriage relationship as the primary force that shapes a person's adult life, the kind of marriage the heroine will choose is the central concern in each of the novels. The heroine's choice is usually the result of an on-going process of moral, perceptual, or emotional growth. Often, her future husband has

been her most important teacher. This fact, combined with the subtlety of Jane Austen's portrayal of strong feelings, has fueled the continuing debate over whether or not her heroes and heroines experience physical attraction and love for one another within the novels. According to Brian Southam, "Her heroes are a dull and unvirile crew; her heroines are untroubled by passion. Sexuality is outlawed, reserved for the villains and villainesses and the silly little girls and the married women who should know better."¹⁷ Julia Prewitt Brown states that the heroines reject sexuality as a dangerous force which is in conflict with the kind of personal awareness and control that they are trying to achieve:

Almost every Austen heroine at some point is confronted with a sexually assertive man, and she either loses interest in him as an imaginative counterpart (Elizabeth and Wickham, Emma and Frank Churchill) or rejects him because of a conscious understanding of the danger of his sexuality (Elinor and Willoughby, Fanny Price and Henry Crawford). It seems that passion is antithetical to what these heroines are striving for. . . . Is not the conscious giving up of passion the price her heroines pay for consciousness?¹⁸

This fairly consistent undervaluing of the potent attraction between the heroine and her future husband disregards the subtle but frequent suggestion of physical attraction and intense feelings between the hero and heroine. Juliet McMaster examines Jane Austen's narrative method and points out that "Again and again, Jane Austen indicates severe emotional shock by . . . understatement. She is not avoiding the presentation of strong feelings; she is presenting them by indirection." McMaster concludes that "Though much of the sexual

aspect of courtship is suggested rather than described, the novels are quite sufficiently stored with evidence of the physical attraction between the major characters."¹⁹ While Jane Austen does reject unions based exclusively on sexual passion--such as those of Lydia and Wickham, Maria and Henry--she neither rejects nor omits that element in conjunction with the other components of a complete relationship.

In rejecting unions based solely on physical attraction or romantic love, Jane Austen follows the popular wisdom of her time. During the eighteenth century, "Almost everyone agreed . . . that both physical desire and romantic love were unsafe bases for an enduring marriage, since both were violent mental disturbances which would inevitably be of only short duration."²⁰ This attitude was not a rejection of physical attraction as part of the over-all relationship, but a rejection of relationships which had no deeper and more rational foundation. According to Stone, "It is highly significant that in The Lady's Magazine in the 1770's, the constant advice is, firstly that sexual attraction is ephemeral and an inadequate basis for marriage by itself, but secondly that it is an essential ingredient of marriage and something that the wife should do her utmost to keep alive."²¹

The ideal marriage in Jane Austen's novels is one in which head and heart are equally engaged, a union in which there is a dynamic balance between two equal beings who not only love one another, but also stimulate the development of their best qualities in each other. The least satisfying marriages in the novels are the ones which fail to achieve this balance between reason and feeling or which unite very

unequal partners. This is the reason why the marriages of Fanny and Edmund and of Marianne and Colonel Brandon are among the least satisfying to many modern readers. The best marriages are those in which the heroine and her future husband are drawn to each other on both levels--intellectual and emotional--and can come together as equals. The marriages of Anne and Wentworth and of Elizabeth and Darcy are the most successful embodiments of the ideal of balanced mutual enhancement. The over-all success of each novel is largely determined by the degree to which the heroine's marriage achieves this goal and is a convincingly natural result of her own and her husband's personalities.

The marriage of Fanny and Edmund is especially problematical for modern readers because Edmund and Fanny have been brother and sister, parent and child, and teacher and pupil. Edmund has been "loving, guiding and protecting" Fanny since she was ten years old, "her mind in so great a degree formed by his care, and her comfort depending on his kindness." His marriage to Fanny is not a union of equals because his love for her is "a regard founded on the most endearing claims of innocence and helplessness" (MP, p. 470). Only in the last four pages of the novel does Fanny become something more than a favorite sister to Edmund, and his romantic attachment to her is more a rebound reaction to the loss of Mary Crawford than anything else. The shift from brotherly to romantic feelings on his part is the result of "his suffering disappointment and regret, grieving over what was, and wishing for what could never be" (MP, p. 461). Instead of risking another

potentially unsuccessful relationship, Edmund withdraws into the safe and secure--and closed--environment of Mansfield Park.

Edmund has been educated by his disillusionment to recognize Mary's vice and Fanny's virtue, but while his awakening to Fanny's moral superiority is plausible enough, his romantic attachment to her is less convincing. The narrative voice of the novel indirectly acknowledges the problem by saying, "I purposely abstain from dates on this occasion, that everyone may be at liberty to fix their own. . . . I only intreat every body to believe that exactly at the time it was quite natural that it should be so, and not a week earlier, Edmund did cease to care about Miss Crawford, and became as anxious to marry Fanny, as Fanny herself could desire" (MP, p. 470). Although Edmund has presumably learned to love with his head as well as with his heart, the final picture is one of stasis rather than of growth or energy, and Edmund and Fanny, like Julia and Mr. Yates, live their married lives within the tight circle of Sir Thomas's influence.

The marriage of Marianne and Colonel Brandon is another instance in which balance is achieved, but at great cost to the characters. Their union is presented as the result of her growing maturity, and it is expected to foster additional growth. Their marriage is described as providing the sort of mutually beneficial interaction that is Jane Austen's ideal: her character gains steadiness and responsibility from being "a wife, the mistress of a family, and the patroness of a village," while "her regard and her society restored his mind to animation, and his spirits to cheerfulness." However, their marriage

can take place only after Marianne has been subdued by illness, and the Marianne who marries Colonel Brandon "with no sentiment superior to strong esteem and lively friendship" (SS, pp. 378-79) is scarcely recognizable as the warm and intense young woman who fell in love with Willoughby. The alteration in Marianne, combined with the fact that Willoughby is "all active life," while Colonel Brandon is "all passive virtue,"²² contributes to the sense of loss and dullness in the conclusion and undermines the promise of future benefit.

Jane Millgate points out that the formal balance of the two heroines and their husbands at the end of the novel emphasizes the need for balance and moderation suggested by the title: ". . . we understand why the title of the book invokes sense and sensibility, and in what degree the mixture should be compounded in order to bring happiness rather than anguish."²³ Nevertheless, Marianne, like Edmund Bertram, seems to have been forced to love her more appropriate suitor for the sake of achieving that sense of balance, and for many readers, the result is not entirely satisfactory.

The union of Elinor and Edward is a much more natural result of their individual personalities than that of Marianne and Colonel Brandon, but their relationship does not stimulate significant changes in either of them during the timespan of the novel. Elinor loves Edward with genuine devotion throughout the novel; her feelings are as strong at the beginning as they are at the end. Edward has also learned to regret his foolish engagement to Lucy and fallen in love with Elinor before the novel opens. After he is released from his unhappy commit-

ment to Lucy and gains Elinor's consent, Edward behaves with "a flowing, grateful cheerfulness, as his friends had never seen in him before" (SS, p. 362). This change in Edward, like Elinor's uncharacteristic outburst of crying, results from the sudden change in their prospects, rather than from changes in their levels of awareness. The fact that neither Elinor nor Edward goes through a process of education during the novel perhaps explains the almost equal division of interest between Elinor and Marianne, which allows for the development of the themes of education and balance.

Elinor and Edward's temperaments and attitudes are very similar, so that, like Jane and Mr. Bingley or Mr. and Mrs. Weston, they will be "one of the happiest couples in the world." Yet, like the Bingleys and the Westons, they are almost too similar; their union lacks energy. The future concerns of Elinor and Edward are reduced almost to triviality: "They had in fact nothing to wish for, but the marriage of Colonel Brandon and Marianne, and rather better pasturage for their cows" (SS, pp. 374-75). Since the first wish is soon fulfilled, they are left with nothing to wish for and no desire for change. There is a warm sense of family solidarity and stability at the end, but their relationship lacks vitality.

* * *

According to Brown, three of the novels--Northanger Abbey, Pride and Prejudice, and Emma--value intellectual growth and awareness over

emotional attachment, so that the heroines experience "love" as an intellectual rather than an emotional attraction: "The emphasis on mind . . . involves a subtle yet definite undervaluing of the heart. All the heroines are capable of love but do not love within the limits of the story. Their love is cognitive love."²⁴ In each of these novels, however, there is a strong undercurrent of emotional and physical attraction between the hero and heroine, and the strength of the marriage at the end comes from the union and balance of passion and intellect in the marriage relationship.

The romance of Catherine Morland and Henry Tilney is not based on abstract intellectual values. Catherine is immediately attracted to Henry because he is charming and handsome, and it is her undisguised partiality for him that first attracts his serious notice of her. Henry becomes Catherine's mentor only in the latter half of the book, after their mutual interest is well-established.

The marriage of Catherine and Henry comes closer to attaining a natural, spontaneous balance of strengths and energies than that of Fanny and Edmund, Elinor and Edward, or Marianne and Colonel Brandon. Their marriage assures that Catherine, in addition to being happy, will continue to learn from his greater range of experience, more complete education, and better sense. He, on the other hand, will be softened and renewed by her freshness and simplicity. His cynicism, engendered by growing up with General Tilney as a father and Captain Tilney as a brother, will be tempered by her goodness and faith in others. Henry, who earlier could coolly discuss Frederick's flirta-

tion with Isabella and acknowledge a family partiality for his brother, blushes when he must try to explain his father's corrupt motives in first courting Catherine's friendship and then expelling her from Northanger against all rules of hospitality and civilized behavior.

The one flaw in their union is that they really aren't equal. Her guileless adoration of him hardly seems like an adequate incentive for his falling in love with a girl so greatly inferior to himself in education and common sense. Jane Austen satirizes the propensity of men to be captivated by ignorance in women, but Catherine is so foolish and naive that it is hard for the reader to respect her. As Schorer states, ". . . her final emancipation . . . is not quite congruent with her earlier gullibility."²⁵ The heavy emphasis on all the qualities she lacks, combined with her almost simple-minded credulity, undercuts her too much; she can't change enough by the end of the novel to seem like a proper match for Henry.

More clearly than in any of the other novels, Emma's marriage unites her with the man who has been responsible for her moral, perceptual, and emotional growth. Mr. Knightley has been Emma's only effective parent-figure and teacher, yet their union is not merely a "marriage of the minds" based on "cognitive love," as Brown suggests, nor is Southam's objection valid when he complains that "Whatever the solid virtues of George Knightley, whatever the truth-to-life in his marriage to Emma Woodhouse, there is some shadowy objection to his avuncular and tutelary union to a girl of such brilliance, beauty, and the 'bloom of full health.'"²⁶ The fact is that in spite of the six-

teen year age difference, Knightley is the only man in the novel who can match the special glow of health and vitality that Emma possesses. Mrs. Weston describes Emma as "the complete picture of grown-up health" (E, p. 39), but Knightley is an equally appealing picture of masculine vigor. His strength and vitality enable him to walk when most men would ride; he stands tall and moves with natural grace and ease.

The bond between Emma and Knightley is very deep and of many years' duration; its strong romantic dimension has developed gradually, but because of their familial relationship and the difference in their ages, neither of them has recognized the change in their feelings for one another. Thus, when Mrs. Weston describes Emma as "loveliness itself," Knightley can acknowledge without embarrassment, "I love to look at her," and Emma can tease Knightley about "not striving to look taller than any body else" (E, pp. 39, 214) when he rides instead of walking to the Coles' dinner party. Juliet McMaster details the wealth of evidence that Emma and Mr. Knightley have a subconscious awareness of each other's physical presence and an intense mutual attraction before as well as after they become conscious of their feelings.²⁷

It is through their jealousy of potential rivals that Emma and Knightley discover their love for one another. Knightley's vexation over Emma's interest in Frank Churchill becomes a fever of jealousy and frustration when Emma's flat assertion that Frank is indifferent to Jane Fairfax convinces him that Emma must have a private understanding with Frank:

. . . his gaiety did not meet hers. He found he could not be useful, and his feelings were too much irritated for talking. That he might not be irritated into an absolute fever by the fire which Mr. Woodhouse's tender habits required almost every evening throughout the year, he soon afterwards took a hasty leave, and walked home to the coolness and solitude of Donwell Abbey.

(E, p. 351)

Emma is much less in touch with her feelings than Knightley is with his, so she experiences jealousy without recognizing it. It takes her much longer to discern the real reason behind her "violent dislike of his marrying Jane Fairfax "or Jane anybody" (E, p. 287) and her specious concern for the rights of Little Henry as heir to the Donwell estate. She privately resolves that Knightley, like herself, should remain single.

Emma's awakening to her love for Knightley is not an intellectual discovery but an intense emotional reaction which then leads to a rational recognition of her attachment to him. When Emma learns of Harriet's attachment to Mr. Knightley and fears that it may be reciprocal, her jealousy illuminates her true feelings: "It darted through her with the speed of an arrow that Mr. Knightley must marry no one but herself" (E, p. 408). Finally, after Knightley proposes, it is Emma's turn to experience feverish agitation as the three of them-- Mr. Woodhouse, Mr. Knightley, and Emma--sit down to tea as usual: "As long as Mr. Knightley remained with them, Emma's fever continued" (E, p. 434). This scarcely sounds like a merely cognitive awareness of Knightley's moral and intellectual virtues.

If the match between Emma and Mr. Knightley is unbalanced, it is not because a beautiful and brilliant young woman has married her mentor, but because Knightley is so greatly superior to Emma; he possesses honesty, gentility, sensitivity, and moral awareness that she can only aspire to. This difference in their levels of maturity is in part due to the gap in their ages. Emma admits to Frank, ". . . there is a likeness in our destiny; the destiny which bids fair to connect us with two characters so much superior to our own" (E, p. 478). Frank gallantly assures Emma that she has no superior, but her assessment is correct. Now that Emma understands and appreciates Knightley's strengths, she will be a more tractable pupil than in the past. Her education will continue within the loving relationship of her marriage. The benefit does not seem reciprocal, however; Emma has little to teach Knightley.

The fact that Knightley is willing to live at Hartfield is evidence of his sensitivity and tolerance toward others as well as of his love for Emma, but it gives their marriage a somewhat regressive atmosphere. The fact that Emma will continue to dominate her father reduces the sense of forward movement and increased potential that her marriage to Knightley would otherwise have. This is not to suggest that Mr. Woodhouse should be abandoned or disregarded, but that his dependence on them and the continuation of the unbalanced relationship between him and Emma, in which their natural roles are reversed, limits the sense of progress at the end of the novel. Little seems to have changed; for Emma, happiness requires maintaining the status quo.

* * *

Of all the heroines, Anne Elliot and Elizabeth Bennet come closest to achieving ideal marriages. For each of them, head and heart are fully involved in the marriage relationship. They and their husbands will be equal partners in marriage, and the union will benefit both individuals. The salutary effects of their marriages for both husband and wife are explicitly predicted, and more than in any of the other novels, the capacity of the new couple to function as parents is clearly implied.

One of the strengths of the romance between Anne and Wentworth is that from the outset, it is both passionate and intelligent. Although Anne allows her head to over-rule her heart and Wentworth lets his emotions dominate his reason, both love with their heads and their hearts. It is this powerful combination of both elements that enables their love to survive the eight-year estrangement.

The depth of Anne's emotional commitment to Wentworth is emphasized throughout the novel. Because her love never wavers, "No second attachment, the only thoroughly natural, happy, and sufficient cure, at her time of life, had been possible" (P, p. 28). Even when she meets Mr. Elliot, who appears to be an ideal suitor for her, she dismisses him without serious consideration on no grounds other than that he isn't Wentworth:

He was quite as good-looking as he had appeared at Lyme, his countenance improved

by speaking, and his manners were so exactly what they ought to be, so polished, so easy, so particularly agreeable, that she could compare them to only one person's manners. They were not the same, but they were, perhaps, equally good.

(P, p. 174)

When Anne meets Wentworth again after his long absence, she finds him even more attractive than before; the years of active service have "only given him a more glowing, manly, open look, in no respect lessening his personal advantages" (P, p. 61). Anne is acutely aware of Wentworth's physical presence, as indicated by her agitated reaction to his proximity: "They were actually on the same sofa . . . they were divided only by Mrs. Musgrove" (P, p. 68). When she unexpectedly sees him from a distance, she feels an "overpowering, blinding, bewildering" agitation, "a something between delight and misery. . . . For a few minutes she saw nothing before her: it was all confusion" (P, p. 175). After Anne receives his impassioned letter, she feels "an overpowering happiness;" she appears ill, and very nearly is. She tries to behave normally in front of Charles and Mary, but "She began not to understand a word they said, and was obliged to plead indisposition and excuse herself" (P, p. 238).

Anne's feelings for Wentworth are as passionate as those of Marianne for Willoughby, but unlike Marianne's attachment to Willoughby, Anne's love for Wentworth is not a romantic fantasy that ignores common sense and practical reality. Her affection is founded upon a clear-sighted esteem for Wentworth's character and disposition, and she pays proper attention to practical considerations. Because of

Anne's better sense and greater maturity, as well as the obvious differences between the two men, the happiness of the outcome is more commensurate with the intensity of their feelings for one another.

The deep mutual understanding between Anne and Wentworth has been little diminished by time and distance. She can read subtle changes in his expressions and behavior, while he can hear nuances of her voice that would be lost on others. Like Anne, Wentworth has never wavered from his first attachment, despite the eager interest of other young women. He tells himself that "her power with him was gone for ever" and that he has a heart ready "for any pleasing young woman who came in his way, excepting Anne Elliot" (P, p. 61), but the fact is that his attachment to Anne is still the strongest motivating force in his life. His sister, Mrs. Croft, is well aware that his claims of availability only conceal his true feelings from himself and that ". . . Anne Elliot was not out of his thoughts, when he more than seriously described the woman he should wish to meet with. 'A strong mind, with sweetness of manner,' made the first and last of the description" (P, p. 62). Indeed, Anne is never far from his thoughts, and his frequent inward denials of her power over him only emphasize how much influence she still has.

Wentworth is also sensitive to Anne's physical being, and this awareness causes him to lift little Walter from her shoulders and later to place her in his sister's carriage: ". . . she owed it to his perception of her fatigue, and his resolution to give her rest" (P, p. 91). Despite his "indifference" to Anne, Wentworth is instant-

ly conscious of the handsome stranger's admiration of her beauty and is anxious to know the man's name. His jealousy of Mr. Elliot shows him that "He had imagined himself indifferent when he had only been angry" (P, p. 241). When he hears Anne emotionally defending the constancy of women, he is overpowered, "half agony, half hope" (P, p. 237). Wentworth has the same sort of tender, passionate vitality that Willoughby possesses, but without any of Willoughby's faults. The Marianne-Willoughby romance is negated, but the romance of Anne and Wentworth, every bit as overtly passionate, is brought at last to happy fulfillment, with "smiles reigned in, and spirits dancing in private rapture" (P, p. 240)--that delicate balance between public decorum and personal ecstasy which Marianne and Willoughby never achieve.

Anne and Wentworth are the oldest of Jane Austen's couples when they wed, and they have both learned their respective lessons. Anne, while not repudiating her submission to Lady Russell's guidance, has learned to trust her heart more readily: "She had been forced into prudence in her youth, she learned romance as she grew older--the natural sequence of an unnatural beginning" (P, p. 30). She now identifies with Mrs. Croft, and like her, would not be heedless of risk, but would seek a better balance between reason and emotion, caution and daring. Mrs. Croft has "open, easy, and decided" manners, "like one who had no distrust of herself, and no doubts of what to do; without any approach to coarseness, however, or any want of good humour" (P, p. 48). This is the direction in which Anne is growing. Although more quiet and diffident, Anne has developed the competence

and self-confidence necessary to direct the actions of those around her when it is appropriate. Anne is a favorite with Mrs. Croft, and as sisters-in-law, the two will be very close as well as being very similar in feelings and values.

Captain Wentworth has more to learn during the actual timespan of the novel than Anne does. At the outset, he is still convinced that the kind of determination and quick thinking that have made him successful as a sailor are equally valid in other situations as well, and that Anne gave him up out of weakness. Louisa's accident teaches him "to distinguish between the steadiness of principle and the obstinacy of self-will, between the darings of heedlessness and the resolution of a collected mind" (P, p. 242). He learns that "firmness of character . . . like all other qualities of mind . . . should have its proportions and limits" (P, p. 116). Anne's ability to think clearly and usefully in the crisis creates a sharp contrast between the maturity and rational sense of her mind and the childish willfulness of Louisa's reckless behavior. In learning to do justice to Anne's character and in discovering the constancy of her feelings for him, Wentworth is also forced to recognize that it was his stubborn pride that cost them both an additional six years of estrangement. Thus, by the time Anne and Wentworth are reunited, they have a deeper understanding of themselves and of each other. They have gained a mature sense of their individual responsibility for the course their lives have taken, and they have not only greater real freedom of choice but also a clearer sense of what they want from life.

The kind of marriage they will have is forecast through the portrayal of Admiral and Mrs. Croft's relationship. The parallel is emphasized by Anne's perception of the similarities between the Crofts' relationship and her relationship with Wentworth. Anne and Wentworth will achieve the same sort of dynamic, loving balance that the Crofts have in their marriage. The only alloy to the happiness of the ending is the sense of lost time and unnecessary suffering, but the ending looks forward to the future rather than looking back to the past.

The future of Anne and Wentworth as parents is suggested in the portrayal of the Harvilles' warm, close family, with its competent mother, attentive father, and happy children. Anne's capacity as a parent is amply demonstrated in her caring for Mary's children, "who loved her nearly as well, and respected her a great deal more than their mother." Mrs. Musgrove tells Anne, "I cannot help wishing Mrs. Charles had a little of your method with those children. They are quite different creatures with you!" Anne enjoys caring for the children, glad to be useful and glad to be loved; she finds in them "an object of interest, amusement, and wholesome exertion" (P, pp. 43-44). After little Charles is injured, Anne comments, "A sick child is always the mother's property, her own feelings generally make it so" (P, p. 56), yet it is she, not Mary, who can be useful in caring for the boy and who stays with him while his parents go visiting. Wentworth handles the younger child effectively when he lifts Walter off Anne's shoulders. Charles Hayter is embarrassed that Wentworth did what he should have done: "You ought to have minded me, Walter;

I told you not to teaze your aunt" (P, pp. 80-81). It is clear that Anne and Wentworth will be conscientious parents who can not only set a positive example of adult behavior by their own lives, but also guide and educate their children properly.

* * . *

The relationship of Elizabeth and Darcy has frequently been faulted on the ground that it lacks passion or emotional intensity. Southam, for instance, claims that ". . . there is no warmth or violence of love whatsoever in Darcy. He admires a good figure, but no more than that."²⁸ Brown states that "Elizabeth loves with her mind. It is an indication of Jane Austen's slightly horrifying honesty that she does not present Elizabeth's love as more than that."²⁹ Juliet McMaster perceives that the apparent antagonism between Elizabeth and Darcy is a symptom of their strong attraction to one another, and she points out that the verbal sparring and matching of wits that they engage in is not an unusual prelude to romantic love in literature.³⁰ The antithesis of love is not dislike but indifference. Elizabeth is never indifferent to Darcy, and the scenes between them are charged with energy.

Elizabeth's attraction to Darcy is indicated in various ways. He occupies her thoughts a great deal of the time; even when she is with Wickham, she often thinks and talks about Darcy. When Wickham brings up the subject of Darcy's character, "Elizabeth found the

interest of the subject increase, and listened with all her heart" (PP, p. 78). She cannot help "reverting" to the topic of Darcy's behavior when Wickham begins to talk about more "general" subjects. After Colonel Fitzwilliam reveals Darcy's role in separating Jane and Bingley, Elizabeth is distraught. She has already had time to adjust to Jane's loss; a large part of her "agitation and tears" stems from the conflict of her ambivalent feelings toward Darcy. She is deeply attracted to him, but she keeps hearing things that seem to confirm his ill-nature. She is so upset that she stays home to avoid seeing Darcy at Rosings and, "as if intending to exasperate herself as much as possible against Mr. Darcy" (PP, p. 188), she spends her evening re-reading Jane's letters and concentrating on Jane's unhappiness. She is trying to nullify Darcy's potent appeal for her. In this mood, she receives his first, arrogant proposal.

Darcy's letter shows Elizabeth how blindly prejudiced she has been and is the start of her gradual awakening not only to his merits but to her love for him as well. As her opinion of Darcy's character changes, she tries to identify her feelings for him, but she cannot define them or resolve her quandary by logical analysis:

She respected, she esteemed, she was grateful to him, and felt a real interest in his welfare; and she only wanted to know how far it would be for the happiness of both that she should employ the power, which her fancy told her she still possessed, of bringing on the renewal of his addresses.

(PP, p. 266)

Like Emma, Elizabeth doesn't know she loves her future husband until she thinks she has lost him. Her reaction to Lydia's elopement is

shaped by the affect she thinks it will have on Darcy's feelings for her, and it is when she feels that "all love must be vain" (PP, p. 278) that she begins to realize that she does indeed love Mr. Darcy. When she learns of all that he has done to arrange Lydia's marriage, she immediately comprehends his motive on an emotional level, though her logic disputes it: "Her heart did whisper, that he had done it for her" (PP, p. 326).

When Darcy subsequently visits the Bennets, Elizabeth struggles to understand his behavior and to ascertain from it his feelings toward her. Each time he comes, she goes through a classic he-loves-me, he-loves-me-not argument within herself, and then is angry at being so wrapped up in him:

'Why, if he came only to be silent, grave, and indifferent,' said she, 'did he come at all?'

She could settle it in no way that gave her pleasure.

'He could still be amiable, still pleasing, to my uncle and aunt when he was in town; and why not to me? If he fears me, why come hither? If he no longer cares for me, why silent? Teazing, teazing man! I will think no more about him.'

(PP, p. 339)

But Elizabeth can no more put Darcy out of her mind than he can put her out of his. During the party at Longbourn, she can't take her eyes off him or put him out of her thoughts: "She followed him with her eyes, envied every one to whom he spoke, had scarcely patience enough to help anybody to coffee; and then was enraged against herself for being so silly!" (PP, p. 341)

Brown cites the line, ". . . Elizabeth, agitated and confused, rather knew that she was happy than felt herself to be so" (PP, p. 372), as proof that Elizabeth's love is a cognitive rather than an emotional one.³¹ Yet, this is a typical moment in Jane Austen's novels, experienced by most of her heroines, in which the emotional shock of discovering that she is loved in return is so intense that her senses are "disordered" and she feels more agitation and apprehension than joy. Furthermore, Darcy's proposal doesn't solve all Elizabeth's difficulties. Like Emma, she is worried about the unhappiness she knows her father will feel over her decision:

She did not fear her father's opposition, but he was going to be made unhappy, and that it should be through her means, that she, his favourite child, should be distressing him by her choice, should be filling him with fears and regrets in disposing of her, was a wretched reflection . . .

(PP, p. 375)

After she has convinced Mr. Bennet of her genuine love for Darcy and of his worthiness to be loved, she feels "relieved from a very great weight" (PP, p. 377). Although "Every thing was too recent for gaiety," Elizabeth gradually begins to relax enough to feel really happy. When she writes to Mrs. Gardiner, "I am happier even than Jane; she only smiles, I laugh" (PP, p. 383), it is not her father's sad, cynical laughter or some intellectual satisfaction that she feels, but an exuberant joy that comes from her heart at least as much as from her head.

Southam's view of Darcy is particularly surprising, considering that, with the exception of Wentworth, he is Austen's most intense

hero. His first proposal is presented more directly and in greater detail than most and is among the most ardent. Darcy is irresistibly drawn to Elizabeth not only by their suitability in temperament and intellect but emotionally as well; it is the strength of his feelings for her that overcome his distaste for her family's vulgarity and defeats all his perfectly logical objections to marrying her.

Darcy is passionately in love with Elizabeth; no other woman will do. True passion begins when individuals cease to be interchangeable. Defoe describes the ideal emotional basis for marriage as a man and woman who are

engaged before marriage by a mutual, a sincere, a well-grounded affection; who love, and know why they do so; who love upon the solid foundation of real merit, personal virtue, similitude of tempers, mutual delights; that see good sense, good humour, wit, and agreeable temper in one another, and know it when they see it, and how to judge of it; and fix all the view of their future felicity in the possession of the person so loved.³²

This is how Darcy and Elizabeth feel about one another, and it is the basis on which all of Jane Austen's heroes and heroines marry.

Unlike the heroes and heroines, most of the other young people in the novels can change from one suitor to another rather easily; if rejected by one potential spouse, they readily find another. This is possible for them because their choices are based on the eligibility and availability of the match rather than on an emotional commitment to one specific person. Lydia and Mr. Collins are two extreme examples of this state of mind. Lydia never experiences love or real passion despite the fact that her "passions" are stronger than her

virtue. After Lydia elopes with Wickham, Elizabeth recalls that she

had never perceived . . . that Lydia had any partiality for him, but she was convinced that Lydia had wanted only encouragement to attach herself to any body. Sometimes one officer, sometimes another had been her favourite, as their attentions, raised them in her opinion. Her affections had been continually fluctuating, but never without an object.

(PP, p. 280)

In the same fashion, Mr. Collins can shift his courtship from Jane to Elizabeth to Charlotte without difficulty; Charlotte wins him because she is available and encouraging. Mr. Collins is incapable of passion and none is involved in his wooing. His stoical bride may well have closed her eyes and thought of England on her wedding night. Fortunately, Mr. Collins would never know the difference. Mr. Darcy would.

The strongest proof of the depth of Darcy's love for Elizabeth is the impact her initial refusal has on him. It changes his level of self-awareness and modifies his self-image; it motivates him to make a striking change in his behavior not only to her but to other people in general. And it does all of this before he has any serious hope that she will return his affection. His anger at being refused soon changes to dissatisfaction with himself, and he makes a conscious effort to correct his faults and to show Elizabeth that he is capable of better behavior. After Darcy's second proposal and his confession of how her critical words have tortured him, Elizabeth expresses amazement that her words could have had such a profound effect; she had no idea of the depth and sincerity of his love for her: "I was certainly very far from expecting them to make so strong an impres-

sion. I had not the smallest idea of their being ever felt in such a way" (PP, p. 368). Darcy is more dramatically changed by the power of love than any other Austen hero, and it is partly because his love for Elizabeth is both an emotional and an intellectual force in his life.

Both Darcy and Elizabeth learn important lessons during the novel, and their relationship holds the promise of future growth for both of them. Through her refusal, Elizabeth enables Darcy to recognize the underlying arrogance in his attitudes and behavior. It is Elizabeth, also, who points out to him that there is no excuse for "a man of sense and education, and who has lived in the world" (PP, p. 175) to be unable to behave with civility even to strangers, and that, like skill at the piano, social skills must be cultivated. Darcy is also intolerant of the ridiculous or vulgar qualities of others; he cannot laugh and forgive the foibles and absurdities of human nature, and he cannot bear to be laughed at himself: ". . . it has been the study of my life to avoid those weaknesses which often expose a strong understanding to ridicule" (PP, p. 57). Both by arranging Lydia's belated marriage to Wickham and by marrying Elizabeth in spite of her family's indecorum, he shows a growing willingness to tolerate human frailty. After their marriage, Elizabeth's "lively, sportive, manner of talking" to Darcy, which makes him "the object of open pleasantry" (PP, p. 387-88), reveals how much Darcy has grown in his ability to accept his own imperfections.

Through her relationship with Darcy, Elizabeth discovers that she has been unjust to him because of her blind partiality for Wick-

ham's more charming and ingratiating manners. Darcy points out to her the potential harm of misdirected laughter: "The wisest and best of men, nay, the wisest and best of their actions, may be rendered ridiculous by a person whose first object in life is a joke." Elizabeth answers, "Certainly . . . there are such people, but I hope I am not one of them. I hope I never ridicule what is wise and good" (PP, p. 57). But this is precisely the error Elizabeth finally sees that she has made. When she learns the whole truth about Darcy and Wickham, she realizes that she has been witty at the expense of fairness:

And yet I meant to be uncommonly clever in taking so decided a dislike to him, without any reason. It is such a spur to one's genius, such an opening for wit to have a dislike of that kind. One may be continually abusive without saying any thing just; but one cannot be always laughing at a man without now and then stumbling on to something witty.

(PP, pp. 225-26)

Like her father, she has delighted in laughing at the folly of others, but she now sees that not only must one sometimes do more than simply sit back and laugh, but that laughter must be regulated or one may wind up ridiculing what is wise and good as well as what is weak and foolish. Her love for Darcy motivates her to control her impulse to laugh and tease him about the way he "guides" Bingley because "She remembered that he had yet to learn to be laughed at, and it was rather too early to begin" (PP, p. 371)

The marriage of Elizabeth and Darcy is truly a union of equals. Unlike Emma and Mr. Knightley, Elizabeth and Darcy have been about equally culpable in their errors, and their faults are of about the

same magnitude. The interaction of their strengths and weaknesses will benefit them both in ways that are explicitly predicted. Mrs. Gardiner, who actively favors the match, writes her approbation of Darcy's character and gently teases Elizabeth about the advantages their marriage would have: "His understanding and opinions all please me; he wants nothing but a little more liveliness, and that, if he marry prudently, his wife may teach him" (PP, p. 325). Elizabeth perceives how much their marriage would enhance the awareness and education of them both:

It was an union that must have been to the advantage of both; by her ease and liveliness, his mind might have been softened, his manners improved, and from his judgment, information, and knowledge of the world, she must have received benefits of greater importance.

(PP, p. 312)

The ability of Darcy and Elizabeth to be good parents is shown by their function as surrogate parents to Kitty and Georgiana. Kitty spends most of her time at their or Jane and Bingley's home, and "In society so superior to what she had generally known, her improvement was great. . . . she became, by proper management, less irritable, less ignorant, and less insipid" (PP, p. 385). Georgiana also benefits from living with Darcy and Elizabeth: "Her mind received knowledge which had never before fallen in her way" (PP, p. 388). She will overcome much of her shyness and timidity through the influence of Elizabeth's example. In seeing her brother more relaxed in his own behavior and treated as an equal by Elizabeth, she will lose much of her awe of him and be able to treat him in a more relaxed, natural

way herself. The success of Elizabeth and Darcy in guiding and educating their younger sisters demonstrates that if they have children, they will be highly competent parents.

The marriage of Elizabeth and Darcy is as nearly perfect as any in Jane Austen's fiction. Their attraction to one another is completely convincing, as is their ability to draw out the best potential in each other. There is no sense of loss, or stasis, or imbalance in their relationship; it is full of energy, and between the two of them, they create an atmosphere in which they can each attain their full adult stature, and in turn, assist their sisters and their children to do the same.

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CHAPTER IV: SISTERS AND BROTHERS

According to Jane Austen, the shared experiences of individuals who have been raised together as children create a bond which is unsurpassed in strength and durability; no subsequent relationships produce deeper or more lasting feelings. The narrative voice in Mansfield Park asserts that

. . . even the conjugal tie is beneath the fraternal. Children of the same family, the same blood, with the same first associations and habits, have some means of enjoyment in their power, which no subsequent connections can supply; and it must be by a long and unnatural estrangement, by a divorce which no subsequent connection can justify, if such precious remains of the earliest attachments are ever entirely outlived.

(MP, p. 235)

This bond of shared experience should be maintained by detailed correspondence between the siblings when they are apart. Those brothers and sisters who fail to write frequently and in depth to one another during long separations are shown to lack the kind of commitment that Jane Austen expects of siblings, no matter how congenial their relationship may seem to be when they are together.

In Jane Austen's view, an individual's family circle is as incomplete without brothers and sisters as it is without a father and mother. The isolated way of life of a country gentleman and his fam-

ily made brothers and sisters the most important, and sometimes only, source of companionship for young people. In her novels, a young person who lacks normal sibling relationships, for whatever reason, seeks a surrogate brother or sister from among his or her acquaintances. The very limited but stable social group, combined with the custom of months-long visits, fostered these intimate, long-term friendships which could alleviate the isolation and took the place of natural sibling relationships. Marriage also functioned to fill the void by providing brothers and sisters-in-law.

In her novels, the quality of an individual's relationships with his or her siblings is an accurate indication of the quality of his character and disposition. Jane Austen expects brothers and sisters to feel a very strong commitment to one another; they should actively promote each other's greatest good and rise above the stresses of unequal opportunities and possible rivalries. Ideally, their concern should be fully reciprocal, and each should be worthy of the other's esteem. The more nearly equal they are and the more genuinely mutual their attachment is, the more satisfying their relationship is. Her heroes and heroines make an effort to meet their brothers and sisters more than half way, when necessary, and even when the brothers or sisters are unresponsive or unworthy, they try to establish and maintain amicable, supportive relationships. They never repudiate their siblings, no matter how strongly they disapprove of their actions, but rather, try to guide or assist them as much as possible. Those characters who fail to maintain warm ties with their brothers and

sisters usually lack the ability to establish healthy relationships with others as well.

* * *

The "vicious propensities" of George Wickham's character are demonstrated more clearly by his treacherous treatment of his godfather's children than by any of his other actions. He acknowledges that he and Darcy were raised as brothers: ". . . the greatest part of our youth was passed together; inmates of the same house, sharing the same amusements, objects of the same parental care" (PP, p. 81). His calculated attempt to seduce Georgiana into an elopement to gain her fortune and take revenge against Darcy was a betrayal of the trust developed between Georgiana and himself during childhood: ". . . he so far recommended himself to Georgiana, whose affectionate heart retained a strong impression of his kindness to her as a child, that she was persuaded to believe herself in love, and to consent to an elopement" (PP, p. 202). Georgiana is vulnerable to Wickham because of their early association, and he uses this special influence in his effort to betray her.

Most of the negative characters have flawed relationships with their brothers and sisters. Often, they appear to be amiable toward one another so long as their aims coincide, but their relationships lack the depth of commitment that would cause them to make personal sacrifices for the other's well-being, and when their goals are in

conflict, they may become intense rivals. This is particularly true of siblings of the same sex; brother-sister combinations are rarely competitors, but siblings of the same sex who have no depth of feeling to unite them often harbor considerable covert hostility beneath their apparent amiability.

The relationship between Lucy Steele and her older sister Nancy has a superficial veneer of cordiality. However, Lucy is both more attractive and more intelligent than Miss Steele, and although they present themselves as the best of friends, there is a great deal of anger beneath the surface. They are united in their efforts to ingratiate themselves with Lady Middleton, but in any conversation, Lucy frequently contradicts or corrects Nancy's comments; she "generally made an amendment to all her sister's assertions" (SS, p. 126). Lucy's efforts to curb the vulgarity of Nancy's behavior create a distorted reflection of Elinor's efforts to reduce the excesses of Marianne's behavior. Lucy's attempts are more successful but lack the quiet discretion and affectionate concern that characterize Elinor's advice to Marianne: "... Lucy's sharp reprimand, which now as on many occasions, though it did not give much sweetness to the manners of one sister, was of advantage in governing those of the other" (SS, p. 219). Elinor is sincerely concerned for Marianne and the harm her indiscreet behavior may do her, whereas Lucy is embarrassed and worried only about herself.

Nancy's resentment of her sister's bossiness and the underlying antagonism in their relationship is revealed by their eavesdropping on

one another and revealing to others what has been said in private. When Nancy reveals Lucy's secret engagement to her unsuspecting future in-laws, it is far from the unintentional slip Mrs. Jennings describes to Elinor:

. . . poor Nancy, who, you know, is a well-meaning creature, but no conjurer, popped it all out. 'Lord!' thinks she to herself, 'they are all so fond of Lucy, to be sure they will make no difficulty about it;' and so, away she went to your sister, who was sitting all alone at her carpet-work, little suspecting what was to come . . .

(SS, p. 258)

This is thinly disguised malice, but because their relationship has no real substance beneath the surface, Lucy's reaction to her sister's treachery is to threaten never to trim another new hat for her, and they soon "are as good friends as ever" (SS, p. 272). After Nancy tells Elinor of Edward's offer to release Lucy from their engagement, Elinor is shocked to discover that Nancy intentionally listened in on her sister's conversation. Nancy justifies her betrayal by pointing out that Lucy would do the same to her:

Oh, la! there is nothing in that. I only stood at the door, and heard what I could. And I am sure Lucy would have done just the same by me; for a year or two back, when Martha Sharpe and I had so many secrets together, she never made any bones of hiding in a closet, or behind a chimney-board, on purpose to hear what we said.

(SS, p. 274)

When Lucy elopes with Robert Ferrars, she takes all of Nancy's money and leaves her without even the means of getting home. Between them, there is no loyalty, no affection, and no honor.

After her marriage to Robert Ferrars, Lucy enters wholeheartedly into the hostilities among the various members of the Ferrars and Dashwood families. Just as Fanny Dashwood squelches the few twinges of fraternal responsibility that John Dashwood feels for his father's second family, Lucy encourages the rivalry between her husband and his sister and her family. John and Fanny are in competition with Robert and Lucy for Mrs. Ferrars' favor and financial assistance. By artifice and obsequious humility, Lucy becomes "a favorite child" to Mrs. Ferrars and thereby gains the greater share of her monetary gifts. In a flourish of malice toward Elinor, Lucy sends the deceptive report of her marriage, and she writes to Edward of her marriage to his brother, saying, ". . . it shall not be my fault if we are not always good friends, as our near relation now makes proper. . . . Your sincere well-wisher, friend, and sister, Lucy Ferrars" (SS, p. 365). This is a thorough perversion of the natural fraternal relationship.

Lucy cannot be blamed for the lack of fraternal affection among the children of Mrs. Ferrars because their hostilities are already well-developed. Fanny Ferrars Dashwood resents her husband's half-sisters because of their legitimate claim to their brother's assistance. None of the Ferrars respect Edward because he is quiet and unambitious. Robert shows no loyalty or friendship for his brother, publicly criticizing Edward's soft-spoken manners and private education. When he learns of Edward's engagement to Lucy, he ridicules Edward's future as a clergyman and, after affecting great concern for

"poor Edward," resolves to cut him off forever. Robert is not above eloping with his brother's fiance--that opportunity undoubtedly was one of Lucy's strongest attractions--and he never feels any compunction over having received monies that rightfully should have been Edward's. Fanny Dashwood is even resentful of Colonel Brandon's giving Edward the modest church living at Delaford, although it is "an acquisition of wealth to her brother, by which neither she nor her child could be possibly impoverished" (SS, p. 295).

Isabella and John Thorpe have the same sort of superficially amiable relationship as Lucy and her sister. They are cooperative in their efforts to unite themselves to James and Catherine. They are motivated by mercenary self-interest, and there is nothing in their characters or the scope of their relationship to suggest that they would be loyal to one another if their goals were ever in conflict or if it caused them any real inconvenience.

The relationship of Mary and Henry Crawford is more fully developed and more complex; it has the same ambiguous combination of good and bad elements that coexist in Mary and Henry themselves. Mary and Henry are closer and more affectionate than Isabella and John, but their relationship still lacks any real commitment. According to Mary, Henry loves her, consults her, confides in her, and talks to her by the hour; she describes him as "exactly what a brother should be" (MP, p. 59). When she laughingly admits that Henry rarely writes more than a few lines when they are apart, which is quite often, Fanny surmises that Henry really isn't a very devoted brother. As she tells

Edmund, ". . . I cannot rate so very highly the love or good nature of a brother, who will not give himself the trouble of writing any thing worth reading to his sisters, when they are separated" (MP, p. 64).

Henry's lack of steady, serious concern for his sister is shown in more important ways than his failure to correspond meaningfully, however. When Mary needs a home, she tries to convince Henry to open his own house, but while he will do anything for her which doesn't restrict his personal freedom, he is unwilling to make any significant sacrifice of his own pleasure or convenience:

. . . it was not till after she had tried in vain to persuade her brother to settle with her at his own country-house, that she could resolve to hazard herself among her other relations. To any thing like a permanence of abode, or limitation of society, Henry Crawford had, unluckily, a great dislike; he could not accommodate his sister in an article of such importance, but he escorted her, with utmost kindness, into Northamptonshire, and as readily engaged to fetch her away again at half an hour's notice, whenever she were weary of the place.

(MP, p. 41)

This unwillingness to make any sacrifice to what is right over what is pleasant or convenient is the same weakness of character which eventually costs him his relationship with Fanny.

Mary's attitude toward Henry demonstrates both the defects of her character and her naturally affectionate nature. She views his predatory behavior toward women with bemused tolerance; even when he announces that he plans to amuse himself by "making a small hole in Fanny Price's heart," she merely admonishes him not to take too much advantage of someone as sensitive and vulnerable as Fanny, "And with-

out attempting any further remonstrance, she left Fanny to her fate" (MP, pp. 229, 231). She cooperates with Henry in his pursuit of Fanny by giving her the chain to wear with William's cross, and Fanny, seeing through Mary's behavior, feels that ". . . Miss Crawford, complaisant as a sister, was careless as a woman and a friend" (MP, p. 260). Despite her negligence of Fanny's feelings, as well as Julia and Maria's, Mary is sincerely glad when Henry decides to marry Fanny: ". . . I approve your choice from my soul, and foresee your happiness as heartily as I wish and desire it" (MP, p. 292). She believes the match will give happiness and betterment to both Fanny and Henry and she envisions the four of them--Henry and Fanny, Edmund and herself--living in close harmony: "'Ha!' cried Mary, 'settle in Northamptonshire! That is pleasant! Then we shall all be together.'" Henry promises, "Fanny will be so truly your sister!" (MP, p. 295). The future that Mary is imagining would have been a typical ending for an Austen novel, with Fanny and her favorite brother married to brother and sister, had other events not invalidated it.

Brothers and sisters such as Henry and Mary or John and Isabella are able to get along without discord primarily because they aren't rivals in the marriage market; they cooperate rather than compete in their quest for promising suitors. This enables them to maintain an amiable relationship despite the lack of any real commitment between them. It requires much greater strength of character plus sincere mutual esteem for siblings of the same sex to feel a proper attachment to one another because they are almost inevitably subject to compari-

sons of their beauty, talents, and dispositions, and their goals are much more likely to be in competition against each other.

Lydia and Kitty Bennet generally get along well, with Kitty following her more aggressive younger sister in their eager pursuit of beaux. The lack of any deeper friendship between them becomes apparent when Lydia receives Mrs. Forster's invitation in which Kitty is not included. Lydia gloats over her good luck while Kitty feels resentful and angry:

The rapture of Lydia on this occasion . . . and the mortification of Kitty, are scarcely to be described. Wholly inattentive to her sister's feelings, Lydia flew about the house in restless exstasy, calling for every one's congratulations, and laughing and talking with more violence than ever; whilst the luckless Kitty continued in the parlour repining at her fate in terms as unreasonable as her accent was peevish.

(PP, p. 230)

Lydia departs with promises of writing "very often and very minutely to her mother and Kitty; but her letters were always long expected, and always very short" (PP, p. 238). It takes Kitty nearly a month to recover from her resentment over Lydia's getting an opportunity that she can't share.

Similarly, Maria and Julia Bertram are close, but only on a superficial level. Their relationship has the appearance of amiability and unanimity, but it lacks the deeper level of devotion that would enable them to resist competing against each other. When they both fall in love with Henry Crawford, they become intense, though secret, rivals who delight in one another's discomfiture. When Henry

begins to show a clear preference for Maria, Julia is bitterly angry:

The sister with whom she was used to be on easy terms, was now become her greatest enemy; they were alienated from each other, and Julia was not superior to the hope of some distressing end to the attentions which were still carrying on there, some punishment to Maria for conduct so shameful towards herself, as well as towards Mr. Rushworth. With no material fault of temper, or difference of opinion, to prevent their being very good friends while their interests were the same, the sisters, under such a trial as this, had not affection or principle enough to make them merciful or just, to give them honour or compassion. Maria felt her triumph, and pursued her purpose careless of Julia; and Julia could never see Maria distinguished by Henry Crawford, without trusting that it would create jealousy, and bring a public disturbance at last.

(MP, pp. 162-63)

When Maria incurs public disgrace by leaving her husband and running off with Henry, Julia's only thought is for herself. The failure of Maria's marriage seems to threaten her own prospects and to promise increased restrictions at home, so she hurries to secure a husband and freedom by eloping with the most readily available young man. She has no interest in Maria's fate except in its possible effects on her.

The deficiency of the relationship between Maria and Julia follows the pattern set by their mother and her sisters. Lady Bertram would simply have given up her sister following Fanny's elopement with Lieutenant Price, while Mrs. Norris actively foments bitterness and alienation between the families. Even after Mrs. Price's letter of contrition restores peace, Mrs. Norris gives only lip service to the idea of helping her needy sister. There is little affection or con-

cern among the sisters of this parent generation, and their lack of proper sisterly feeling continues in the relationships among their children.

The lack of fraternal affection among the Bertram children is also shown by the resentment Tom and Maria feel toward Edmund. They are aware of Edmund's moral superiority and dislike him for it. He tries to carry out his father's wishes while Sir Thomas is in Antigua, but his sisters and brother feel more antagonism than respect toward him for it. Tom and Maria feel triumphant when his scruples are overcome, and they rejoice that he has "descended from that moral elevation which he had maintained before. . . . Such a victory over Edmund's discretion had been delightful. . . . They congratulated each other in private on the jealous weakness to which they attributed the change, with all the glee of feelings gratified in every way" (MP, p. 158). They know that their father places a great deal of trust in Edmund's reliability, and they are jubilant that he has failed to live up to that trust.

Tom diminishes the rights and expectations of his brother in a far more serious way through his expensive, irresponsible lifestyle. His debts force his father to dispose of the Mansfield living which would otherwise have been held for Edmund until he was old enough to take orders. Instead, ". . . the younger son must help to pay for the pleasures of the elder" (MP, p. 23). Despite Sir Thomas's stern lecture, Tom refuses to worry about the loss to his brother; with "selfish cheerfulness" he dismisses the troublesome subject from his mind.

* * *

The superiority of Edmund's character over his brother and sisters' dispositions is shown by the better way he treats Fanny when she comes to live at Mansfield. Tom "made her some very pretty presents, and laughed at her" (MP, p. 18). The shallowness of this attitude is consistent with the generally heedless and irresponsible quality of his behavior. Maria and Julia are too arrogant to accept Fanny as a friend, let alone as a sister. Because she is younger and less well-educated, they ridicule her small size and her ignorance. In contrast, Edmund takes a personal interest in his little cousin's comfort and happiness; he is "always true to her interests, and considerate of her feelings, trying to make her good qualities understood, and to conquer the diffidence which prevented their being more apparent; giving her advice, consolation, and encouragement" (MP, pp. 21-22). Edmund takes the trouble to talk to Fanny, to understand her feelings, and to supply her needs as far as he can. This is the kind of behavior Jane Austen expects of brothers and sisters.

Because the adults in the Bertram household do not perform adequately as surrogate parents for Fanny, Edmund also takes on a parental function in his relationship with her. He guides her education with more interest and care than the governess:

. . . his attentions were otherwise of the highest importance in assisting the improvement of her mind, and extending its pleasures.
. . . he recommended the books which charmed

her leisure hours, he encouraged her taste, and corrected her judgment; he made reading useful by talking to her of what she read, and heightened its attraction by judicious praise.
(MP, p. 22)

Fanny attributes her appreciation of nature as well as the greater part of her education to Edmund's influence.

The negative aspects of Edmund's love for Mary Crawford is emphasized by his temporary neglect of Fanny. After he asks Fanny to let Mary ride the mare whenever she isn't going to ride, Fanny is left with no means of exercise and recreation. When he realizes what he has allowed to happen, Edmund is ashamed of having carelessly deprived her of freedom and comfort:

Vexed as Edmund was with his mother and aunt, he was still more angry with himself. His own forgetfulness was worse than any thing which they had done. Nothing of this would have happened if she had been properly considered; but she had been left without any choice of companions or exercise, and without any excuse for avoiding whatever her unreasonable aunts might require.

(MP, p. 74)

Edmund immediately amends his behavior to protect Fanny even though it means curtailing some of Miss Crawford's pleasure.

Like Edmund, the other heroes in Jane Austen's fiction are all good brothers. Among Mr. Knightley's most significant attributes is his ability to maintain proper relationships with all the people around him. His relationship with his brother is an exemplum of fraternal devotion; he and John possess "the real attachment which would have led either of them, if requisite, to do everything for the good of the other" (E, pp. 99-100). Colonel Brandon is also a caring

brother. He tries to help his first love, Eliza, with whom he was raised as a child, and after her death, he accepts the guardianship of her young daughter. Following the seduction of his ward, he rescues and protects her in the hope that her life will be less tragic than her mother's. Captain Wentworth and Mrs. Croft are one of Jane Austen's most congenial brother-sister combinations, and Wentworth is "as thoroughly the object of the Admiral's fraternal kindness as of his wife's" (P, p. 73).

Darcy's devotion as a brother is among the most persuasive bits of evidence that change Elizabeth's perception of his character. She recognizes that his love of his sister shows him "capable of some amiable feeling" (PP, p. 208), and his brotherly friendship with Bingley is further proof of his basic goodness. She realizes that if he were truly ill-natured, he could not be the kind, affectionate brother that Mrs. Reynolds describes him to be: "'And this is always the way with him,' she added.--'Whatever can give his sister any pleasure, is sure to be done in a moment. There is nothing he would not do for her'" (PP, p. 250).

Georgiana's love for her brother saved her from being entrapped by Wickham's treachery; "unable to support the idea of grieving and offending a brother whom she almost looked up to as a father" (PP, p. 202), she revealed the intended elopement to Darcy in time for him to prevent it. In stopping the elopement, Darcy was sensitive to his sister's feelings and understood her vulnerability. The fact that no breach between the two of them occurred as a result of Darcy's inter-

ference must be due to the sensitivity of his handling of the highly emotional situation and to the depth of their fraternal attachment. Georgiana still looks up to her brother and trusts his opinions. When Miss Bingley criticizes Elizabeth's appearance and behavior, ". . . Georgiana would not join her. Her brother's recommendation was enough to ensure her favour: his judgment could not err, and he had spoken of Elizabeth as to leave Georgiana without the power of finding her otherwise than lovely and amiable" (PP, p. 270). Georgiana's love and respect for her brother make her anxious to know and like Elizabeth and to be liked in return.

Darcy extends his fraternal kindness to include Elizabeth's sister after Lydia runs away with Wickham. Lydia has no brothers to step forward and protect her honor, but Darcy loves Elizabeth enough to treat her sister as his own and to exert himself on her behalf. He uses all the means at his disposal to rescue Lydia from the harmful consequences of her own wanton behavior.

Like Darcy, Henry Tilney is an affectionate brother, and his fraternal devotion has been his sister's one comfort since their mother's death. The superiority of Henry's character over Frederick's is demonstrated by his more loving treatment of his lonely sister. Eleanor tells Catherine, "I have no sister, you know--and though Henry --though my brothers are very affectionate, and Henry is a great deal here, which I am most thankful for, it is impossible for me not to be often solitary" (NA, p. 180). When Catherine visits Northanger Abbey, she soon notices how much Eleanor's spirits are affected by Henry's

absence. Henry and Eleanor are closer to each other than to Frederick, but they are tolerant of him in spite of their disapproval of his motives and conduct. They are loyal to him as a brother without condoning his behavior as a man. After Eleanor marries, she uses her increased influence with her father to persuade him to allow Henry to marry Catherine; she obtains the General's "forgiveness of Henry, and his permission for him 'to be a fool if he liked it'" (NA, p. 250).

Jane Austen uses the Musgrove family to distinguish between proper and improper kinds of family devotion. She derides the distorted indulgence of family attachment that causes them to idealize their deceased brother/son. With their usual imperceptiveness and warmth of feeling, the Musgroves cherish the memory of Dick Musgrove more highly than they could possibly have loved the troublesome young man. Jane Austen ridicules the maudlin sentimentality with which they revise the past. Wentworth's association with midshipman Musgrove shows that Wentworth has a proper appreciation of family ties. Under the supervision of Captain Wentworth, Dick wrote his family the only two disinterested letters that they received from him in all the years he spent at sea. When Mrs. Musgrove wants to reminisce about her dead son, Wentworth talks to her "with so much sympathy and natural grace, as showed the kindest consideration for all that was real and unabsurd in the parent's feelings" (P, pp. 67-68).

Although their attitude toward Dick is faulty, the relationship between Henrietta and Louisa Musgrove is one of the best examples of sisterly affection in the novels. Anne envies their "seemingly per-

fect good understanding and agreement together, that good-humoured mutual affection, of which she had known so little herself with either of her sisters" (P, p. 41). Even when Henrietta and Louisa both become infatuated with Captain Wentworth, they don't become antagonists; ". . . they both seemed so entirely occupied by him, that nothing but the continued appearance of the most perfect good-will between themselves could have made it credible that they were not decided rivals" (P, p. 71). They are similarly cordial toward their cousins, the Miss Hayters, "there being no pride on one side, and no envy on the other, and only such consciousness of superiority in the Miss Musgroves, as made them pleased to improve their cousins" (P, p. 74). When Anne learns that both Louisa and Henrietta will be able to marry soon, she is delighted that they have equal opportunities for happiness:

'I am extremely glad, indeed,' cried Anne, 'particularly glad that this should happen; and that of two sisters who both deserve equally well, and who have always been such good friends, the pleasant prospects of one should not be dimming those of the other-- that they should be so equal in their prosperity and comfort.'

(P, pp. 217-18)

This is Jane Austen's idea of a truly happy ending, and it is the outcome she provides for her most important pairs of sisters, Elinor and Marianne Dashwood and Elizabeth and Jane Bennet.

* * *

Part of the function of marriage for the heroine is to insure a continuing closeness between her and her favorite siblings. When the heroine and her sister have a close relationship, they marry men who are good friends, and the two couples live near one another. When the heroine doesn't have a strong sisterly relationship, she usually establishes an intimate friendship with another young woman to fill the void. For Catherine and Emma, part of the process of education in the novel is to learn to distinguish who is an appropriate surrogate sister and who is not. When the heroine does not have a sister she is close to, her marriage gives her the sister she lacks. After her marriage, each of the heroines has a family circle which includes at least one brother and one sister with whom she is warmly attached.

Elinor and Marianne are among the most affectionate of Jane Austen's pairs of sisters; they not only are loyal to one another but can rise above their own problems to empathize with each other. When Marianne is anxiously expecting Willoughby to arrive, and Edward Ferrars comes instead, "He was the only person in the world who could at that moment be forgiven for not being Willoughby; the only one who could have gained a smile from her; but she dispersed her tears to smile on him, and in her sister's happiness forgot for a time her own disappointment" (SS, p. 86). When Elinor finally explains the situation involving Edward and Lucy, Marianne is deeply moved by the anguish Elinor has suffered and by the strength of Elinor's determination to shield her family from the added burden of her unhappiness.

Marianne realizes that she has been unjust in her assumptions about Elinor, and she is really contrite. It is her recognition of the superiority of Elinor's conduct that convinces Marianne to change her own style of behavior, and thereafter, she exercises greater discretion and self-control.

Despite the depth of their mutual attachment, the relationship of Elinor and Marianne is not wholly satisfactory. Mrs. Dashwood's inadequacy as a parent forces Elinor to assume a parental role, and this creates tension in the friendship between her and her sister. Elinor is too deeply concerned for Marianne's well-being to sit idly by while her sister behaves in ways which endanger her health and happiness. She tries to provide the guidance their mother fails to give, but because Mrs. Dashwood encourages Marianne's imprudence, Marianne resents Elinor's advice.

Marianne's immaturity further undermines their relationship because Elinor cannot confide in her. Although Marianne would never intentionally betray Elinor's privacy, her behavior is unguarded, and it is difficult for her to conceal anything she feels strongly about. Also, because of her excessively emotional style of behavior, neither Marianne nor Mrs. Dashwood is capable of giving Elinor any help in coping with her disappointed love:

From their counsel or their conversation she knew she could receive no assistance; their tenderness and sorrow must add to her distress, while her self-command would neither receive encouragement from their example nor from their praise. She was stronger alone . . .

(SS, p. 141)

The immaturity of her sister and her mother isolates Elinor; she has no one she can talk to or confide in. All the strength and supportiveness flows in one direction only, with Elinor giving much and getting almost none in return. After Marianne has discovered how destructive her excessive emotionalism can be, she begins to correct her behavior and to apply reasonable restraints to the expression of her feelings. This lays the foundation for a much more equal and mutually satisfying relationship between Elinor and Marianne in the future.

After Elinor marries Edward, her marriage "divided her as little from her family as could well be contrived, without rendering the cottage at Barton entirely useless, for her mother and sisters spent much more than half their time with her" (SS, p. 378). Within a short time, Marianne marries Colonel Brandon, who has become Edward's benefactor and close friend:

Their resemblance in good principles and good sense, in disposition and manner of thinking, would probably have been sufficient to unite them in friendship, without any other attraction; but their being in love with two sisters, and two sisters fond of each other, made that mutual regard inevitable and immediate, which might otherwise have waited the effect of time and judgment.

(SS, p. 370)

Marianne's growing maturity and stable happiness as Colonel Brandon's wife gives the relationship between her and Elinor the balance it had previously lacked, and each gains a brother-in-law with whom she already has warm ties of friendship. The two sisters thus have equal prospects of happiness at the end of the novel, and their marriages,

far from separating them, guarantee the closeness and continuity of their relationship; they live in close proximity to one another, and between them there is "that constant communication which strong family affection would naturally dictate" (SS, p. 380).

The relationship between Elizabeth and Jane is nearly ideal from the outset because, although they are dissimilar in temperament, they both possess maturity, common sense, and propriety in their behavior. They have a close, companionable relationship and are able to share their thoughts and feelings freely. They are frequently united in their efforts to improve the conduct of the other members of their family, and when Jane visits the Gardiners, Elizabeth finds that "with such a mother and such uncompanionable sisters, home could not be faultless" (PP, p. 151). She accepts Charlotte's invitation to visit her and Mr. Collins at Rosings because it will give her a chance to see Jane as well. When she and Jane are apart for any length of time, they write frequently to each other and continue by that means to share confidences, seek one another's advice, and communicate family news.

Like Marianne, Jane is inexplicably thwarted in her first warm attachment; unlike Marianne, however, Jane is both discreet and sensible. Elizabeth "considered with pleasure that it was not likely to be discovered by the world in general, since Jane united with great strength of feeling, a composure of temper and a uniform cheerfulness of manner, which would guard her from the suspicions of the impertinent" (PP, p. 21). Jane suffers from her insensitive mother's com-

ments about Bingley, but she strives to master her feelings: "Oh! that my dear mother had more command over herself; she can have no idea of the pain she gives me by her continual reflections on him. But I will not repine. It cannot last long. He will be forgot, and we shall all be as we were before" (PP, p. 134). When Elizabeth looks doubtful, Jane assures her, "I shall certainly try to get the better." Jane's self-control and realistic acceptance of the situation she can't change contrast sharply with Marianne's emotional self-indulgence. Jane loves as deeply as Marianne, but she handles her emotions more intelligently:

Jane was not happy. She still cherished a very tender affection for Bingley. Having never even fancied herself in love before, her regard had all the warmth of first attachment, and from her age and disposition, greater steadiness than first attachments often boast; and so fervently did she value his remembrance, and prefer him to every other man, that all her good sense, and all her attention to the feelings of her friends, were requisite to check the indulgence of those regrets, which must have been injurious to her own health and their tranquillity.
(PP, p. 227)

Many critics seem to view Jane as less intelligent and perceptive than Elizabeth. Certainly, Elizabeth has a more penetrating intellect and enjoys analyzing the characters of other people, while Jane is inclined to accept people at face value. Jane perceives the best in everyone and excuses bad behavior as misunderstanding rather than malice, while Elizabeth's satirical eye focusses on people's faults, "with more quickness of observation and less pliancy of temper than her sister" (PP, p. 15). Nevertheless, their errors in perception

and judgment in the course of the novel are really about equal. Jane fails to see the hypocrisy of people like Bingley's sisters, just as Elizabeth fails to recognize the strength and goodness beneath Darcy's aloof manners. Both learn through their errors, but that doesn't eliminate the differences between their temperaments. One of the strengths of their relationship is that they respect each other's judgment and enjoy each other's company without necessarily seeing things the same way.

Jane and Elizabeth's capacity for fraternal loyalty demonstrates the superiority of their dispositions. Their really good nature is shown by their urging Mr. Bennet to allow Lydia to return home for a visit before she and Wickham move north with the regiment:

. . . Jane and Elizabeth, who agreed in wishing, for the sake of their sister's feelings and consequence, that she should be noticed on her marriage by her parents, urged him so earnestly, yet so rationally and mildly, to receive her and her husband at Longbourn, as soon as they were married, that he was prevailed on to think as they thought, and act as they wished.

(PP, p. 314)

When Elizabeth talks with Wickham, she is "unwilling for her sister's sake, to provoke him" despite her annoyance at his continuing dishonesty regarding Darcy and Georgiana; instead, she says "with a good-humoured smile, 'Come Mr. Wickham, we are brother and sister, you know. Do not let us quarrel about the past. In future, I hope we shall always be of one mind'" (PP, p. 329). Lydia and Wickham visit Jane and Bingley after they are married, and Elizabeth sends them whatever money she can spare from her own expenses. The willingness

of Elizabeth and Jane to help Lydia far beyond anything she deserves reveals their generosity of spirit and the depth of their commitment to all their sisters.

Through her marriage, Elizabeth gains a younger sister worthy of her high esteem, "and the attachment of the sisters was exactly what Darcy had hoped to see. They were able to love each other, even as well as they intended" (PP, p. 387). By providing suitable, right-minded guidance for Kitty, the Darcys and the Bingleys improve her temper so that she becomes a more worthy as well as a more pleasant sister.

By marrying best friends, Elizabeth and Jane have the added happiness of having husbands who are as warmly attached as the two of them are, and each gains as a brother a man whose friendship she values. After Bingley has received Mr. Bennet's permission to marry Jane, he encounters Elizabeth in the drawing-room, "and coming up to her, claimed the good wishes and affection of a sister." Thereafter, "In the absence of Jane, he always attached himself to Elizabeth, for the pleasure of talking to her; and when Bingley was gone, Jane constantly sought the same means of relief" (PP, pp. 347, 349). Later, when Elizabeth is trying to convince Jane that she not only plans to marry Darcy but truly loves him as well, she asks, "But are you pleased, Jane" Shall you like to have such a brother?" Jane replies,

'Very, very much. Nothing could give either Bingley or myself more delight. . . . Now I am quite happy,' said she, 'for you will be as happy as myself. I always had a value for him. Were it for nothing but his love of you, I must always have esteemed him; but now, as

Bingley's friend and your husband, there can
 be only Bingley and yourself more dear to me.'
 (PP, p. 373)

After only a year of marriage, Jane and Bingley move from Netherfield to an estate near Derbyshire, "and Jane and Elizabeth, in addition to every other source of happiness, were within thirty miles of each other" (PP, p. 385). The contentment of each is increased by the contentment and nearness of the other.

* * *

Fanny Price forms her closest emotional ties with her brothers. When she is sent to live at Mansfield Park, it is William, more than her parents or other siblings, whom she misses, and it with him that she corresponds. Her first wish after arriving at Mansfield is to have the means of writing to him, and it is through assisting her in this endeavor that Edmund first becomes her special friend. Her criticism of Henry Crawford as a brother begins with the conviction that William would never have failed to write to her while they were apart; as she tells Edmund, "I am sure William would never have used me so, under any circumstances" (MP, p. 64).

The relationships between Fanny and her brother and cousin produce little happiness or comfort during most of the novel. Fanny sees William very rarely during brief visits, and her love for Edmund has become a frustrated romantic attachment. She suffers in silence as he courts Mary Crawford and confides his frustrations to her.

Fanny's helplessness forces William and Edmund to adopt protective, quasi-parental roles toward her; her passivity and dependence make healthy, give-and-take relationships nearly impossible to achieve.

Although Fanny and William are very warmly attached, their relationship lacks balance. In the Price home, William was "her advocate with her mother (of whom he was the darling) in every distress" (MP, p. 15). When he visits her at Mansfield, he is surprised and dismayed at how quickly she is fatigued. During the card game, he tries to play against Fanny as if she were an equal, "driving as hard a bargain and imposing on her as much as he could," but she does her best to let him win. Crawford intercedes to protect her hand:

' . . . No, no, sir, hands off--hands off.
Your sister does not part with the queen.
She is quite determined. The game will be
yours,' turning to her again--'it will
certainly be yours.'

'And Fanny had much rather it were William's,'
said Edmund, smiling at her. 'Pocr Fanny!
not allowed to cheat herself as she wishes!'
(MP, p. 244)

When Fanny visits Portsmouth, William tries to bring her to the attention of their parents, who hardly notice her:

' . . . here's Fanny in the parlour, and why
should we stay in the passage?--Come, mother,
you have hardly looked at your own dear Fanny
yet.'

'But here is my sister, Sir, here is Fanny,'
turning and leading her forward;--'It is so
dark you do not see her.'

(MP, pp. 378, 380)

His last concern as he is leaving to set sail on the Thrush is for Fanny's comfort; he admonishes his mother, "Take care of Fanny, mother.

She is tender, and not used to rough it like the rest of us. I charge you, take care of Fanny" (MP, p. 388).

Edmund's attitude toward Fanny is similarly protective. He tries to bring her forward with the rest of his family; he is unsuccessful as much because of her resistance as because of his family's attitudes. When Edmund tries to convince Fanny of her own capabilities, her reaction is always, "I am not qualified . . . I am not competent" (MP, p. 269). Edmund gently scolds Fanny for "As usual, believing yourself unequal to anything!--fancying every thing too much for you" (MP, p. 351). Edmund frequently intercedes on Fanny's behalf to limit the privations and restrictions imposed on her by Mrs. Norris's malice and Lady Bertram's thoughtlessness. He is always her "privileged guardian" (MP, p. 355).

During her visit to Portsmouth, Fanny finds herself in the unusual position of being superior in education and breeding to those around her; "Susan, she found, looked up to her and wished for her good opinion; and new as anything like an office of authority was to Fanny, new as it was to imagine herself capable of guiding or informing any one, she did resolve to give occasional hints to Susan" (MP, p. 396). Gradually, Fanny becomes Susan's mentor, much as Edmund has been hers, and she is surprised by her own capacity to assist her sister's education.

Susan's removal from Portsmouth to Mansfield insures that the attachment between Fanny and Susan will continue to grow without the handicap of distance, and there is a chance that Fanny will learn as

much from the example of Susan's behavior as vice versa. Susan is much better equipped to deal with the Bertrams because "Her more fearless disposition and happier nerves made every thing easy to her" (MP, p. 472). Sir Thomas and Lady Bertram, neither of whom has a quick or perceptive intellect, can understand and appreciate Susan much more readily than they could Fanny because she is not too timid and self-denying to make her needs and wishes known. The Bertrams were never malicious toward Fanny, but pressured by Mrs. Norris and really unaware of Fanny's feelings, they were unintentionally unkind. The maturing relationship between Fanny and her sister will benefit them both, and each can serve as a model of the qualities the other needs to develop.

The marriage of Fanny and Edmund is presented as a natural outgrowth of his fraternal love for her and "her warm and sisterly regard for him" (MP, p. 470). Their marriage guarantees that Fanny and two of her favorite siblings will continue to be very close to each other, but the merging of the fraternal and romantic attachments into one relationship is generally unsatisfactory to modern readers. Romantic love and marriage do not seem to be an appropriate product of the fraternal tie between Fanny and her cousin.

Like Fanny, Catherine is closest to her older brother, but while Edmund is mature enough to give Fanny the guidance of a surrogate parent, James is even less sensible and mature than Catherine. His relationship with her is very shallow, and during most of the novel, his influence on her is for the worse. Although she sees the vulgar-

ity and boorishness of John Thorpe's behavior, Catherine tries to like him to please her brother. James also recommends Isabella as precisely the right sort of woman to be Catherine's intimate friend:

. . . she is just the kind of young woman I could wish to see you attached to; she has so much good sense, and is so thoroughly unaffected and amiable, I always wanted you to know her. . . . I hope you will be a great deal together while you are in Bath. She is a most amiable girl, such a superior understanding!

(NA, p. 50)

The inadequacy of their relationship is shown by the fact that James fails to protect his sister's best interest when it comes to a choice between supporting her or pleasing Isabella. When Isabella pretends to cry because Catherine will not break her date to walk with Miss Tilney in order to go to Blaise Castle with the Thorpes instead, James "miserable as such a sight, could not help saying, 'Nay, Catherine. I think you cannot stand out any longer now. The sacrifice is not much; and to oblige such a friend--I shall think you unkind, if you still refuse.'" Catherine is distressed that James sides against her, but when she proposes a compromise to resolve the conflict, he accuses her of not being the loving sister he thought she was: "'I did not think you had been so obstinate, Catherine,' said James; 'you were not used to be so hard to persuade; you once were the kindest, best-tempered of my sisters'" (NA, pp. 98-100). James's behavior reveals a serious lack of the proper regard for his sister's feelings. Isabella's influence leads him to be disloyal to his sister because he does not yet have the maturity to resist the pressure Isabella exerts.

After James and Catherine have been disillusioned by Isabella, their relationship begins to deepen. James feels that of all his family, only Catherine can really understand how he feels; his parents' calm, unemotional reaction to the end of his engagement is reasonable but not very comforting to a young man with a broken heart. He writes to Catherine for sympathy, saying, "Let me soon hear from you, dear Catherine; you are my only friend; your love I do build upon" (NA, p. 202).

Separated from her family while she is in Bath, Catherine seeks friends among her social circle to supply the companionship she normally receives from her sisters and brothers at home. An important part of her education is learning to recognize the hypocrisy of Isabella and to appreciate fully Eleanor's worth. Catherine and Isabella treat each other like sisters almost immediately after they meet:

They called each other by their Christian name, were always arm in arm when they walked, pinned up each other's train for the dance, and were not to be divided in the set; and if a rainy morning deprived them of other enjoyments, they were still resolute in meeting in defiance of wet and dirt, and shut themselves up, to read novels together.

(NA, p. 37)

When Isabella tells Catherine that she and James are engaged, Catherine is thrilled at the prospect of having "such a sister." Isabella promises that after she and James are married, she will love Catherine much more even than her own sisters: "You will be so infinitely dearer to me, my Catherine, than either Anne or Maria. I feel that I shall be so much more attached to my dear Morland's family than to my

own" (NA, p. 118). The artificiality of their friendship is emphasized by Isabella's frequent, exaggerated expressions of love, which are greatly out of proportion to the degree that they know each other.

Isabella also uses these expressions of endearment to manipulate and coerce Catherine:

She reproached her with having more affection for Miss Tilney, though she had known her so little a while, than for her best and oldest friends, with being grown cold and indifferent, in short, towards herself. 'I cannot help being jealous, Catherine, when I see myself slighted for strangers, I, who love you so excessively! When once my affections are placed, it is not in the power of any thing to change them.'

(NA, p. 98)

Isabella tries to promote her brother's suit with Catherine by invoking the bonds of friendship and the future ties of sisterhood. Her letter to Catherine after James breaks the engagement finally exposes Isabella's falseness, and Catherine feels "ashamed of having ever loved her. Her professions were now as disgusting as her excuses were empty, and her demands impudent" (NA, p. 218).

Eleanor Tilney is dissimilar to Isabella in every important way. Eleanor and Henry have no improper pride or self-importance as a result of their wealth and status: "A distinction to which they had been born gave no pride. Their superiority of abode was no more to them than their superiority of person" (NA, p. 141). The friendship between Catherine and Eleanor progresses gradually and the expressions of attachment on both sides are in true proportion to the emotions involved. Even after they have become really close friends, their

expressions of affection are simple and sincere rather than inflated and artificial. When Catherine is worried that she may be over-staying her welcome at Northanger Abbey and suggests that perhaps she should go home, "The kindness, the earnestness of Elinor's manner in pressing her to stay, and Henry's gratified look on being told that her stay was determined" (NA, p. 221) convince Catherine that she is truly welcome with them. Eleanor's anguish is genuine when she has to tell her friend of the General's abrupt decision, and Catherine never doubts the sincerity of Eleanor's friendship. She later insists to her mother that "No friend can be more worth keeping than Eleanor" (NA, p. 236).

Eleanor values Catherine's friendship just as highly. While discussing the possibility that Frederick may marry Isabella, Henry tells his sister,

'Prepare for your sister-in-law, Eleanor, and such a sister-in-law as you must delight in!--Open, candid, artless, guileless, with affections strong but simple, forming no pretensions and knowing no disguise.'

'Such a sister-in-law, Henry, I should delight in,' said Eleanor with a smile.

(NA, p. 206)

This is a perfect description of the sister-in-law she will have in Catherine. Through the marriage of Henry and Catherine, which she helps bring about, Eleanor gains the sister she has never had, while Catherine, having learned to see Isabella for the false friend she was, gains a sister-in-law as warmly affectionate and unpretentious as herself.

Emma also must learn who is an appropriate surrogate sister and who is not. Emma and Isabella are very warmly attached, but Isabella has never been Emma's equal, despite the advantage of age. Much slower and less assertive, Isabella is no match for Emma, and like their father, she is dominated and overshadowed by Emma. Emma feels protective of Isabella and resents John Knightley's impatience with his wife, but it is still not a well-balanced relationship. Since her marriage to John Knightley, Isabella has not lived close enough to the Woodhouses to provide much companionship for Emma.

After Isabella's marriage left Emma as an only child in her father's house, Miss Taylor became a substitute sister to Emma, filling the void created by Isabella's absence: ". . . the intercourse of the last seven years, the equal footing and perfect unreserve which had soon followed Isabella's marriage, on their being left to each other, was a yet dearer, tenderer reflection." Within a short time, they ceased to be governess and pupil and became like sisters: "Between them it was more the intimacy of sisters" (E, p. 6, 5). Miss Taylor should have been an authority figure for Emma, not an equal, and soon she, like Isabella and Mr. Woodhouse, is subject to Emma's influence.

As the novel opens, Miss Taylor has just married Mr. Weston, and Emma is again left with no sister, and no daily companion but her father. She wonders how she will bear such a melancholy change. Mrs. Weston will not be her personal and exclusive companion as Miss Taylor has been: ". . . great must be the difference between a Mrs. Weston,

only half a mile away from them, and a Miss Taylor in the house" (E, p. 7). Emma finds herself facing solitude, and she decides to befriend and educate Harriet Smith out of loneliness and boredom: "It would be an interesting and certainly a very kind undertaking; highly becoming her own situation in life, her leisure, and powers" (E, p. 24). Emma is "quite convinced of Harriet Smith's being exactly the young friend she wanted--exactly the something which her home required." Emma sees Harriet as a companion to replace Miss Taylor:

As a walking companion, Emma had very early foreseen how useful she might find her. In that respect Mrs. Weston's loss had been important. . . . a Harriet Smith, therefore, one whom she could summon at any time to a walk, would be a valuable addition to her privileges.

(E, p. 26)

Emma's motives for "noticing" and "improving" Harriet thus have a veneer of altruism over a good deal of conceit and self-interest, but it is the lack of sisterly companionship that first suggests the plan to Emma.

Because she has always been dominant in her own family circle, Emma is accustomed to manipulating the people around her, and by choosing someone as compliant as Harriet to be a surrogate sister, she is able to continue the same pattern of behavior (though Harriet turns out to be surprisingly resistant to change). Emma chooses Harriet because she is not ready to accept the friendship of an equal; she prefers someone to whom she can feel superior, someone she can guide and instruct. She is not mature enough to function as a teacher

or substitute parent, however, and her good intentions toward Harriet meet the same fate as her resolutions to improve herself: "It was much easier to chat than to study; much pleasanter to let her imagination range and work at Harriet's fortune, than to be laboring to enlarge her comprehension, or exercise it on sober facts (E, p. 69).

Emma rejects Jane Fairfax as a potential friend because she sees Jane's accomplishments as a threat to her own status, and she resents Jane's polite but guarded resistance to her efforts at manipulation. Only after Emma has discovered the harm she has done to Harriet and others, and acknowledged her own arrogance in trying to control other people, can she begin to understand the value of an equal friendship with a woman suitable to be her intimate companion. Emma at last begins to feel a just esteem and compassion for Jane; she remembers her past injustices to Jane, and

She bitterly regretted not having sought a closer acquaintance with her, and blushed for the envious feelings which had certainly been, in some measure, the cause. Had she followed Mr. Knightley's known wishes, in paying that attention to Miss Fairfax which was in every way her due; had she done her part towards intimacy; had she endeavoured to find a friend there instead of in Harriet Smith, she must, in all probability, have been spared from every pain which pressed on her now.

(E, p. 42)

With a new appreciation of Jane's merits, Emma goes to visit her; Jane also shows a desire to begin a new relationship with Emma. Both apologize for past behavior to the other, and as Emma's visit ends, they have a new level of warmth and intimacy between them.

At the close of the novel, Emma has better balanced relationships with most of the people around her. She and Isabella are married to brothers and live only sixteen miles apart. Emma, who at times had felt antagonistic toward her brother-in-law, is now ready to accept his view of her marriage to Knightley as honest and just: "He writes like a sensible man. . . . I honour his sincerity" (E, p. 464). It is now appropriate for Emma and Mrs. Weston to be on equal terms with one another, and they have the advantage of living within easy walking distance of each other. For the first time, Emma has an intimate friendship with a woman her own age and equal to herself in ability, and it is a relationship in which neither is dominant over the other. Emma has matured enough to accept Jane Fairfax as a valued companion instead of seeing her as a rival. This is one of the strongest pieces of evidence that Emma has actually changed as a result of all that has happened.

* * *

Of all Jane Austen's heroines, Anne Elliot has the least responsive siblings and the least satisfactory relationships with them, despite her own warm, affectionate nature and her repeated efforts to maintain some degree of family attachment. She has no brothers and no sisters worthy of the name. Elizabeth and Mary lack proper feelings toward Anne, as well as toward each other, and the pervasive defects in their characters are emphasized by their indifference to

the ties of sisterhood. Elizabeth is too self-absorbed to care much about either of her sisters, and she is "repulsive and unsisterly" (P, p. 43) toward Anne. She has no affection for Anne personally and no sense of loyalty toward their relationship. Elizabeth's notion of a good way to economize is not to give Anne a present, and she invites Mrs. Clay to accompany her and Sir Walter to Bath in Anne's place. Later, she tells Mrs. Clay, "She is nothing to me compared with you" (P, p. 145).

Mary is "not so repulsive and unsisterly as Elizabeth, nor so inaccessible to all influence of hers" (P, p. 43) primarily because she has a very dependent personality: "'I cannot possibly do without Anne,' was Mary's reasoning; and Elizabeth's reply was, 'Then I am sure Anne had better stay, for nobody will want her in Bath.'" Mary's constant illnesses and low spirits cause her to rely on Anne, who humours her and caters to her wishes. Anne is so little regarded by her family that even Mary's selfish demands seem inviting compared with Elizabeth's cold rejection: "To be claimed as a good, though in an improper style is at least better than being rejected as no good at all; and Anne, glad to be thought of some use, glad to have anything marked out as a duty . . . readily agreed to stay" (P, p. 33).

Although Mary is very glad to be coddled and cared for by Anne, her sense of rivalry toward Anne and her sisters-in-law is quick to surface whenever she thinks that what they do may affect her personal status. She opposes Henrietta's engagement to Charles Hayter because "She looked down very decidedly upon the Hayters, and thought it would

be quite a misfortune to have the existing connection renewed--very sad for herself and her children." As she tells Anne, "Charles may say what he pleases . . . but it would be shocking to have Henrietta marry Charles Hayter: a very bad thing for her, and still worse for me" (P, pp. 75-76). Henrietta's happiness and well-being are of no concern to Mary. After Louisa's fall, Mary is full of jealous outrage that Anne is asked to stay instead of her--"Anne, who was nothing to Louisa, while she was her sister, and had the best right to stay in Henrietta's stead!" (P, p. 115). Mary is not capable of being useful in a sick chamber, but she is affronted that Anne should have been chosen to help. Mary is jealous and defensive when Charles tells Anne that Captain Benwick has been asking after her, and she insists that Captain Benwick has never mentioned Anne at all. She peevishly claims him as her acquaintance, not Anne's.

Mary's reaction to Anne and Wentworth's engagement is based entirely on her perception of how the match will affect her own status; she rejoices that her prospects are still superior to Anne's:

It was creditable to have a sister married, and she might flatter herself with having been greatly instrumental to the connection, by keeping Anne with her in the autumn; and as her own sister must be better than her husband's sisters, it was very agreeable that Captain Wentworth should be a richer man than either Captain Benwick or Charles Hayter. She had something to suffer, perhaps, when they came into contact again, in seeing Anne restored to the rights of seniority, and the mistress of a very pretty laudalette, but she had a future to look forward to of powerful consolation. Anne had no Uppercross Hall before her, no landed

estate, no headship of a family; and if they could keep Captain Wentworth from being made a baronet, she would not change places with Anne.

(P, pp. 249-50)

Mary and Elizabeth, like Sir Walter, are incapable of devotion to anyone outside of themselves. Like his house of mirrors, which reflects the self, they perceive the people and events in their lives only in terms of their own individual self-importance.

Of the Elliots, only Anne has the capacity to love others; all the communication that takes place among the three sisters depends on Anne: "Mary never wrote to Bath herself; all the toil of keeping up a slow and unsatisfactory correspondence with Elizabeth fell on Anne" (P, p. 107). Because she receives so little response from her sisters, she seeks companionship outside her immediate family. Her friendship with Mrs. Smith, formed while she was away at school twelve years earlier, is easily rekindled, and it is her devotion in visiting her invalid friend which leads to the full revelation of Mr. William Elliot's true character. Her affection for Louisa and Henrietta is similarly unselfish. When she hears that both will be able to marry soon, she rejoices in their happiness, "and though she sighed as she rejoiced, her sigh had none of the ill-will of envy in it. She would certainly have risen to their blessings if she could, but she did not want to lessen theirs" (P, p. 219).

During the course of the novel, Anne becomes less and less involved with her own family and more and more deeply involved in the concerns of the navy officers and of the Musgroves:

She had lately lost sight even of her father, and sister, and Bath. Their concerns had sunk under those of Uppercross . . . Anne would have been ashamed to have it known how much more she was thinking of Lyme and Louisa Musgrove, and all her acquaintances there; how much more interesting to her was the home and friendship of the Harvilles and Captain Benwick, than her own father's house in Camden Place, or her own sister's intimacy with Mrs. Clay. She was actually forced to exert herself to meet Lady Russell with anything like the appearance of equal solicitude, on topics which had by nature the first claim on her.

(P, p. 124)

Anne has not rejected her sisters and father; they have rejected her. Nothing she has been able to do over the years has succeeded in eliciting a loving response from them. By the end of the novel, she realizes how little she has in common with the other members of her family, and she is strongly drawn to the naval officers' sincerity and openness. Instead of wasting any more years in a futile attempt to please her family and gain their affection, she accepts the chance to begin new, healthier familial relationships.

Through her marriage to Captain Wentworth, Anne gains the kind of family she has never had. As soon as she and Wentworth renew their engagement, Anne is drawn into his family circle: "With the Musgroves there was the happy chat of perfect ease; with Captain Harville, the kind-hearted intercourse of brother and sister . . . with Admiral and Mrs. Croft, everything of peculiar cordiality and fervent interest" (P, p. 245). She is warmed by "the prompt welcome which met her in his brothers and sisters" (P, p. 251); in Mrs. Croft she has a sister with whom she has always been a favorite, and in Admiral Croft she

gains an affectionate brother whose "goodness of heart and simplicity of character" have already made them good friends. Her only regret is that her own relatives are incapable of offering the same open-hearted welcome.

In addition to the loving acceptance extended by her husband's family, Anne also becomes a part of the warm, deeply devoted circle of Wentworth's "brother-officers" and their wives. Separated from their parents and siblings by their profession, the sailors form close bonds of affection and loyalty to one another. The most striking characteristic of the navy officers at Lyme is their "brotherliness." Wentworth explains his willingness to transport Mrs. Harville and her children and other relatives by attributing it to friendship: "All merged in my friendship, Sophia. I would assist any brother officer's wife that I could, and I would bring anything of Harville's from the world's end, if he wanted it" (P, p. 69). The hospitality of the Harvilles toward the group from Uppercross is no less warm and sincere; they assume that Wentworth and his friends will dine with them and seem "almost hurt" that any other plan would be thought of. "There was so much attachment to Captain Wentworth in all this, and such a bewitching charm in a degree of hospitality so uncommon, so unlike the usual style of give-and-take invitations, and dinners of formality and display" (P, p. 98). The Harvilles have been equally devoted in their attachment to Captain Benwick, who was engaged to Captain Harville's sister until her death: ". . . the friendship between him and the Harvilles seemed, if possible, augmented by the event which closed all

their views of alliance, and Captain Benwick was now living with them entirely" (P, p. 97). Captain Harville treats Captain Benwick like a brother in his affectionate concern for his feelings. This capacity for true fraternal friendship is one of the best attributes of the sailors and seems to be indicative of the over-all health and vigor of their profession. Anne has yearned to be a part of this loving group, and the strength of these fraternal relationships undoubtedly adds to Anne's joy in being a sailor's wife.

CHAPTER V: THE RECONSTITUTED FAMILY

Jane Austen's novels reflect both the social reform philosophy of the eighteenth century and the rise of industrialism which began during the latter half of the eighteenth century and became increasingly important during the nineteenth. Her view of the family shares the eighteenth century ideal of the companionate marriage and Locke's concept of proper parent-child relationships. The families that achieve these ideals are also shaped by the socio-economic changes brought about by the Industrial Revolution. Most of the existing families in the novels are inadequate because the members of the parent generation have failed to achieve a healthy union and harmony in their marriage relationship and have neglected their necessary functions as parents. The movement of each of the novels is toward the creation of a more nearly ideal family unit through the marriage of the heroine and toward the establishment of a revitalized community with the heroine and her husband at the center.

The novels express Jane Austen's conviction that the needs and best interests of the individual can only be met within the context and boundaries of society but that the goals of society can best be met when the legitimate personal and emotional needs of the individual are also satisfied. The novels emphasize the importance of personal

attachment as the basis for marriage, and they portray the dynamic interaction and mutual shaping that occurs within the marriage relationship. Jane Bennet expresses the attitude held by all of Jane Austen's heroines when she states her belief in love as a necessary foundation for marriage: "And do you love him quite well enough? Oh, Lizzy! do any thing rather than marry without affection. Are you quite sure that you feel what you ought to do?" (PP, p. 373). All the heroines make companionate marriages, and it is clear that as husband and father, wife and mother, the hero and heroine will fill their appropriate places and perform their proper functions in the family constellation and, by extension, in the community as well.

The new family unit has an eighteenth century quality of order and symmetry, while the composition of the reorganized social group reveals the increasing social mobility of the middle class. The most morally deficient individuals are distanced from the new community, while the competent, well-bred members of the middle class are drawn in. The rise of industrialism gave a growing share of wealth and prestige to the professional classes, while the system of primogeniture, which was still in effect among the aristocracy and landed gentry, created a growing number of impoverished younger sons who had to find a profession to support themselves. This contributed to the blurring of class distinctions between the upper and middle classes.

The gradual decline of the aristocracy and the rise of the professional class are represented in the novels through the portrayal of individual characters. Jane Austen satirizes the improper pride

and diminished capabilities of the old aristocracy through such characters as Lady Catherine de Bourgh and her daughter, Lady Dalrymple and Miss Carteret, and Mr. Rushworth and his mother, each of whom is shown to have nothing to offer but the status conferred by birth: ". . . they were nothing. There was no superiority of manner, accomplishment or understanding" (P, pp. 149-50). Edmund Bertram finds Mr. Rushworth so dull-witted and foolish that he cannot help thinking, "If this man had not twelve thousand a year, he would be a very stupid fellow" (MP, p. 40). Similarly, Anne recognizes with disgust that her father and sister court people of high rank whom they would otherwise despise; Miss Carteret, who is neither clever nor well-informed, is "so plain and so awkward, that she would never have been tolerated in Camden Place but for her birth" (P, p. 150).

This criticism of people who have neither abilities nor good sense is most fully expressed in the portrayal of Sir Walter, Elizabeth, and Mary Elliot. Despite their aristocratic heritage--or rather, because of their distorted perception of its merits--their behavior is less well-bred than that of the navy officers; the vanity and vulgar display of their public behavior is repeatedly juxtaposed to the true gentility and sincere courtesy of those beneath them by birth but superior to them in all other respects. When Kellynch Hall is rented to the Crofts, Anne "could not but in conscience feel that they were gone who deserved not to stay, and that Kellynch Hall had passed into better hands than its owners" (P, p. 125). When Anne and Wentworth renew their engagement, the prestige of the ancient and

titled family has declined so far that there isn't even an appearance of disparity in their social levels:

Captain Wentworth, with five-and-twenty thousand pounds, and as high in his profession as merit and activity could place him, was no longer nobody. He was now esteemed quite worthy to address the daughter of a foolish, spendthrift baronet, who had not had principle or sense enough to maintain himself in the situation in which Providence had placed him, and who could give his daughter at present but a small part of the share of ten thousand pounds which must be hers hereafter.

(P, p. 248)

A pervasive issue throughout the novels is the value of the status conferred by birth versus the intrinsic worth of good sense and strength of character. One of the lessons that Mr. Knightley tries to teach Emma is to recognize the merits of Robert Martin's character instead of viewing him only in terms of his rank in society. Knightley describes Martin as "a respectable, intelligent, gentleman farmer," and insists, "I never hear better sense from anyone than from Robert Martin. He always speaks to the purpose; open, straightforward, and very well judging" (E, pp. 62, 59). Robert Martin consistently behaves with sensitivity and good-breeding; his letter to Harriet is not only literate but expresses "good sense, warm attachment, liberality, propriety, even delicacy of feeling" (E, p. 51). In a similar way but with more immediate success, the example of Mr. Gardiner's intelligence, taste, and good manners teaches Darcy not to look down on people merely because they earn a living by trade or some other respectable profession. The family circle of Elizabeth and

Darcy after their marriage includes not only Mr. Bingley, who amassed his fortune through trade, but the Gardiners as well: "With the Gardiners, they were always on the most intimate terms. Darcy as well as Elizabeth really loved them" (PP, p. 388).

Most of the successful families in the novels are not members of the aristocracy but of the upper middle class. The healthier families tend to be among the professional class partly because they have had to use their intelligence, skills, and common sense to succeed, while the members of the traditional upper class have not. Many of the aristocratic families, such as the Elliots and the Rushworths, are decadent; the idleness of the leisure class way of life fosters immaturity and irresponsibility, and the lack of any occupation or purpose allows them to go through life without having to develop their abilities or acquire useful skills.

Because the defects of the aristocracy arise in part from the leisure class way of life, the question of how an individual chooses to spend his or her time becomes an important issue in the novels. Those people who don't need a profession to survive economically face a special problem because they have no necessary function marked out for them; the value of their pursuits depends entirely on their own free choice and their degree of self-discipline. It is a serious challenge and a major test of character for a person who has the option of doing nothing to establish and pursue worthwhile goals in life. With characteristic irony, Jane Austen puts the right sentiments into the wrong mouths. It is Mrs. Elton who boasts that she is never

bored or at a loss for constructive activities because she has such a wealth of inner resources to draw on:

. . . I honestly said that the world I could give up--parties, balls, plays--for I had no fear of retirement. Blessed with so many resources within myself, the world was not necessary to me. I could do very well without it. To those who had no resources it was a different thing; but my resources made me quite independent.

(E, pp. 276-77)

General Tilney, whose values have been corrupted by greed and pride, extolls the benefits of having an occupation to build character and develop a sense of responsibility: ". . . I am sure your father, Miss Morland, would agree with me in thinking it expedient to give every young man some employment. The money is nothing, it is not an object, but employment is the thing. Even Frederick, my eldest son, you see, who will perhaps inherit as considerable a landed property as any man in the county, has his profession" (NA, p. 176).

Jane Austen shows the potential hazards of having nothing worthwhile to do. For young men, having no duties or obligations to attend to leads to habits of idle self-indulgence and irresponsibility that stunt proper character development. In mature adults, having no occupation or active function in life can lead to triviality of pursuits and the atrophy of abilities and interests. The lack of a profession encourages men such as Mr. Musgrove, Charles Musgrove, Sir John Middleton, and Willoughby to waste their time in frivolous activities; the triviality of their pursuits in time produces a corresponding triviality of character. Eventually, it can lead to a dulling of out-

look and awareness, as in the case of Mr. Woodhouse: ". . . for having been a valetudinarian all his life, without activity of mind or body, he was a much older man in ways than in years" (E, p. 7).

The contrast between Mr. Bennet and Mr. Gardiner is at least in part due to the difference in their life styles. Mr. Bennet might have adjusted more constructively to his wife's inferiority if he had had something important to think about and work for, but instead of having anything to do which might have kept him active and involved, he was free to withdraw into his study and become an observer instead of a participant in his family and his community. He has become unused to exertion of any kind, and this contributes to his giving up easily in the search for Lydia; also, he has had so little practical experience in dealing with the world that he really has no idea where or how to begin looking for her. Mr. Gardiner is far more competent because his profession has required him to be knowledgeable, to use good common sense, to make informed decisions, and then to act on those decisions. His profession also depends upon his capacity to deal effectively with many other people; as a result, he is the most socially adept man in the novel.

Although the novels depict the negative effects of the leisure class way of life and the advantages of having an occupation, the issue is not so simple or clear-cut. Merely having a profession does not guarantee that a person will be sensible, industrious, and upright, nor does having the freedom and leisure bestowed by wealth automatically lead to lethargy or wasteful self-indulgence. As in all other

aspects of daily life, Jane Austen shows the importance of each individual's personal response to such external factors as birth and situation. For example, the army may build character in most young men who choose that profession, but it hasn't improved Captain Tilney or George Wickham, neither of whom has acquired a sense of purpose or responsibility. Nor has Mr. Elton's character been enhanced by his role as a clergyman; he doesn't derive the same sort of satisfaction from his duties as Edmund Bertram and Edward Ferrars find in theirs. Mrs. Elton is the daughter of a successful merchant, but she possesses none of the attributes of taste and intelligence that characterize Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner. The Gardiners are unashamed of their status in life; Mrs. Elton, like Bingley's sisters, would prefer to forget the source of her wealth. The greatest possible contrast is between Lieutenant Price and Captain Harville, who have experienced almost identical external circumstances during their navy careers, but whose reactions to being incapacitated have been at opposite ends of the spectrum. The degree of dissimilarity between them demonstrates how greatly the character and disposition of the individual can affect the course of his or her life, almost regardless of outside forces.

Without exception, each of Jane Austen's heroes either has or creates for himself an occupation. Edward Ferrars and Edmund Bertram need the income from their church livings, but both feel a commitment to the profession that goes beyond economic necessity. Henry Tilney is also a clergyman, and he attends personally to the management of his estate at Woodston. Bingley has earned his living through trade.

Captain Wentworth has the most active and demanding profession of all the heroes, and his wife will have a share in it. Colonel Brandon, Mr. Darcy, and Mr. Knightley are all members of the landed gentry and have the choice of whether or not they will work. All three choose to involve themselves actively in the complex tasks of managing their estates. Colonel Brandon is a former army officer whose estate at Delaford provides useful duties and responsibilities for Marianne as well as for himself. Pemberley and Donwell provide similarly constructive outlets for Darcy and Mr. Knightley, both of whom also have extensive libraries so that even their recreation is rational and purposeful. Knightley's enjoyment of every detail and concrete task of managing Donwell is presented somewhat humourously through his interaction with William Larkins, but his avid interest and active participation in running his farmlands and orchard, settling his accounts, and administering the parish will keep him physically and mentally fit. Thus, the family structure, lifestyle, and social community of Jane Austen's heroines after marriage combine the best aspects of the eighteenth century social reform movement with the positive results of the Industrial Revolution.

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