2021

From Major to Minor Characters: The Fallen Woman and Her Female Friends in the Novels of Wollstonecraft, Hays, and Austen

Anne McLaughlin
Connecticut College, arxm579@gmail.com

From Major to Minor Characters:
The Fallen Woman and Her Female Friends
in the Novels of Wollstonecraft, Hays, and Austen

An Honors Thesis presented by
Anne McLaughlin
to the Department of English
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
Honors in the Major Field

Connecticut College
New London, Connecticut
May 2021

Acknowledgements

First, I would like to thank the English Department for helping me graduate within three years and who supported me all throughout my time at Connecticut College. Although I did not get to take classes with all the professors, the entire department has been warm and welcoming. I am grateful for the opportunities, wisdom, and help from the English Department.

I would also like to thank my family and friends who encouraged me throughout the entire process. Specifically, I would like to thank my mom, Jean McLaughlin, a successful independent woman, who raised me to believe in myself and my older sister, Alison, who was always rooting for me even when I doubted my abilities. Both my mom and sister supported me leaving my home in California to attend Connecticut College.

Additionally, I would like to thank my late Uncle Jim who passed away on May 19, 2020 while I was working on revising my initial thesis proposal. Prior to his passing, he would listen to whatever ideas came to my mind about my thesis even when I was in Connecticut and he was in California battling cancer.

I also thank my readers Professor Michelle Neely and Professor Hubert Cook, who have pushed me further to explore more literature than I would have read otherwise. I truly appreciate the help despite the challenges caused by COVID-19.

Finally, I would like to thank my thesis and major advisor Professor Jeff Strabone. After reading *Pride and Prejudice* for the first time in English 150, I initially presumed that I would never enjoy marriage plot novels, but Professor Strabone helped me reconsider whether the marriages that end the plot need to be interrogated further. In Early Romanticism, I developed a love for Coleridge, Wordsworth, Wollstonecraft, and Hays. My love for the latter two ended up becoming part of my thesis and I developed a deep love for the classic writer Jane Austen.

From Major to Minor Characters: The Fallen Woman and Her Female Friends in the Novels of Wollstonecraft, Hays, and Austen

Abstract

In this thesis I argue that Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Hays, and Jane Austen use female-female friendships, sororal relationships, and depictions of the "fallen" woman in their novels to expose the oppressive nature of patriarchy and marriage for women. Wollstonecraft and Hays were radical in their time, which is represented in their novels that point out marriage's inequities towards women in regard to divorce laws and custody laws. Focusing on how marriage impacts a woman's friendships, Austen acknowledges the potentially isolating nature of marriage.

Wollstonecraft and Hays wrote novels that eschew the marriage plot by focusing on how female-female relationships provide solace to the married heroines and friendship is an alternative to marriage. I argue that by prioritizing female friendships and thus female solidarity they undercut the traditional heteronormative narrative. Additionally, these female relationships in the novels transcend the boundaries created by social classes to exhibit the different types of oppression all women faced. Using the relationship between a mother and her child, Wollstonecraft directs attention to the unjust divorce laws and custody laws of the late eighteenth century. Wollstonecraft uses the fallen woman to show the repercussions of being a sexually transgressive woman, and I argue we are invited to feel pity toward the fallen women. While Hays never punishes her protagonist for being open about her sexual desires, she points out the privileges of being a man and the consequences a woman must fear.

Similar to Wollstonecraft and Hays, Austen points out the inequities of marriage using female-female relationships. Unlike the other two, Austen demonstrates that a good marriage is one that allows female-female relationships and sororal relationships to endure. Although her novels are all marriage plot novels, I argue Austen includes some dubious marriages that force the readers to recognize how marriage can isolate a woman from her friendships. Austen includes minor characters who are fallen women to show consequences sexually transgressive women faced. She invites us to sympathize with the fallen women instead of condemning them, and I argue we ought to pity the fallen women who are redeemed even if we find the characters disagreeable. I highlight how Austen differs from Wollstonecraft and Hays by demoting the "fallen" women to minor characters and how she focuses on marriage's ability to interrupt female friendships. Although Austen is more subtle in her critique of marriage, I argue all three writers demonstrate that marriage commodifies a woman's body and is equivalent to legalized prostitution.

Table of Contents

Introduction

British novels written by women in the late eighteenth to the early nineteenth century often center around marriage. Marriage plot novels are inevitably political—they address problems with the patriarchal, social, and colonial power without necessarily being explicit. The novels of Mary Wollstonecraft and Mary Hays feature protagonists in unquestionably horrendous marriages to epitomize the inequities married women face and to openly comment on the mistreatment of sexuality transgressive women in the 1790s. Jane Austen, on the other hand, was more subtle in her criticism and I argue that some of the marriages that ended her novels are meant to be perceived negatively because of how they isolate women. Hays includes an unapologetically passionate protagonist who is surprisingly not punished for her desires, while Wollstonecraft and Austen invite readers to sympathize with the fallen women who are unfortunately punished. Although these three writers highlight injustices caused by the patriarchy, other writers like the more popular Jane West argue for female passivity and obedience, which were desired by the patriarchy. In her novel *A Gossip's Story*, West scorns the fallen woman and includes, what she believes, the justified punishment of the fallen woman.

By prioritizing female friendships over marriage, Wollstonecraft and Hays undercut the heterosexual hegemony and direct attention to the oppressive nature of marriage. Not only do the female friendships ignore the limits created by social class, these friendships outweigh the importance of marriage. Austen distinguishes a good from a bad marriage where a good marriage is mutually beneficial to both people and permits female-female friendships and sororal relationships to endure. In contrast, a bad marriage severs a woman from her pre-existing social connections—limiting her circle of friends—and forces the woman to be an accessory of her husband. In addition to marriage, Wollstonecraft and Austen address the inequalities in divorce

laws where women were severely punished for adultery while a man's infidelity was typically overlooked. Wollstonecraft is the only one of the three who focuses on the unfair custody laws that usually favored the father over the mother. Austen alludes to the power men had over their households while Wollstonecraft and Hays clearly direct attention to how the patriarchy gave a disproportionate amount of power that permitted men to control their wives and children.

Historical Background: Marriage, Divorce, and Custody Laws

In 1753 Hardwicke's Marriage Act, also referred to as the Clandestine Marriage Bill of 1753 before it become a law, was established to prevent clandestine marriages by necessitating a parent's approval for anyone under twenty-one who wished to marry in England and Wales. Anyone who performed a marriage without the consent of the bride's and the groom's parents was severely punished. David Lemmings' article "Marriage and the Law in the Eighteenth Century: Hardwicke's Marriage Act of 1753" discusses how women had little to no control over their children. Lemmings states: "Interestingly, the Marriage Act was consistently less supportive of the role of mothers in marriage decisions" (349). He explains:

> Women, who were regarded by contemporaries as the more emotional sex, were obviously not to be fully trusted in the important family business of making their children's marriages; and the opposition in the house of commons, among whom Professor Stone claims to identify the representatives of a trend towards encouraging the role of natural affection and greater equality in marriage, discounted the influence of mothers (350).

Hardwicke's Marriage Act allowed parents, especially fathers, control over whom their children marry. In the traditional heteronormative nuclear family, it is expected for women to take on domestic roles in maintaining the house and raising the children. However, when it comes to more serious matters like whom the children could marry, the father had more control than his wife.

The Marriage Act additionally prevented women from seeking recourse from the church to ensure a man keeps his verbal promise of marriage after he seduced her, which is addressed in Eve Taylor Bannet's article "The Marriage Act of 1753: 'A Most Cruel Law for the Fair Sex.'" Bannet states:

> Once the Marriage Act become law, however, a woman who yielded to her lover and was with child after exchanging promises of undying fidelity and devotion no longer had any recourse if he left her. The man who debauched her under promise of marriage could no longer be compelled to perform his promise. For the Marriage Act meant, in effect, that the couple's private verbal promises to live together as man and wife no longer had any force in the law (234).

As a result of the Marriage Act, a woman who engaged in sexual intercourse was unable to compel her seducer into marriage. While the man remains unscathed, the woman becomes a "fallen" woman and her child is illegitimate because society mistreats sexually transgressive women. In her novel *The Wrongs of Woman: or, Maria* Wollstonecraft represents how the Marriage Act negatively impacted women through her character Jemima, a love child. Jemima is a love child or an illegitimate child because her mother was seduced under the false assurance of marriage. In Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* and *Emma* she includes characters who are illegitimate children and in *Mansfield Park* Austen references Elizabeth Inchbald's play *Lovers' Vows* which includes an illegitimate child. In *Sense and Sensibility* and *Mansfield Park,* Austen addresses how illegitimate children are viewed negatively, but in *Emma* the fact that Harriet Smith is a natural daughter does not impact how people treat her.

Ann Sumner Holmes' article "The Double Standard in the English Divorce Laws, 1857–1923" discusses the Divorce and Matrimonial Causes Act of 1857, which made it legally easier for men to get a divorce. Prior to the Act of 1857, Parliament was needed to grant divorces and they were rare. The Act codified an existing disparity whereby it was easier for men to divorce women. Holmes explains that "while a wife's adultery was sufficient cause to end a marriage, a

woman could divorce her husband only if his adultery had been compounded by another matrimonial offense, such as cruelty or desertion" (601–602). The law clearly favoured men over women, which is depicted in the various novels. This inequality in regard to adultery and subsequent divorce was rectified by the Matrimonial Causes Act of 1923. Another inequity of divorce involved the custody of children where, prior to the twentieth century, men were essentially guaranteed custody. Holmes states:

> In the early 19th century an English father's authority over his children was virtually absolute at common law. By the Custody of Infants Act of 1939, Parliament at last granted mothers the right to petition the Court of Chancery for access to their children who were in the custody of their fathers (609).

The fact that men were more likely to receive custody of the children is represented in Wollstonecraft's *The Wrongs of Woman*. Both Wollstonecraft and Austen address the divorce of adulteresses although divorce was uncommon in the late eighteenth to early nineteenth century. The divorces in the novels are all linked to the wife's adultery because adulteresses were perceived as worse than men who commit adultery.

Friedrich Engels' *The Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State* describes the lived reality of women from the eighteenth century. Although his writing is not supported by historical evidence, I use his writing as a theoretical text because the claims he makes match what happened in eighteenth-century Britain. He comments that "the overthrow of mother right was the *world historical defeat of the female sex*. The man took command in the home also; the woman was degraded and reduced to servitude; she became the slave of his lust and a mere instrument for the production of children" (87). As Engels describes, men did have control over the household which enforced the inferior status of the woman and how a woman's body was a commodity. A woman's body eventually became simply a tool for reproductive labour and she essentially a glorified prostitute. By the early twentieth century not only had some of the

inequalities of marriage been rectified, but also people could openly express the injustices women faced which is demonstrated in Upton Sinclair's novel *The Jungle*. Although Sinclair is an American writer, he does reference the similarities between marriage and prostitution, which are addressed by Wollstonecraft, Hays, and Austen. Sinclair concisely states:

> Marriage and prostitution were two sides of one shield, the predatory man's exploitation of the sex pleasure. The difference between them was a difference of class. If a woman had money she might dictate her own terms: equality, a life contract, and the legitimacy—that is, the property rights—of her children. If she had no money, she was a proletarian, and sold herself for an existence (373).

Unlike this idea of marriage where a woman "might dictate her own terms," in the eighteenth century a woman was not able to have legal rights over her children. Sinclair points out that marriage and prostitution are both for man's pleasure. Men abused women for their own sexual needs and women are forced to sell their bodies, either to their husbands or to customers.

Luce Irigaray's book *The Sex Which Is Not One* emphasizes the commodification of women's bodies. Irigaray emphasizes how a woman is valued for her reproductive labour and how a woman's body is an object of desire. A woman's value is based on how it benefits or serves the men she is acquainted with because her intellect is disregarded. Irigaray says:

> To be sure, the means of production have evolved, new techniques have been developed, but it does seem that as soon as the father-man was assured of his reproductive power and has marked his products with his name, that is, from the very origin of private property and the patriarchal family, all the social regimes of 'History' are based upon the exploitation of one 'class' of producers, namely, women. Whose reproductive use value (reproductive of children and of the labor force) and whose constitution as exchange value underwrite the symbolic order as such, without any compensation in kind going to them for that 'work'. (173)

As a commodity, a woman is stripped of almost all her human rights because her body is necessary for reproduction. Irigaray argues that women are exploited, which is represented when Wollstonecraft compares women to slaves. At the same time, slaves are denied all humans rights whereas privileged women are fortunate enough to retain some semblance of humanity.

Ultimately, Irigaray points out how the commodification of women results in dehumanization and focusing on reproductive labour.

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick highlights intimate female relationships, but she focuses more on the potential sexual aspect of these relationships. I differ from Sedgwick by concentrating on the importance of these friendships and how they subvert the heterosexual marriage narrative. In her article "Jane Austen and the Masturbating Girl" she highlights intimate moments between two women that can be interpreted as sexual. Although Sedgwick makes fascinating points in her article, I argue she goes further in her argument to add homosexual relationships simply because a scene takes place in a bedroom. Instead, the scene likely takes place in the bedroom simply because it was a way for two women, specifically siblings, to be alone to talk to one another.

Lawrence Stone's book *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500–1800* focuses on the evolution of marriage and the rise of the nuclear family. Stone names two different types of families from the 1450s until 1700: the Open Lineage Family, which prevailed from 1450-1630, and the Restricted Patriarchal Nuclear Family, which arose from 1550-1700. With the Open Lineage Family, Stone states:

> Marriage was not an intimate association based on personal choice. Among the upper and middling ranks it was primarily a means of tying together two kinship groups, of obtaining collective economic advantages and securing useful political alliances…In a highly authoritarian and patriarchal society, it was only natural and reasonable that mate selection should primarily be made by parents, kin and 'friends', rather than by the bride and groom (5).

Instead of marriage being the joining of two particular individuals, it was the joining of two families. As a result, it was imperative that the families had a say in whom their children married, especially for middle- to upper-class people. Around the 1530s there was a rise in the Restricted Patriarchal Nuclear Family, but it did not become the primary type of marriage until the 1580s. The Restricted Patriarchal Nuclear Family diminished the kinship bonds,

> but at the same time, both state and Church, for their own reasons, actively reinforced the pre-existent patriarchy within the family, and there are signs that the power of the husband and father over the wife and the children was positively strengthened, making him a legalized petty tyrant within the home (7).

The two major differences between the Restricted Patriarchal Nuclear Family and the Open Lineage Family are: one, the importance of kinship and, two, the control men had over women and children. A key event was the emergence of "the Close Domesticated Nuclear Family, which evolved in the late seventeenth century and predominated in the eighteenth" (7). This type of family emphasized the importance of autonomy, and men and women would be able to choose whom they married. Although Stone states that the Close Domesticated Nuclear Family allowed autonomy, he adds that there was limited autonomy for the middle- to upper-class families. In addition to focusing on how class impacted marriage, Stone draws on writings from Mary Wollstonecraft and Mary Hays to discuss the effects Romanticism had on marriage.

Both Wollstonecraft and Hays were middle-class women writing in the 1790s during the start of the Romantic Era, which occurred from the late eighteenth to the nineteenth century. Although Stone claims Wollstonecraft's complaints about women's education were an exaggeration, the evidence he cites seems to agree with Wollstonecraft's claims against women's education.[1] Both Hays and Wollstonecraft promote the education of women and their writings align with Romantic ideals. In *The Family* Stone states:

> Until romanticism temporarily triumphed in the late eighteenth century, there was thus a clear conflict of values between the idealization of love by some poets, playwrights and the authors of romances on the one hand, and its rejection as a form of imprudent folly and even madness by all theologians, moralists, authors of manuals of conduct, and parents and adults in general. Everyone knew about it, some experienced it, but only a minority of young courtiers made it a way of life, and even they did not necessarily regard it as a suitable basis for a life-long marriage.
>
> The accepted wisdom of the age was that marriage was based on personal selection, and thus inevitably influenced by such ephemeral factors as sexual attraction or romantic love, was if anything less likely to produce lasting happiness than one arranged

[1] Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500–1800* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 352.

> by more prudent and more mature heads. This view finds confirmation in anthropological studies of the many societies where love has not been regarded as a sound basis for marriage, and where one girl is as good as another, provided that she is a good housekeeper, a breeder, and a willing sexual playmate. (181)

Prior to Romanticism, the conflict between the acceptance and rejection of love affected marriages and marital expectations. Stone points out that "outside court circles, where it flourished, romantic love was in any case regarded by moralists and theologians as a kind of mental illness" (5). Instead of supporting romantic love, people viewed it as a hindrance to marriages and "one girl is as good as another, provided she is a good housekeeper, a breeder, and a willing sexual playmate." Instead of viewing a woman as a person, she becomes useful based on her domestic and reproductive labor.

In the Open Lineage Family, a marriage was the union of two families, but romantic love promotes the marriage of the individuals themselves. Returning to the idea of Romanticism and the Romantic Era, the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines Romantic as

> designating, relating to, or characteristic of a movement of style during the late 18th and 19th centuries in Europe marked by an emphasis on feeling, individuality, and passion rather than classical form and order, and typically preferring grandeur, picturesqueness, or naturalness to finish and proportion (*OED*, s.v. "Romantic").

There are a number of definitions of the word passion and how it is connected to the Passion, or suffering, of Jesus Christ. The *OED* defines passion "As a count noun: any strong, controlling, or overpowering emotion, as desire, hate fear, etc.; an intense feeling or impulse," "A fit, outburst, or state marked by or *of* string excitement, agitation, or other intense emotion. In early use also: a fit of madness or mental derangement," and "An aim or object pursued with zeal; a thing arousing intense enthusiasm" (*OED*, s.v. "passion"). Prior to Romanticism, the feelings of individuals were ignored because they conflicted with familial obligations. Promoting an individual's love and passion over the desires of the family goes against the idea of marriage being between two families for the benefit of the families. Stone acknowledges that Hays was

particularly passionate and many scholars recognize this. Hays' passion is reflected in her character Emma Courtney from *Memoirs of Emma Courtney*. Because Wollstonecraft and Hays were middle-class women, they were negatively impacted by their status, which allowed them to recognize how marriage reinforced the patriarchal power over women and children.

After discussing the Open Lineage Family, Restricted Patriarchal Nuclear Family, and Close Domesticated Nuclear Family, Stone then describes how the eighteenth century gave rise to the Companionate Marriage. Around the time of Austen, there was an increase in the Companionate Marriage, which is reflected in *Sense and Sensibility* and *Pride and Prejudice*. Stone writes:

> The many legal, political and educational changes that took place in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were largely consequences of changes in ideas about the nature of marital relations. The increasing stress laid by the early seventeenth-century preachers on the need for companionship in marriage in the long run tended to undercut their own arguments in favour of the maintenance of strict wifely subjection and obedience. Once it was doubted that affection could and would develop after marriage, decision-making power had to be transferred to the future spouses themselves, and more and more of them in the eighteenth century began to put the prospects of emotional satisfaction before the ambition for increased income or status. This in turn also had its effect in equalizing relationships between husband and wife. [2]

There was a conflict of interest between the necessary companionship in a marriage and a woman's obedience. Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* and *Emma* conclude with marriages where the heroines become subservient to their husbands or their powers substantially diminished. The upper middle class and gentry faced numerous structural obstacles that tried to prohibit companionate marriages, which Austen portrays in some of her novels. In regard to Hardwicke's Marriage Act, parents had legal authority over whom their children married, which is represented in Austen's novels. Similar to Wollstonecraft and Hays, Austen writes about the inequities

[2] Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500-1800*, 325.

women faced, especially when women were forced to choose between marrying for financial stability versus marrying for love.

Stone connects the rise in Companionate Marriage during the eighteenth century to the change in women's education. Wollstonecraft and Hays address the improvement in women's education and they promote the cultivation of a woman's mind. Despite the improvements in women's education, the favouritism towards sons over daughters still endured. Unfortunately, daughters of wealthy parents were raised to be submissive and passive, which is highlighted in all three novelists' works. Unlike boys who were spoiled, girls were sheltered to the point of ignorance and forced to repress their emotions and opinions. Stones states,

> A young married woman was advised to obey her husband, even if under protest, not to cry, to put on a cheerful expression and not to complain, *never* to refer to 'the rights of women', to curb her tongue and to try an avoid a quarrel, not to criticize her husband's friends or relatives, not to keep him waiting, and to be neat and elegant without being over-scrupulously fussy. It is the advice of someone with fairly low expectations of marital behaviour from a husband, and it describes a world far removed from the notions of married life supplied by the romantic novels of the time (400).

The subservience of women is emphasized in West's *A Gossip's Story* where the passive woman is rewarded. By focusing on the fallen women and marriage's inequities towards women, Wollstonecraft and Hays portray the "world far removed from the notions of married life supplied by the romantic novels of the time." Both novelists address the favouritism of boys over girls and how this favouritism resulted in the segregation of the sexes, which posed several problems to the companionate marriage. It was not uncommon for men to be absent from the household, often preferring to spend time at taverns and clubs.[3] Women and children were abandoned at home, which gave rise to the lonely housewife and the potential for adultery. Not only was it common for the sexes to be separate, Stone points out that

[3] Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500-1800,* 403.

> It is symptomatic of unresolved problems in the more companionate marriage that in the second half of the eighteenth century many of both sexes still felt more at ease in the company of their own sex, evidence of which is the persistence of the custom of the withdrawal of the women from the dining-room to the drawing-room (400).

Finding comfort in members of the same sex reaffirms my argument about the importance of female-female friendships and sororal relationships. By focusing on female friendships, I argue that we are invited to reassess the importance of marriages in all three novelists' writings.

Another way the companionate marriage benefitted men more than women, especially because of the courtship customs. Stone states:

> Another reason for the frustration of many women was that this shift of motives for marriage from concrete ones of power, status and money to the imponderable one of affection probably worked to the benefit more of men than of women. This was because the social custom dictated that the initiative in the courtship process should be with the male and not the female. The former was, therefore, free to follow his personal inclinations wherever they might lead him, but the latter was, at any rate in theory, restricted in her choice to those who made advances to her (398).

Men were the pursuers or even the predators and women would wait for a man to take notice of them. Hays' *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* was a radical novel because Emma Courtney is open about her desire for Augustus Harley and she pursues him. In *Pride and Prejudice*, we are presented with the socially typical situation of the male pursuing the female when Mr. Collins proposes to Elizabeth. Mr. Collins arrogantly presumes that Elizabeth would want to marry him, but it's clear that his reasons for marriage are all for his own benefit. Elizabeth argues for the companionate marriage, which upsets Lady Catherine de Bourgh who insists that Darcy marrying Elizabeth would be a disgrace. The companionate marriage is significant because it emphasizes the wants of individuals over the desires of the family, which is a characteristic of Romanticism.

Lawrence Stone's *Road to Divorce: England 1530-1987* first focuses on different marriage acts, particularly Hardwicke's Marriage Act of 1753, which gave rise to Gretna Green marriages. Stone points out:

> The Scottish Court of Sessions failed to agree to overthrow the ancient Scottish marriage laws permitting contract and private marriage in order to bring that country into line with its neighbor to the south. The result was that a very serious gap opened in the barrier erected by the 1753 act against such marriages. Those wishing to marry in a clandestine manner had only to cross the border into Scotland in order to do so quickly, and cheaply. This facility caused the rise of a brisk marriage business at Gretna Green, on the main West road as it crossed the border, where clergy stood ready to marry all comers at an instant's notice. (130)

Jane Austen incorporates a few Gretna Green marriages in her novels, which I address in my second chapter. Stone states, "Gretna Green was also the resort of some members of the rich and titled from the south who wanted a quiet and secret marriage, usually to thwart parental or family control or to cover a pregnancy" (131). Although the eighteenth century had an increase in companionate marriages, legally parents continued to have control over whom their children married. Where Lemmings cites Stone's books to emphasize patriarchal power over the family, Stone's *Road to Divorce: England 1530—1987* highlights the legal inequities women continued to face with divorce and custody laws. In particular, Stone acknowledges the connection between adultery and divorces because women were punished more severely for adultery. Stone writes, "During the eighteenth century, especially the latter half, protests by women about unequal legal treatment and the double sexual standard had been steadily increasing in volume and intellectual coherence" (288). Wollstonecraft and Hays address the double sexual standard in their novels, especially because their novels include sexually transgressive women. The punishment of the adulteress connects to the commodification of a woman's body and how a wife was treated as the property of her husband. While divorces were rare, the wife's infidelity was grounds for divorce while the husband's infidelity was typically disregarded.

Similar to Holmes, Stone focuses on the inequalities in the custody laws, which favoured the father over the mother. In particular, Stone defines the "ruined woman" or what I call the "fallen" woman. Stone states:

> Wives from the upper classes who had committed adultery were often tormented with guilt and shame. When caught in adultery, a wife commonly exclaimed in horror that she was 'a ruined woman'—which in most cases turned out to be true. Most adulterous wives were rejected and abandoned by their lovers as soon as the first transport of sexual passion had worn off. Only those whose husbands also wanted a divorce in order themselves to remarry, and those lovers were willing to marry them, could look forward to a happy resolution of the affair. The despair that overtook many married women caught in adultery was therefore only too well founded, since they might well have to face total separation from all their children, severe financial hardship, loneliness, and social ostracism. (339-340)

Both Wollstonecraft and Austen include punished adulteresses who face financial hardships that we are invited to pity. Stone emphasizes the severe punishments for "fallen" women, which I address in my third chapter. All in all, the matrimonial acts in the eighteenth century favoured the husband over the wife, which is represented in all three novelists' work.

Chapter One: Asylums, Adultery, and Abortions

Mary Wollstonecraft's *The Wrongs of Woman or, Maria* and Mary Hays' *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* are novels that promote female friendships that transcend boundaries created by different social classes over heterosexual marriages. Although the heroines of both novels are married, the novels focus on the infidelity of their husbands, on "fallen" women, and on marriages' inequities to mothers. Wollstonecraft and Hays invite readers to sympathize with protagonists who were "fallen," sexually transgressive women. Because Wollstonecraft and Hays were writing in the 1790s, their radical novels were fortunately able to be published. Had they been writing during the British Regency, when Austen was writing and publishing her novels, it is unlikely these novels would have been published. Although the 1790s were a radical decade, both Wollstonecraft and Hays did receive backlash for their progressive novels.[1] Their novels were not as popular as some of the more conservative writers of their time, like Jane West who wrote novels where fallen women were "rightfully" punished. Eleanor Ty discusses how both Wollstonecraft's and Hays' novels focus on the sexual desires of females, which were not topics explicitly addressed in novels at this time. In her novel, Wollstonecraft emphasizes the importance of a woman's mind and how marriage is detrimental to a woman because it negatively impacts her mind. Wollstonecraft's protagonist, Maria Venables, emphasizes the education of women while Hays' heroine, Emma Courtney, focuses on the importance of passion and being able to express romantic desires. Both Emma and Maria are in inarguably atrocious marriages that reveal many of the injustices that upper-class women faced.

As stated earlier, Wollstonecraft's novel is centered around a friendship, between Maria Venables and Jemima, which transcends the boundaries of social class. This friendship takes

[1] Eleanor Ty, introduction to Mary Hays, *The Victim of Prejudice* (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 1998), ix-xliii.

precedence over her marriage to George Venables and allows Maria to find love with Mr. Darnford. Maria is a naive young woman who, in Gary Kelly's words, is "easily duped by the feigned sensibility and courtly gallantry of George Venables, who in fact marries her for her money." [2] He attempts to force Maria into sleeping with someone to cancel his debt, but she runs away with her daughter. Unfortunately, she is found and Venables throws her in an asylum and seizes control of their child so he can take the money left to their daughter. Throughout the novel, we encounter many different "fallen" women, which I address in my third chapter, including the woman Venables impregnated. Due to Venables' actions, the woman seduced by him was sent away, cast out of her own town, and died without anyone to care for her child. The uncaring Venables does not wish to help his own child, and when Maria hears of this horrendous situation, she offers aid to the woman who is left caring for the child. The novel is told as first-person memoirs from the point of view of Maria to her daughter and are intended to be instructions for her daughter to help her survive in a world that treats women unfairly. The readers are led to acknowledge the inequities married women face and marriage's debilitating nature for women.

Hays' protagonist, Emma Courtney, is a woman ruled by passion and her love for Augustus Harley. Regardless of the obstacles she faces, she tries to remain available to him even after finding out he is secretly married. She even goes so far to buy an annuity to prevent herself from being forced to marry for financial reasons. Unfortunately, the bank where she purchased the annuity goes bankrupt and, out of desperation, she marries Mr. Montague to achieve financial stability. Emma is surprisingly never punished for openly expressing her desires for Harley, but she is never able to marry the man she loves. At the end of the novel Emma befriends

[2] Gary Kelly, introduction to Mary Wollstonecraft, *The Wrongs of Woman, or Maria* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), xx.

Montague's mistress, the household servant Rachel whom Montague impregnates. This friendship outlasts Emma's marriage with Montague, and Rachel eventually becomes part of Emma's unconventional family.

Wollstonecraft's *The Wrongs of Woman* is unfortunately an unfinished fragment, but based on the notes of the proposed ending, Maria Venables is punished by the court for her adultery and thus she tries to kill herself. Shortly after Maria takes laudanum, Jemima arrives with Maria's child and convinces Maria to live for the sake of her daughter. On the other hand, Hays' *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* focuses on an unconventional four-person family created at the end of the novel where only two people are related: Emma Courtney and her daughter Emma. The other two people are Augustus Harley II, the son of Emma's love, and the former servant Rachel, who was also Montague's lover. Similar to the friendship between Jemima and Maria Venables, Hays' novel promotes the friendship between Emma and Rachel. Both novels stress the value of female friendships to the point that these relationships take precedence over the protagonists' marriages.

Background on Wollstonecraft, Hays, and Burke

Mary Wollstonecraft is remembered primarily for her *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* and *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman,* which were both popular political books at the time. Eleanor Ty's *Unsex'd Revolutionaries: Five Women Novelists of the 1790s* focuses on Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Hays, Helen Maria Williams, Elizabeth Inchbald, and Charlotte Smith. Ty highlights the similarities between Wollstonecraft's and Hays' writings about the necessity to educate women. Because Austen wrote during the 1810s, she is not included in Ty's book, but in *Mansfield Park* Austen uses Elizabeth Inchbald's play *Lovers' Vows*, which focuses on the

redemption of a "fallen" woman. Ty talks about how Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Men, in a Letter to the Right Hon. Edmund Burke; Occasioned by His Reflections on the Revolution in France* addresses the faults of the patriarchy that Edmund Burke overlooks. Ty writes:

> While Burke believed that patrimony with its orderly transmission of property was one of the stabilizing principles of society, Wollstonecraft denounces 'hereditary property' and 'hereditary honours' as the primary causes of the retardation of civilization's 'progress,' arguing that 'man has been changed into an artificial monster by the station in which he was born.' Appealing to 'nature' and reason, Wollstonecraft contends: 'the only security of property that nature authorizes and reason sanctions is, the right a man has to enjoy the acquisitions which his talents and industry have acquired; and to bequeath them to whom he chooses.' The emphasis on an individual's abilities rather than on his birth or family becomes one of the rallying cries of the supporters of the French Revolution (8).

Wollstonecraft's claims about the importance of the individual aligned with the ideals of the French Revolution as well as the rise of companionate marriage. In her writings, Wollstonecraft argues that preventing women from receiving education reinforced patriarchal power because it forces women to rely on an educated man.

Wollstonecraft is also known for her work as a feminist philosopher and her emphasis on the education of women, which she represents through her heroine Maria Venables from *The Wrongs of Woman*. In addition to creating Maria with similar ideals to her own, Maria's injustices in regard to the patriarchy mirror some of Wollstonecraft's experiences. For example, Wollstonecraft's eldest brother, Ned, was idolized by their parents, which is similar to how Maria's older brother was favored over his sisters. This particular example emphasized how women were expected to take care of their elderly parents, but they would be dismissed from their house once the parents died because the men, their brothers, would typically receive the estate and evict their sisters. I highlight the importance of female friendships, which focuses on female solidarity that disregards boundaries of social classes.

Wollstonecraft's protégé Mary Hays was a political writer and novelist whose works focused on patriarchal and social injustices towards women. Eleanor Ty's *Unsex'd Revolutionaries* describes Hays' novels and her political writings like her *Appeal to the Men of Great Britain in Behalf of Women*. In particular, Ty highlights Hays' idea of the "magic circle," which Hays uses in multiple different writings. Ty states,

> In the *Appeal* she also uses the same metaphor of the 'magic circle,' this 'prison of the soul' out of which women 'cannot move, but to contempt or destruction'. In *Emma Courtney* Hays illustrates the convictions she had articulated in her prose: while Emma was 'active, industrious, willing to employ [her] faculties in any way,' she 'beheld no path open...but...the degradation of servitude'. This tangible example of the 'iron hand of barbarous despotism' thematizes graphically in fiction the implications of the 'magic' circle or social limitation on women's lives. (*Unsex'd Revolutionaries*, 52)

The "magic circle" refers to the socially imposed limitations on a woman's mind, sexual desires, and her overall being. Hays' novel *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* focuses on a woman, Emma Courtney, who is open about her desires and actively tries to pursue a man, which, using Ty's words, breaks the magic circle. By openly expressing her desires, Emma refuses to adhere to societal standards of the passive woman, and is consequently looked down upon. During the time when Hays was writing, the patriarchy promoted the demure woman who was obedient as well as intelligent. Eleanor Ty states:

> What Hays and other female radical thinkers of the 1790s saw as problematic in Burke's theories was the idealization of the male figure of authority. In novels such as *Victim of Prejudice*, *Wrongs of Woman*, *Desmond*, *A Simple Story*, and others written in the late eighteenth century, Hays, Wollstonecraft, Charlotte Smith, and Elizabeth Inchbald, among others, all question this notion of the benevolent patriarch by showing how fathers and husbands could become despotic and abusive, and therefore unfit to govern their families, or little "monarchies." [3]

In addition to featuring a sexually transgressive woman who is open about her desires, the novel includes an abusive patriarch in the form of Montague—Emma's husband. He has an affair with

[3] Eleanor Ty, introduction to Mary Hays, *The Victim of Prejudice* (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 1998), xviii.

the household servant Rachel, attempts to abort her child without her knowledge, and then murders the child when the abortion fails. As a servant, Rachel did not have protection from Montague's advances because he was head of the household.

Various critics like Tilottama Rajan and Eleanor Ty believe Emma Courtney is meant to be a representation of Mary Hays herself. Rajan's article "Autonarration and Genotext in Mary Hays' *Memoirs of Emma Courtney*" focuses on the similarities between Hays and Emma Courtney. Rajan states: "Hays' novel is known to be based on the story of her unreturned and unrestrained passion for the Cambridge radical William Frend" (149). Eleanor Ty states:

> Since many of the letters to Godwin are replicated *verbatim* in *Emma Courtney*, we can assume that as many of the letters Emma writes to Augustus were originally Hays's love letters to Frend. But *Emma Courtney* is nevertheless very much a novel, thought it has strong autobiographical elements. Tilottama Rajan prefers to use the term 'autonarration', as it 'is a textually self-conscious work that draws upon personal experience as part of its rhetoric, so as to position experience within textuality and relate textuality to experience.[4]

The similarities between Emma and Hays are indisputable; however, we cannot state that this novel is an autobiography. Similar to Wollstonecraft's Maria, Hays' Emma does face similar situations as Hays and expresses similar beliefs. Both Wollstonecraft and Hays argue that an uneducated woman reaffirms the male's power over the household.

Around the time when Wollstonecraft and Hays were writing, Edmund Burke, a member of the Whig party and Parliament, wrote *Reflections on the Revolution in France* to compare the King of France to a patriarch. Specifically, Burke viewed the patriarchy as a way to ensure order and stability. In his *Reflections*, Burke creates the typical hierarchy of man above women when he says "a king is but a man; a queen is but a woman; a woman is but an animal; and an animal not of the highest order" (77). He vehemently defends the monarchy, specifically the king because Burke believes that the monarchy is helpful even if a monarch is corrupt. Especially

[4] Eleanor Ty, introduction to *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), xiv-xv.

because France is a flourishing country, but "to hear some men speak of the late monarchy of France, you would imagine that were talking of Persia bleeding under the ferocious sword if Taehmas Kouli Khân; or at least describing the barbarous anarchy despotism of Turkey" (127). Burke disregards the inequalities that women faced because the monarchy keeps men in power. Burke contrasts with Wollstonecraft and Hays because he promotes the patriarchy that they wish to dismantle.

While Wollstonecraft and Hays focus on the oppression of women due to the patriarchy, Burke is a white male who did not experience the same injustices as Wollstonecraft and Hays. As mentioned earlier Wollstonecraft writes *A Vindication of the Rights of Men, in a Letter to the Right Hon. Edmund Burke* addresses how the patriarchy negatively impacts women. Ty states, "For Burke the family becomes a microcosmic state, a basic political unit in its own right. Duty to the patriarchal family is the first step towards a love of society, country, and mankind" (5). I argue that Wollstonecraft, Hays, and Austen all expose the corrupt nature of the patriarchy as well as the isolating nature of marriage. Whereas Burke idolized the family unit, Wollstonecraft and Hays wrote novels including tyrannical patriarchs which negatively impacts the women. Austen does include the tyrannical patriarch as well as the neglectful patriarch, which leads to the creation of the fallen woman and oppressive marriages.

Choosing Her Over a Man

Both Wollstonecraft and Hays emphasize the significance of the educated woman. They both address the injustices early eighteenth-century women faced in regard to marriage, courtship, and custody laws. As stated earlier, Maria's friendship with Jemima takes precedence over her marriage and Emma's friendship with Rachel outlasts her marriage. Aside from both

being fallen women, Jemima and Rachel lose their children—Jemima was forced to abort her child and Rachel witnessed Montague smothering her child. Although Jemima and Rachel lose their children, their friendships with Maria and Emma, respectively, allow them to become mother-figures. In *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500-1800*, Lawrence Stone highlights that while the woman was responsible for child-rearing, the husband ultimately had absolute power over the child's education and social life.

Furthering the discussion of children, in *The Wrongs of Woman* the protagonist Maria has her child ripped from her arms when she is forced into an asylum. Her husband George Venables is a cruel man who drank excessively and visited sex workers which leads to the impregnation of another woman. Although we never meet the other woman because she dies shortly after childbirth, Maria decides to take care of the orphaned child. Hays' *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* includes three children: Emma's own daughter named Emma, the child of Emma's husband Montague who was conceived by the servant Rachel, and the son of Emma's love Augustus Harley who becomes Emma's adopted son. At the end of the novels Maria and Emma create unconventional families incorporating a fallen woman.

By writing about female friendships, Wollstonecraft and Hays give a voice to the commodified women. Maria's relationship with Jemima and Emma's relationship with Rachel creates a sense of female solidarity. Middle- to upper-class women like Maria and Emma were expected to marry and were under the control of their husbands. As such, they were protected from other men, but they were also at the mercy of their husbands. Lower-class women like Jemima and Rachel did not have the protection of a man and thus were at the mercy of their male employers. As the subject of male desires, women are portrayed as the man's prey and they

become the man's commodity. By prioritizing female-female friendships over marriages, Wollstonecraft and Hays undermine the importance of marriage.

The Wrongs of Woman, or Maria: The Prostitute and the Prisoner

Mary Wollstonecraft's famous fragment novel opens with the protagonist, Maria Venables, trapped in an asylum. Maria was thrown into the asylum by her despicable cheating husband who rips their daughter from his wife's arms. While in the asylum, Maria befriends the guard, a former prostitute and thief by the name of Jemima. Wollstonecraft focuses on the friendship between Jemima, a natural child or love child, and the protagonist Maria which transcends the boundaries of social classes. The terms "natural child" and "love child" were used commonly in the eighteenth century to refer to an illegitimate child and, because Jemima's mother was not married to her father, Jemima doesn't have a surname. Instead of scorning Jemima, we are invited to pity her even though she was a thief and former prostitute. Jemima is also the reason that Maria is able to have an affair with Mr. Darnford, another person in the asylum, because she protects the two lovers during their first meeting. In my third chapter, I address how the relationship between Darnford and Maria turns her into a "fallen" woman, specifically an adulteress.

While in the asylum, Maria is protected from her husband and she finds comfort in writing the stories of other women she meets. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines asylum as "a benevolent institution affording shelter and support to some class of the afflicted, the unfortunate, or the destitute; e.g. an asylum for the mentally ill (formerly 'lunatic asylum'), to which the term is sometimes popularly restricted." Although Maria is trapped within the asylum, she is also protected from her husband who has been pursuing her ever since she ran away from

him. This then turns to the other definition of asylum as "a secure place of refuge, shelter, or retreat" and "inviolable shelter; refuge, protection." (*OED*, s.v. "asylum"). In notes to the text, Gary Kelly explains:

> at this time, asylums for the insane were private businesses, and there were many cases of families, with the collusion of corrupt doctors, having relatives who were not insane confined in such places for illegitimate reasons, such as control of property or disposing of a spouse. (188)

Maria's husband places her in the asylum so he can seize control of their daughter and Maria's money. Despite being forced into the asylum, Maria finds love in Darnford and a lasting female friendship with Jemima. After being chased by her husband and living in fear, Maria is able to remain in the prison without worrying about Venables. Her main concern is the safety of her daughter, and her writings are for the sake of her daughter.

As Gary Kelly describes it, the novel's "narrative frame is Maria's first-person manuscript memoir addressed to her absent daughter" and it advises Maria's daughter how to survive in the world.[5] The fact that the writing is addressed to Maria's daughter emphasizes the importance of the relationship between mother and daughter. If we think about childbirth, the process is called labour, which the *OED* defines as "bodily or mental exertion particularly when difficult, painful, or compulsory; (hard) work; toil; *esp*. physical toil" (*OED*, s.v. "labour"). This definition refers to the suffering of reproductive labour, which grounds the idea of a woman's body as a commodity. Women were property of their fathers and eventually their husbands, so if a man owned his wife, then her labouring body became a commodity. The bond between mother and child is viewed as sacred and irreplaceable. In chapter seven, Maria emphasizes the

[5] Gary Kelly, introduction Mary Wollstonecraft, *The Wrongs of Woman, or Maria* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), xxiv.

connection between a mother and their child due to the sacrifices a mother makes for their child. Maria says,

> 'Addressing these memoirs to you, my child, uncertain whether I shall ever have an opportunity of instructing you, many observations will probably flow from my heart, which only a mother—a mother schooled in misery could make.
>
> 'The tenderness of a father who knew the world, might be great, but could it equal that of a mother—of a mother, labouring under a portion of the misery, which the constitution of society seems to have entailed on all her kind? It is, my child, my dearest daughter, only such a mother, who will dare to break through all restraint to provide for your happiness—who will voluntarily brave censure herself, to ward off sorrow from your bosom. From my narrative, my dear girl, you may gather the instruction, the counsel, which is meant rather to exercise than influence your mind.—Death may snatch me from you, before you weigh my advice, or enter into my reasoning: I would then, with fond anxiety, lead you very early in life to form your grand principle of action, to save you from the vain regret of having, through irresolution, let the spring-tide of existence pass away, unimproved, unenjoyed.—Gain experience—ah! gain it—while experience is worth having, and acquire sufficient fortitude to pursue your own happiness; it includes your utility, by a direct path. What is wisdom too often, but the owl of the goddess, who sits moping in a desolate heart; around me she shrieks, but I would invite all the gay warblers of the spring to nestle in your blooming bosom.—Had I not wasted years in deliberating, after I ceased to doubt, how I ought to have acted—I might now be useful and happy.—For my sake, warned by my example, always appear what you are, and you will not pass through this existence without enjoying its genuine blessings, love and respect.' (110-111)

The quotation not only focuses on the connection between a mother and daughter, but also emphasizes the struggles women faced in the eighteenth century. Maria includes the stories of other women in the asylum like Jemima, which not only allows the reader to sympathize with other characters, but also highlights different injustices women faced. Jemima shares the abuse she faced for being an illegitimate child and being assaulted by one of her employers.

Focusing on Jemima, we learn that she is mistreated because of her status as an illegitimate child. Wollstonecraft invites us to pity Jemima, who describes being neglected compared to her step-sister who was spoiled. Jemima compares herself to a slave and says her step-sister "was pampered with cakes and fruit, while I was, literally speaking, fed with the refuse of the table, with her leavings" (94). This addresses two topics: neglected female

relationships and the androgynous female. While I argue for the importance of female-female friendships, I also acknowledge the significance of potential friendships that never occur. The fact that Jemima's step-sister does not ameliorate the abuse presents her in a dislikable light. Had Jemima's step-sibling been a boy, the lack of a friendship or familial bond would be perceived differently from a patriarchal sense. Inequities between same-gendered siblings, in this case Jemima and her step-sister, highlight a lack of female solidarity and sympathy, which ultimately indicates there will always be women who benefit from the oppressive patriarchy. If Jemima's step-sibling had been a male, the preference of sons would be reinforced. Regarding my second topic, Jemima is an androgynous, almost masculine figure. Compared to the ideal demure female, Jemima expresses resentment towards her step-sibling in an aggressive manner when she says, "I could have murdered her" (94). Although Jemima is represented in a stereotypical masculine aggressive manner, we are encouraged to sympathize with Jemima instead of condemning her. Janet Todd's "Female Friendship in Jane Austen's Novels" includes an assessment of Wollstonecraft's desire for an

> androgynous woman, a woman of strong feeling and even stronger sense or reason, a woman whose aim is the 'imitation of manly virtues or, more properly speaking, the attainment of those talents and virtues, the exercise of which ennobles the human character' (31).

Jemima is an example of an androgynous woman whose role is almost masculine and she balances out Maria Venables. Todd describes female-female friendships as a woman finding companionship in a relationship other than marriage. By prioritizing the friendship between Jemima and Maria, Wollstonecraft rejects the primacy of the heteronormative marriage. The friendship between Jemima and Maria is crucial to the plot because in the proposed ending of the novel Jemima finds Maria's daughter and prevents Maria from overdosing.

Wollstonecraft's novel opens with Maria's musing about her situation while in the cell of the asylum. Jemima interrupts Maria's thoughts to tell her that she needs to eat and Maria argues that grief prevents her from eating. Maria then begs Jemima to visit her frequently and although Jemima is suspicious about Maria's motives, she acquiesces. This begins the friendship between the two women and Jemima becomes Maria's confidante. While Maria is physically trapped within the asylum, Jemima has the freedom to come and go as she pleases. On the other hand, Maria escapes from her cell through writing and reading the books provided by Jemima. While in the asylum, Maria befriends other women who have been thrown in the asylum and records the injustices. The books Jemima brings to Maria include notes written by another person confined in the asylum by the name of Henry Darnford. In one of the books, Henry leaves a note for Maria to find and Maria begs Jemima to deliver her reply. The two interact through a series of notes and eventually they meet while Jemima stands guard. The secret meetings and messages continue throughout the novel and Jemima protects the two lovers. During one particular meeting, Maria refers to Darnford as her husband and Jemima is encouraged to leave the two lovers undisturbed. Although Darnford is Maria's lover, Maria's friendship with Jemima outlasts the relationship. In the penultimate chapter, Jemima helps Maria escape and they are forced to leave Darnford behind in the asylum. Surprisingly, Venables appears in this chapter to sue Darnford for seducing his wife. In the last complete chapter, Maria testifies for Darnford and the judge is unsympathetic towards Maria despite the abuse she suffered at the hands of Venables.

The Wrongs of Woman is an unfinished fragment because Wollstonecraft died before finishing the novel and her husband William Godwin published the novel incorporating her notes for the ending of the novel. Godwin includes several notes as well as a short passage that seems to differ from the notes of the ending. In the short passage in the conclusion, Jemima prevents

Maria from killing herself. Because the written passage only includes Jemima and Maria, the reader is invited to acknowledge the significance of enduring female-female relationships. As an asylum patient, Darnford recognizes the inequities of the world, but Jemima and Maria find solace in one another because the patriarchy mistreats women. Although Darnford and Maria discuss escaping together, Jemima is the one who helps Maria escape while Darnford occupies the head of the asylum. Maria at first is reluctant to leave Darnford behind, but Jemima encourages her to write a letter to Darnford to meet her in London. While we are unsure about what happens between Darnford and Maria, the passage indicates the friendship between Jemima and Maria endures. Prior to the passage, Godwin includes "the scattered heads for the continuation of the story" (175) refer to the notes of different endings and almost all of the endings indicate the relationship between Darnford and Maria ends. Some of the notes for conclusion include Darnford leaving Maria to go abroad or his potential infidelity. By including a passage that emphasizes the relationship between Jemima and Maria, I argue we are invited to view female friendship as an alternative to a heterosexual romantic relationship. Wollstonecraft invites readers to acknowledge the importance of female friendships and she uses the friendship between Jemima and Maria to transcend socially constructed boundaries.

Wollstonecraft creates a unique power dynamic because Jemima, an illegitimate child and former sex worker, is the guard at the asylum while the wealthy middle-class Maria Venables is behind bars. Wollstonecraft invites us to pity both Jemima and Maria who are abused by the patriarchal system. As a lower-class woman, Jemima has no one to protect her from rape her while the middle-class Maria is not protected from her husband raping her. In addition, Maria's body is a commodity that her husband tries to use to pay off his debt to Mr. S——, which is why Maria flees from her husband. Ty states,

> Maria's story exposes the injustices perpetrated on women of the middle class which were legal under the judicial system of the late eighteenth century. Once married, Maria realized that she 'had been caught in a trap, and caged for life', as she loses control of her property, her person, and even her child. (35)

While Maria is the commodity of her husband, Jemima is the property of whoever pays for her services or her "masters". This returns to my original argument about the similarities between sex work and marriage. Both Jemima, a former sex worker, and Maria, a married woman, compare themselves to slaves, which reaffirms my argument about the commodification of women's bodies. Maria questions, "Was not the world a vast prison, and women born slaves?" (73) Jemima and Maria find comfort in one another because they recognize the similarities of their situations. In addition to being abused by men, both Maria and Jemima suffered the loss of a child—Jemima was forced to abort her child and Maria's daughter was ripped from her arms by her husband Venables. Maria pleads for Jemima to help rescue her daughter and tells Jemima "Let me but give her an education—let me but prepare her body and mind to encounter the ills which await her sex, and I will teach her to consider you a second mother" (108). Maria recognizes Jemima's losses and tries to reconcile them by making Jemima "a second mother" to her daughter. Ultimately the friendship between Jemima and Maria provides solace to both women and they create a family together in the proposed ending.

Memoirs of Emma Courtney: Unbridled Passions

Mary Wollstonecraft's protégé Mary Hays emphasizes the importance of education for women and exposes marriage as a corrupt institution that hinders the financial independence of women. Mary Hays' novel *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* focuses on the titular character Emma who shamelessly expresses her desires and actively pursues a man. She is never punished for her lack of propriety, which is extremely unconventional for the time when Hays was writing. Critics

during Hays' time were aghast at Emma's brazen statements about her desire for Augustus Harley. In *Unsex'd Revolutionaries*, Ty states,

> Hays's novel created an outrage and became a target for satires because she used her fiction to transgress the boundaries allocated to women by the male-dominated culture. Her heroine's declaration openly challenged the notions of female propriety and modesty as prescribed by the conservatives…Emma reverses eighteenth-century courtship conventions by infringing on the masculine right to selection, openly acknowledges her sexual longing, breaks out of silence, and becomes a subject rather than an [sic] 'specularized' object of male desire. (56)

The transition from "'specularized' object of male desire" to subject prevents Emma from being objectified or used for the pleasure of a man. In addition to "infringing on the masculine right to selection," Emma also tries to remain financially independent, which was uncommon for women. Ty points out,

> Hays shows how an eighteenth-century woman suffers from the limitations in her choice of profession. Self-educated, intelligent, and energetic, Emma finds that a single woman with no fortune had virtually no means of subsisting independently in the 1790s in England (51).

Despite her qualifications, Emma struggles to find work and marries out of desperation after the bank where she purchased a life annuity goes bankrupt. Emma wishes to marry for love, and specifically she desires a companionate marriage, which is represented by her aunt and uncle, the Melmoths. Ultimately, the novel focuses on Emma's friendship with her husband's mistress Rachel, which endures while Emma's marriage fails. Similar to how Jemima is supposed to be a second mother to Maria's daughter, Rachel becomes part of Emma's chosen family along with Emma's daughter and Emma's adopted son Augustus Harley II.

Hays' *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* is an epistolary novel that mainly consists of Emma's love letters to Augustus Harley as well as the philosophical letters exchanged with Mr. Francis. The novel additionally includes letter to Augustus Harley II, the son of Emma's unrequited love Augustus Harley. Hays portrays Emma as a brazen woman who refuses to adhere to the social

expectations in all regards. Emma openly defies people who criticize her when confronted about being alone with Mr. Francis. As an unmarried woman, it is not socially acceptable for Emma to be alone with a man who is not related to her. Her relationship with Mr. Francis is not romantic, and Emma states, "'I consider Mr. Francis as a *philosopher*, and not as a lover. Does this satisfy you, Sir?'" (44). Emma is unabashed when she reveals that she is communicating with Mr. Francis, and her response is almost sassy. Emma remains unpunished despite her lack of propriety and lack of self-awareness. We later learn that Emma uses philosophy to argue for the happiness of the individual and to justify her emotions over reason. This connects to Emma's beliefs that marriage should be for love, which is reflected in the companionate marriage. While pursuing Augustus Harley, Emma is shameless when she asks "why should I hesitate to inform him of my affection—why do I blush and tremble at the mere idea? It is a false shame!" (79). Emma continues to oppose the socially imposed expectations of the demure submissive woman while simultaneously representing how society neglects women who refute these expectations.

Unlike Wollstonecraft's novel, Hays' novel doesn't focus on female-female relationships until the end of the novel. Hays instead points out the forced financial dependency caused by the patriarchy and the obstacles a woman faces when attempting to step outside the typical job occupations. In "Narratives of Women: English Feminists of the 1790s" William Stafford claims that *The Wrongs of Woman* and *Memoirs of Emma Courtney*

> mount a sustained attack upon the romantic myth, upon the idea that a woman can win happiness for herself by taking up her allotted place in an order which defines her as dutiful daughter and loving wife…[they] do this by taking the heroine beyond the usual ending of the courtship novel, into the realities of married life. In these novels, heroines and minor characters—heroes too—are destroyed and devastated by patriarchal power with which reconciliation proves impossible. (30)

As stated in my introduction, both novels are narratives of married women while Jane Austen's novels follow the marriage plot. By including Rachel in Emma's family at the end of the novel, Hays creates a family unit that does not adhere to the conventional nuclear family.

In regard to families, Emma did not have an ideal relationship with her parents, especially because her father had no interest in raising a child after his wife died during childbirth. Instead, Emma was raised by her aunt and uncle, the Melmoths, who have a loving relationship. Emma states, "Mr and Mrs Melmoth, my uncle and aunt, married young, purely from motives of great affection" (11). From a young age, Emma witnessed a loving relationship between her aunt and uncle, which later influences her to pursue a romantic relationship. In addition to being raised by the Melmoths, Emma becomes close to Mrs. Harley, Augustus Harley's mother, who becomes almost a mother figure to Emma. These close relationships are a key part of Emma's development until later on when Emma becomes friends with Rachel, Montague's mistress. Although Rachel does not appear in the novel until towards the end, she is a significant character because she becomes part of Emma's family after Montague commits suicide.

Instead of feeling threatened by Rachel, Emma befriends the other woman and sympathizes with her as a fallen woman. After being sexually intimate with Montague, Rachel falls pregnant and Montague attempts to abort the child without Rachel's knowledge or consent. Similar to the fallen woman Jemima, Rachel loses her child because Montague smothers their child after the abortions fail. Jemima becomes a second mother to Maria's daughter and Rachel becomes a part of Emma's family, which turns her into a guardian for Emma's daughter and adopted son. The family at the end of the novel is unconventional because there is no father figure, but it does not feel like there is a role that needs to be filled. The family is created without marriage indicating that Emma's relationship with Rachel should be prioritized over her

relationship with Montague. After Montague shoots himself, Emma reads a letter where he admits his faults towards Rachel and his murdering of the love child. The chapter after reading Montague's suicide note, Emma focuses on Rachel and writes:

> The unhappy Rachel recovered her health by slow degrees. I had determined, when my affairs were settled, to leave a spot, that had been the scene of so many tragical events. I proposed to the poor girl to take her again into my family, to which she acceded with rapture. She has never since quitted me, and her faithful services, and humble, grateful attachment, have repaid my protection an hundred fold. (192)

Despite the fact that we do not get many details of Emma's friendship with Rachel, Hays invites us to pity Rachel and feel compassion towards her. If Emma had not taken her in, she would have been homeless and likely ended up a prostitute or in another horrendous situation. Montague's position as head of the household gave him unlimited power over Rachel's body and she was helpless to resist him. Emma recognizes that Rachel was not at fault for Montague's infidelity and welcomes her into her family with open arms.

Both Wollstonecraft and Hays create major-character fallen women who befriend the protagonists in order to emphasize the importance of female friendships. Maria's friendship with Jemima and Emma's friendship with Rachel create female solidarity, transcend the boundaries of social classes, and provide alternative relationships to marriage. While Jemima's friendship prevents Maria from killing herself, Emma's friendship saves Rachel from living the life of a fallen woman. By focusing on the fallen women as major characters, Wollstonecraft and Hays highlight society's inequities towards women as well as the injustices women face. We are invited to pity the fallen women, to recognize the importance of female-female friendships, and to realize the corruption of marriage. Both Maria's marriage to Venables and Emma's marriage to Montague occur inarguably for financial reasons and we are encouraged to disapprove of these marriages. While Emma's marriage to Montague is not as horrendous as Maria's marriage to Venables, we recognize that Montague is a despicable character especially after he murders

Rachel's child. Wollstonecraft and Hays present marriage as an oppressive regime similar to slavery and they focus on female friendships as an alternative relationship to marriage.

Chapter Two: Failed Marriages in the Marriage Plot

Although Jane Austen's marriage plot novels deliver the closure required of the genre, I argue that beneath the surface they critique that marriage is a corrupt institution that negatively affects women. They do this in two ways. One way is that the novels invite readers to be skeptical of heterosexual marriages that disempower female relationships, particularly fulfilling female-female friendships and sisterly bonds, and they invite readers to question the happiness of such unions. The other way is through Austen's inclusion of minor characters who might be considered "fallen" women in society, although her treatment of such characters is pitying rather than scornful. By pitying the "fallen" woman, Austen represents that fallen women don't need to be punished, and I argue that they should not be punished. One subset of the "fallen" women are the adulteresses, whom Austen treats in a similar pitying fashion because they are forced into loveless marriages. An unmarried "fallen" woman can only be redeemed by the man whom she had an affair with, but the adulteresses are never redeemed. Marriage is a punitive regime for sexually transgressive women who indulge in pleasure outside of marriage. The punishment of "fallen" women and adulteresses is a measure of marriage reinforcement. Austen acknowledges how marriage is necessary for certain women to achieve financial security, but she highlights how such a marriage is isolating and essentially legalized prostitution. Instead of a woman selling her body to many different men, she sells her body to one man—her husband. Because the married woman is the man's property, she is forced to rely on her husband for protection from other men, but she still is at risk of being raped by her own husband. In her marriage plot novels Austen addresses the problems of marriage, which were exacerbated by Hardwicke's Law. Due to the time when Austen was publishing in the Regency of the 1810s, she could not write in the same openly radical way as Mary Wollstonecraft and Mary Hays. As a result, the

adulteresses and fallen women are minor characters instead of major characters. I argue that her treatment of these minor characters represents the atrocities married women face in marriage, which in turn undermines the credibility of certain marriages in the novels.

Lisa O'Connell's book *The Origins of the English Marriage Plot* discusses how Jane Austen and Frances Burney redirected the marriage plot novels. O'Connell attributes the redirection of the marriage plot to the change of the time when these two women were writing. She breaks the reasons into three particular components: political changes in the world, a change in English marriage because of Hardwicke's Marriage Act, and change in "literary culture" (185-186). More specifically, O'Connell states, "As the novel form became commercialised, it developed specialist genres and niche markets, many of which were mainly written by and aimed at women" (186). Hardwicke's Marriage Act gave rise to Gretna Green marriages, which are depicted in a couple of Austen's novels. O'Connell states, "Gretna Green was the first village on the new western turnpike road as it crossed from England into neighbouring Scotland, where the old code of consent tolerating clandestine marriage remained in place even after Hardwicke's legislation" (190). Hardwicke's Marriage Act gave fathers legal control over whom their children married until they turned twenty-one, but fortunately for eager couples this act did not apply to Scotland. O'Connell furthers arguments made by other Austen scholars that Jane Austen's "novels come closest to defining the modern English marriage plot as we began by theorising it, that is, as marking a coalescence of social status, states of feeling, Christian virtue and moral worth in marriage" (218). O'Connell's book is valuable because she explains how Austen's novels reflect the changing state of the world when Austen was writing and how Austen was a radical writer. I use O'Connell's book to further inform my opinion of Austen's writing and explore how her marriage plot novels are radical.

Claudia L. Johnson's *Jane Austen: Woman, Politics, and the Novel* focuses on Austen's unique approach to her marriage plot novels and how she differs from other popular writers at the time. Similar to countless other critics, Johnson places Austen in conversation with Wollstonecraft. I use Johnson's chapter "The Age of Chivalry and the Crisis of Gender" in her book *Equivocal Beings* to focus on how Austen fits in with other writers around her time. Johnson compares Austen to other writers like Wollstonecraft, Burney, Edmund Burke, William Godwin, Daniel Defoe, and other popular writers. Johnson additionally focuses on the irony used in Austen's novels and how it is a distinct characteristic of Austen's writing. I disagree with Johnson's assessment on how Austen treats adulteresses and fallen woman. I argue that Austen encourages readers to sympathize with the fallen women, but her methods are subtle because the fallen woman is never shown in the novel. Building on my earlier chapters about Wollstonecraft and Hays, I argue that Austen continues the idea of sympathizing with the fallen women, but Austen moves these characters to minor roles because of when she is writing.

Losing Her to a Man—Marriage Interrupting Female Relationships

All of Jane Austen's novels are centered around the marriage plot, but I argue not all of the main characters end up in happy marriages. In this section I argue the that the failed female friendships between major and minor characters are a critique of the heteronormative hegemony. There are two different types of female-female relationships in Austen's novels; one is friendship and the other is sisterhood. In Austen's first two published novels, *Sense and Sensibility* and *Pride and Prejudice,* I will show how the heroines' marriages permit fulfilling sister relationships and female friendships to stay constant, which is a sign that these are the good marriages. These two books also include female-female relationships that are not permitted to

endure due to conflicts of interests over estate and money. Afterward, I will discuss *Mansfield Park*, published in 1814, and *Emma*, published the year after, because both books display how female friendships and sister relationships can be interrupted by marriage. I argue that marriages that interrupt or prevent female-female relationships, whether female friendships or sister bonds, are detrimental to women and that Austen invites us to frown upon such unions.

In *Sense and Sensibility*, two sisters of contrasting temperaments counsel each other in their pursuit of marriages and end up in marriages that allow their sister relationship to continue to flourish. Elinor Dashwood is the "sense" who balances out her younger sister, Marianne, who is the "sensibility" from the title. With the help of Marianne, Elinor is able to express her affection for Edward Ferrars and ends up married to him. On the other hand, Marianne's sense increases because of Elinor's influence, and eventually she comes to love Colonel Brandon. At the end of the novel Marianne and Elinor remain in a close relationship even after they marry, which signifies how well the marriages work out. Another novel with a pair of opposite sisters is Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, which is centered around the two eldest Bennet daughters, Jane and the novel's protagonist Elizabeth. Similar to the two eldest Dashwood girls, the Bennet sisters balance each other out and they support one another in their marriage-seeking endeavors. Like Elinor Dashwood, Jane learns to be more open about her emotions from Elizabeth, and Elizabeth's humility increases because of Jane's influence. In the end Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy live close to Jane and Mr. Bingley, which creates a type of positive community. I focus on how Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* and *Pride and Prejudice* portray positive marriages which reinforce sisterly bonds and create communities instead of separating women from fulfilling female friendships.

At the other end of the spectrum, Austen's novels *Mansfield Park* and *Emma* are centered around marriages that I argue are detrimental to fulfilling female friendships of the main characters. The protagonist of *Mansfield Park*, Fanny Price, is a pitiable character who is in love with her cousin Edmund Bertram. Due to her love for Edmund, Fanny fails to establish a strong bond with Mary Crawford because of jealousy when Edmund takes a liking to Mary. They establish a tentative friendship which immediately dissipates when Mary is dismissed from Edmund's life. Once Mary is out of the picture, Edmund turns to his cousin Fanny and marries her out of desire to preserve his friendship with her. Austen's titular character Emma is an independent woman who boldly declares that she will never marry. Her story includes an undervalued sister relationship with her older sister and female friendships that are interrupted by marriage. Emma loses her governess Miss Taylor, her companion Harriet Smith, and the potential friend Jane Fairfax to marriage. In the end of the novel Emma marries her sister's brother-in-law George Knightley, who has admired Emma from the time she was young. This egregious marriage reminds me of the main marriage in Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*. I argue that Edmund Bertram from *Mansfield Park* and George Knightley from *Emma* are similar because both men mold Fanny Price and Emma Woodhouse, respectively, into their ideal wives. These marriages are deplorable because there is a lack of equality in these relationships. Although we know Fanny truly loves Edmund, she marries a manipulative man who takes advantage of her naivety. In the case of Emma, her marriage to Mr. Knightley ensures she can maintain a friendship with Mr. Knightley, but his company is no match for female companionship. Austen invites us to think poorly of the marriages that end female friendships and, I argue, her treatment of such marriages causes us to doubt the marriages of the main characters in *Mansfield Park* and *Emma*.

Janet M. Todd in "Female Friendship in Jane Austen's Novels" focuses on similar friendships that I highlighted, but Todd focuses on how the lack of female friendships in *Mansfield Park* and *Emma* is meant to be seen as beneficial to our heroines. Instead of condemning Edmund Bertram's marriage to Fanny Price and George Knightley's marriage to Emma Woodhouse, Todd believes that the later Austen undervalues female friendships that I argue Austen invites us to mourn. Todd argues,

> The suggestion that a woman should strive to develop through a female relationship is a radical one in fiction and seems to oppose the commonplace idea that she should aim primarily at finding her complement in the reasonable man. In her early novels Austen seems attracted to the possibilities and potentialities of female friendship. Later, however, she comes to apprehend its socially disruptive implications, its threat to the traditional patriarchy and marriage which she sometimes wishes to modify but never to destroy. With such an apprehension, she moves from attraction to outright rejection of close female friendship. Approaching or withdrawing, however, Austen reveals her understanding of the power of female association and through it the possibility of an androgynous ideal embodied in a woman (32).

Todd argues that Austen's later novels incorporate marriages that are more fulfilling to the heroines compared to the female friendships for the heroines. I disagree with Todd's argument about Austen's later novels, *Mansfield Park* and *Emma*, being conservative because I believe that they represent marriages that are detrimental to our heroines and that we are invited to mourn the loss of female friendships. I deviate from Todd's argument because I argue Austen invites us to condemn a marriage that "requires feminine passive qualities in the woman and masculine active qualities in the man, and which cannot tolerate any modification" (43). Because there is not room for modification, I argue that Austen invited us to disapprove of the marriages which solidify the heteronormative dominate male married to the submissive female. Instead of accepting the marriages of Fanny Price and Emma Woodhouse to complementary masculine characters, I argue we should mourn the loss of female friendships. I argue that Austen invites us to mourn the lost friendships between Fanny Price and Mary Crawford, Emma Woodhouse and

Harriet Smith, and finally Emma Woodhouse and Jane Fairfax. I argue we are meant to condemn marriages that negatively impact female-female relationships.

Sense and Sensibility: The Reasonable and the Reckless

Austen's first published novel *Sense and Sensibility* focuses on the sisterly relationship between Elinor and Marianne Dashwood. We are introduced to the Dashwood lineage with Mr. Henry Dashwood as the head of Norland Park located in Sussex, inherited from his uncle. From his first marriage, Henry has a son, John Dashwood, who is the heir to Norland because of an entail. Elinor, Marianne, and Margaret are John's half-sisters and the product of Henry's second wife, Mrs. Dashwood. I find the relationship between the Dashwood women and Fanny Dashwood, more commonly referred to as Mrs. John Dashwood because she is John's wife, intriguing because the women never become intimate friends due to the conflict of interest regarding Norland. Once Henry dies, the entail results in Fanny Dashwood becoming the mistress of Norland and this creates a power imbalance where Fanny has more control than her mother-in-law. This forces Mrs. Dashwood and her daughters to move to a cottage in Devonshire. What finally allows the novel to end is when Elinor marries her love Edward Ferrars and Marianne learns to love Colonel Brandon. To reach this ending, Elinor must teach Marianne to have more "sense" and Elinor becomes more in touch with her "sensibility" because of Marianne. The two sisters balance each other, so they both end up in fulfilling marriages that allow their relationship with each other to flourish.

In regard to female friendships, the Dashwood women are never on friendly terms with John's wife Fanny Dashwood once Fanny becomes the mistress of Norland Park. As the head of Norland, Fanny Dashwood is in conflict with the former head of Norland, Mrs. Dashwood. This

conflict is represented once: “Mrs. John Dashwood now installed herself mistress of Norland; and her mother and sisters-in-law were degraded to the condition of visitors” (9). Not only does Fanny become “mistress of Norland,” but also her in-laws are demoted to visitors in their home. Because they become visitors, Mrs. Dashwood and her daughters are required to find another place to reside. After living several months at Norland with John and his wife, Mrs. Dashwood and her daughters are forced to leave and move into Barton Cottage, owned by Mrs. Dashwood’s cousin Sir John Middleton, located in Devonshire. Although there is no mourning of a friendship, Austen represents Fanny as self-absorbed and uncaring about the fate of the other Dashwood women. Fanny’s husband, John Dashwood, is not legally obligated to provide for his half-sisters and step-mother, but he does provide his female relatives with some money because the late Mr. Dashwood had requested him to support his family. Regardless, the money is a meager amount and is not sufficient to support the Dashwood women, yet Mrs. John Dashwood selfishly argues that the money should be spent on her own children. This represents a conflict of interest where Fanny views the other Dashwood women as competition for money, so a friendship is out of the question. Fanny’s selfishness often evokes negative reactions towards the character and creates empathy for the other Dashwood women.

The primary focus of the novel is Elinor and Marianne Dashwood. When we are first introduced to the Dashwood women, Austen writes about the concern Elinor has for Marianne while Margaret is referred to as “the other sister” (8). Because Margaret is thirteen and not of a marrying age, she is not as close to her older sisters, which Austen includes in the introduction of Margaret. Although the information about Margaret is limited, it is evident that she is a character of sensibility like Marianne and Mrs. Dashwood. Straight from the beginning, the reader can recognize that the bond between Marianne and Elinor is the primary focus on the novel. At the

beginning of the novel the reader is made aware of Elinor's love for Edward Ferrars, Mrs. John Dashwood's brother. As a person of sense, Elinor is reserved towards Edward and she doesn't openly express her emotions for Edward, which causes Marianne to call her "Cold-hearted Elinor!" (24) Marianne is the complete opposite and wholeheartedly throws herself into a relationship with John Willoughby. Elinor remains the "sense" when she tells Marianne to reject extravagant gifts from Willoughby and she coaches her sister in how to approach relationships. Marianne, similar to her mother, is a character of sensibility to the point she makes herself ill when Willoughby gets engaged to another woman. Influenced by her older sister Elinor, Marianne's sense increases and she falls in love with the courteous Colonel Brandon, whom she first ignored in favor of pursuing the greedy Willoughby. Elinor, on the other hand, learns to be more open with her emotions and increases her "sensibility." Mrs. Dashwood realizes that she was so preoccupied by Marianne and Willoughby, that she neglected that her eldest daughter would be at risk of feeling a similar pain to Marianne because of Edward. It is only when Elinor believes that she has lost Edward to Lucy Steele that she openly displays her emotions and she cries out of relief when she discovers Lucy has married Robert Ferrars instead. Once this issue is resolved and Elinor becomes engaged to Edward, the Dashwoods focus on setting up Marianne with Colonel Brandon.

As the "sense" in the sister relationship, Elinor approaches love in a more reserved and cautious way. Marianne, aware of her older sister's feelings for Edward, is certain that the two will end up engaged. Austen highlights to possibility that marriage could ruin sister bonds when Marianne tells Elinor,

> "And you really are not engaged to [Edward]!" said she. "Yet it certainly will soon happen. But two advantaged will proceed from this delay. *I* shall not lose you too soon, and Edward will have greater opportunity of improving that natural taste of your favourite pursuit which must be so indispensably necessary to your future felicity. Oh! if

> he should be so far stimulated by your genius as to learn to draw himself, how delightful it would be!" (25)

In this passage Marianne acknowledges that an engagement to Edward could take her sister away from her and she says "*I* shall not lose you too soon." Once a woman marries, it is common for her to move into her husband's house, so it would put a strain on the bond between Elinor and Marianne once Elinor marries. Although Marianne is aware that she will lose her older sister to marriage, she still encourages the relationship. One of the first obstacles Elinor faces in her relationship with Edward is the disruption experienced when she and her family move to Devonshire. In Devonshire, Elinor meets the Steele sisters and she is distraught when she hears of the secret engagement between Edward Ferrars and Lucy Steele. The knowledge of this upsets Elinor, but she prioritizes Marianne over her own emotions and helps Marianne with the complicated relationship with John Willoughby.

Having no relationship or attachment to any man in Sussex, Marianne is controlled by her sensibility, which causes Elinor to worry for her younger sister when she acts impulsively and without propriety. Shortly after moving to Barton Cottage, the Dashwood women visit Sir John Middleton, Mrs. Dashwood's cousin and landlord, and his family at Barton Park. While at Barton Park, the Dashwoods meet Mrs. Jennings, Sir John Middleton's mother-in-law, and Sir John Middleton's friend Colonel Brandon. During their visit, Marianne is invited to play the pianoforté and her passionate nature intrigues the gentlemanly Colonel Brandon, whose backstory including an adulteress and fallen women I address in my next section. Mrs. Jennings is hopeful that Marianne will return Colonel Brandon's affections, but Marianne deems him too old. During a walk with her sister Margaret, Marianne falls and is rescued by the cunning John Willoughby. Marianne quickly takes a liking to Willoughby and eagerly accepts presents from him. Like her mother, Marianne's sensibility overrides her judgement and she does not hide her

affection for Willoughby. Elinor, on the other hand, is more reserved than Mrs. Dashwood and Marianne. She deems it inappropriate to accept expensive gifts from Willoughby although Mrs. Dashwood is convinced Willoughby will marry Marianne.

Unlike her eldest daughter, Mrs. Dashwood is unconcerned about Marianne's image being tainted when it is revealed she has been alone with Willoughby. When *Sense and Sensibility* was published, it was uncommon for an unengaged woman to be alone with a bachelor to whom she is not related because of the implication that something salacious could have occurred. Elinor is well aware of this fact and she expresses her doubt over the fact that Willoughby took Marianne to his aunt's house. Marianne is confused by Elinor's doubt and says,

> "Why should you imagine, Elinor, that we did not go there, or that we did not see the house? Is not it what you have often wished to do yourself?"
>
> "Yes, Marianne, but I would not go while Mrs. Smith was there, and with no other companion than Mr. Willoughby."
>
> "Mr. Willoughby however is the only person who can have a right to shew that house; and as he went in an open carriage, it was impossible to have any other companion. I never spent a pleasanter morning in my life."
>
> "I am afraid," replied Elinor, "that the pleasantness of an employment does not always evince its propriety."
>
> "On the contrary, nothing can be a stronger proof of it, Elinor; for if there had been any real impropriety in what I did, I should have been sensible of it at the time, for we always know when we are acting wrong, and with such a conviction I could have had no pleasure."
>
> "But, my dear Marianne, as it has already exposed you to some very impertinent remarks, do you not now begin to doubt the discretion of your own conduct?"
>
> "If the impertinent remarks of Mrs. Jennings are to be the proof of impropriety in conduct, we are all offending every moment of our lives. I value not her censure any more than I should do her commendation. I am not sensible of having done anything wrong in walking over Mrs. Smith's grounds, or in seeing her house. They will one day be Mr. Willoughby's, and—"
>
> "If they were one day to be your own, Marianne, you would not be justified in what you have done."
>
> She blushed at this hint; but it was even visibly gratifying to her; and after a ten minutes' interval of earnest thought, she came to her sister again, and said with great good humour, "Perhaps, Elinor, it WAS rather ill-judged in me to go to Allenham; but Mr. Willoughby wanted particularly to shew me the place; and it is a charming house, I assure you…" (79-80).

Marianne's sensibility prevents her from recognizing her inappropriate behavior to be alone with Willoughby. Although she claims that she is "sensible" enough to know if she has done something wrong, Elinor points out that she should not have revealed her actions to Mrs. Jennings regardless of how pleasant a trip it might have been. Additionally, Elinor tells Marianne that it was inappropriate to visit Allenham alone with Mr. Wickham, especially since his aunt Mrs. Smith, who owned the house, was not present. While Mrs. Dashwood fails to point out the potential improper actions of Marianne, Elinor is quite vocal in her opinions that there must be a formal engagement before Marianne is alone with Willoughby. Although Marianne points out that they went in an open carriage, so there was no possible way for anything scandalous to happen, Elinor reminds her that she is not formally engaged to him.

Just before Willoughby suddenly disappears from the Dashwoods' lives to marry someone else, Mrs. Dashwood allows Marianne to greet Willoughby at Barton Cottage alone in hopes of a formal engagement. This once again proves that Elinor is the most sensible in her family while the rest are affected by their sensibilities. Willoughby never does propose that night and Marianne is in tears when she realizes he is leaving for London and refusing to explain his reasoning. Marianne becomes sick with grief and struggles to maintain a normal life when she hears nothing from Willoughby. When she learns that Willoughby is back from London after a long absence, she is shocked that he does not visit or write to her. He eventually breaks off their informal engagement through a letter and Elinor sees this as a blessing. Marianne is distraught and her heart is further broken when she discovers his marriage to the wealthy Miss Grey. Marianne's relationship with her older sister Elinor eventually increases her sense, so that she is able to overcome her love for Willoughby. Aside from leading Marianne on, the despicable John Willoughby also impregnated a young teenager and left her alone. Elinor learns that the young

girl was the daughter of Colonel Brandon's former love, Eliza I, and Mrs. Jennings speculates that the girl may be his natural daughter. Once Elinor hears the story about Eliza II, she sympathizes with an adulteress and a "fallen" woman, which I address later on.

Marianne and her failed relationship with Willoughby take precedence over Elinor's relationship with Edward until Elinor believes she has lost Edward to Lucy Steele. Austen hints that Elinor's sensibilities override her sense because

> She now found, that in spite of herself, she had always admitted a hope, while Edward remained single, that something would occur to prevent his marrying Lucy; that some resolution of his own, some mediation of friends, or some more eligible opportunity of establishment for the lady, would arise to assist the happiness of all. But he was now married, and she condemned her heart for the lurking flattery, which so much heighted the pain of intelligence (404).

This admission of her sensibilities seems unlikely to happen without Marianne who was convinced that Edward would definitely marry Elinor. When Edward arrives at Barton, Elinor tries to stifle her emotions and asks how Mrs. Ferrars is doing. Edward responds assuming she's asking about his mother and Elinor clarifies that she's inquiring about Mrs. Edward Ferrars. Edward corrects her by informing her that Lucy Steele is now Mrs. *Robert* Ferrars instead of Mrs. Edward Ferrars. This information overwhelms Elinor's sensibilities and "she almost ran out of the room, and as soon as the door was closed, burst into tears of joy" (408). Elinor is represented as an extremely rational person, but she does have moments where she is controlled by her sensibilities. Edward proposed to Elinor shortly after she calms down, which means Elinor ends up with a man who does not cut her off from her family.

At the end of the novel, we learn that Elinor retains her female relationships, which I argue is important to a good marriage. The novel itself is centered about Elinor's sense and Marianne's sensibility, so it would be astounding if their marriages resulted in the destruction of their relationship. Austen concludes, "Elinor's marriage divided her as little from her family as

could well be contrived, without rending the cottage at Barton entirely useless, for her mother and sister spent much more than half their time with her" (428). Not only does the relationship allow Elinor's friendship with Marianne to persist, it also allows her to remain close to her mother and Margaret. The ending to the marriage plot novel allows the relationship between Marianne and Elinor to remain a priority. Austen writes,

> Between Barton and Delaford, there was that constant communication which strong family affection would naturally dictate;—and among the merits and the 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 (431).

The final paragraph of the novel continues to focus on the valuable sister relationship between Elinor and Marianne. The two women were "living almost within sight of each other," which emphasizes how proximity plays a role in female relationships. Austen includes "let it not be ranked as the least considerable…they could live without disagreement between themselves" meaning the fact that the Elinor and Marianne are able to remain friends is of considerable importance in their marriages. Elinor's marriage to Edward Ferrars and Marianne's marriage to Colonel Brandon are positive marriages because the marriages are partnerships and they permit female friendships to endure.

Pride and Prejudice: The Willful and the Willing

Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* is centered around the five Bennet daughters: Jane, Elizabeth, Mary, Catherine (commonly known as Kitty), and Lydia. The two eldest Bennet daughters are the main focus of the novel as Jane and Elizabeth balance one another out similar to the Dashwood sisters. Like to Marianne and Elinor, Jane and Elizabeth help one another find suitable husbands and together they create a community at the end of the book. The first

interrupted female relationship is between Elizabeth and Charlotte, which ends once Charlotte gets engaged. The ending of the relationship between Charlotte and Elizabeth occurs because of a conflict of interest and a disagreement over what constitutes a good marriage. Yet another relationship, although it is not a solely female-female friendship, is Elizabeth's friendship with Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner, which is significant because it allows Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth to get together. I plan on addressing the Gardiners as a unit because the couple provides a model for the eventual marriage between Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth. The Gardiners are the ideal married couple in the novel, excluding the marriages that occur at the end of the novel, because their relationship is a partnership. I compare the difference between Mrs. Gardiner and Mrs. Bennet and I argue, that Mrs. Gardiner is a better mother figure to Elizabeth, and to a lesser extent Jane, than Mrs. Bennet. The fact that the Gardiners are part of the Bingley-Darcy-Bennet community at the end of the book highlights their importance. The various different couples that come together throughout the novel make this one of the most memorable Jane Austen novels.

The friendship between Charlotte Lucas and Elizabeth Bennet, which is disturbed when Charlotte marries Elizabeth's cousin Mr. Collins, is reminiscent of the conflict of interest between the Dashwood women and Mrs. John Dashwood. In the beginning of the novel, both are women unwed and unengaged, which troubles their families. At the age of twenty-seven, Charlotte is perceived as an old maid and her mother despairs that she will never marry, especially because she is not handsome like the two eldest Bennet daughters. Initially Mr. Collins has his eyes set on the eldest daughter Jane Bennet, but Mrs. Bennet reveals "her *eldest* daughter, she must just mention—she felt it incumbent to on her to hint, was very likely to be very soon engaged" (79). Mr. Collins then decides to propose to Elizabeth and during his proposal he states,

> "My reasons for marrying are, first, that I think it a right thing for every clergyman in easy circumstances (like myself) to set the example of matrimony in his parish; secondly, that I am convinced that it will add very greatly to my happiness; and thirdly—which perhaps I ought to have mentioned earlier, that it is the particular advice and recommendation of the very noble lady whom I have the honour of calling patroness" (118).

Mr. Collins reveals that his motivations for marrying are shallow: he wants to set an example for his church; he wishes to increase his happiness, which isn't a bad reason itself, but he doesn't really believe that it will increase her happiness; and he hopes to please Lady Catherine by marrying. He states that he is proposing to Elizabeth because he is aware that the entail results in him inheriting the Bennet estate. Austen makes it apparent that we should perceive Mr. Collins as an ignorant buffoon and that his proposal is insulting to Elizabeth because he acts like she should be falling to her knees thanking him. Mr. Collins is represented as a deplorable man who is insistent that Elizabeth meant to accept his proposal instead of reject it. Much to her mother's dismay and to her father's delight, Elizabeth is adamant in her rejection of Mr. Collins because she finds him arrogant and ignorant and she wishes to marry for happiness. Initially after Elizabeth rejects him, Mr. Collins is convinced that she meant to accept his proposal. After realizing that Elizabeth will never marry him, Mr. Collins then proposes to Elizabeth's friend Charlotte, who readily accepts. It is unsurprising for a woman like Charlotte to accept Mr. Collins's marriage proposal because she views marriage as a means to ensure a roof over her head and food on her plate.

The engagement between Mr. Collins and Charlotte causes the friendship between Elizabeth and Charlotte to dissolve, especially since Mr. Collins is set to inherit the Bennet estate after the passing of the head of the household. In other words, the Bennet women will be cast out of their own house by Mr. Collins and Elizabeth's friend Charlotte. The marriage proposal to Charlotte seems almost spiteful because Mr. Collins is marrying Elizabeth's friend, which is an

automatic downfall to the female friendship. This returns to my argument that certain female friendships are threatened by competition of property. If Charlotte had not accepted Mr. Collins's proposal, she risked not having a place to live after her father died. When discussing her engagement to Mr. Collins with Elizabeth, Charlotte states,

> But when you have had time to think it all over, I hope you will be satisfied with what I have done. I am not a romantic you know. I never was. I ask only a comfortable home; and considering Mr. Collins's character, and situation in life, I am convinced that my chance of happiness with him is as fair, as most people can boast on entering the marriage state (140-141).

Instead of marrying for love, Charlotte views marriage as a means for financial security and although her happiness is not guaranteed, there is a fair chance of happiness. She agrees to marry Mr. Collins to ensure she would have a roof over her head and food provided for her. After coming to terms with Charlotte's engagement to Mr. Collins, Elizabeth feels extraordinary despair as she realizes Charlotte is "disgracing herself and sunk in her esteem" (141). Instead of trying to understand Charlotte's motivations for marriage, Elizabeth is appalled by her friend's choice and is horrified to realize that her friend will be marrying for money. In this way, I argue that Charlotte is highlighting that marriage can be a transaction, which I believe we are invited to condemn. Instead of the passionate partnership between the Gardiners, Charlotte might as well be a possession of Mr. Collins that he delights in showing off to guests.

Focusing on the relationship between Charlotte and Elizabeth, Melinda Moe's article "Charlotte and Elizabeth: Multiple Modernities in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*" argues that Charlotte's marriage to Mr. Collins causes Elizabeth to lose all respect for her friend. Moe focuses on the modernities within the book, but I further her idea that Charlotte is a foil for Elizabeth. I believe that Charlotte is a foil for Elizabeth because her views on marriage were more practical for the time period, but Austen writes about Charlotte's marriage in such a way

that the reader has pity for Charlotte. Moe states, "the disagreement between the two friends encapsulates a highly conflicted moral drama about the relationship between marriage and individual fulfillment" (1076). I argue that "individual fulfillment" is not the problem at hand, but instead there is a conflict between marriage and female friendships. Charlotte's decision to marry Mr. Collins ensures she has a place to live after the death of her parents and she hopes for eventual happiness with Mr. Collins. On the other hand, Elizabeth believes that there is not a chance for the marriage to succeed and she mourns the loss of her friend. Jane tries to encourage Elizabeth to not think so negatively of the marriage between Charlotte and Mr. Collins, but we are invited to agree with Elizabeth because the marriage is an example of a destruction of a female friendship. In addition, we are encouraged to pity Charlotte because she is marrying a buffoon simply because she wants to ensure she will not end up homeless.

After losing Charlotte to Mr. Collins, Elizabeth is left with her older sister Jane for comfort. She complains about the marriage to Jane, who tries to give Elizabeth a more balanced perspective on the relationship. Jane is aware of the struggles Charlotte would face if she does not accept the marriage proposal and she hopes that Charlotte and Mr. Collins will be happy. Jane points out how the marriage is for practical reasons and she says:

> "My dear Lizzy, do not give way to such feelings as these. They will ruin your happiness. You do not make allowance enough for difference of situation and temper. Consider Mr. Collins's respectability, and Charlotte's steady, prudent character. Remember that she is one of a large family; that as to fortune, it is a most eligible match; and be ready to believe, for everybody's sake, that she may feel something like regard and esteem for our cousin."
>
> "To oblige you, I would try to believe almost any thing, but no one else could be benefited by such a belief as this; for were I persuaded Charlotte had any regard for him, I should only think worse of her understanding, than I now do of her heart. My dear Jane, Mr. Collins is a conceited, pompous, narrow-minded, silly man; you know he is, as well as I do; and you must feel as well as I do, that the woman who marries him, cannot have a proper way of thinking. You shall not defend her, though it is Charlotte Lucas. You shall not, for the sake of one individual, change the meaning of principle and integrity, nor

> endeavour to persuade yourself or me, that selfishness is prudence, and insensibility of danger, security for happiness" (153).

Although she is the closest to Charlotte, Elizabeth immediately dissolves her friendship and tells Jane, "You shall not defend her, though it is Charlotte Lucas." On the other hand, Jane encourages Elizabeth to not think so negatively of the marriage between Charlotte and Mr. Collins. She believes it is possible for the two to find happiness and she doesn't wish either one of them to be unhappy. Austen invites us to side with Elizabeth because Mr. Collins is obnoxiously ignorant and we are encouraged to pity Charlotte. Not only is Mr. Collins a disagreeable character, but also his marriage interrupts the friendship between Elizabeth and Charlotte. While Elizabeth's attitude towards Charlotte's choice may represent her as callous because she is willing to end a friendship, we are forced to recognize that Charlotte's marriage to Mr. Collins is out of desperation. Austen's representation towards the marriage highlights how marriage is corrupt and the institution of marriage reinforces the man's dominance over his wife. Charlotte Lucas is dependent on Mr. Collins to provide for her, which creates a power imbalance and the marriage isolates Charlotte from her closest friend Elizabeth, which is why she is not included in the community at the end of the novel.

Although Elizabeth loses Charlotte to Mr. Collins, she is fortunate enough to remain close to Jane and Mrs. Gardiner. Her close relationships with both women allow her to finally accept Mr. Darcy's feelings after she acknowledges he has changed as a man. The first matter of business is the relationship between Mr. Bingley and Jane that must be clarified. In his first proposal, Mr. Darcy admits to ruining the relationship because he believed that the Bennets were an inferior family. Once Mr. Bingley proposes to Jane, Elizabeth is relieved because her sister finally is happy. The marriage between Mr. Bingley and Jane is truly one of love because Jane's

focus is on Mr. Bingley. Instead of being resentful, Elizabeth grows close to Mr. Bingley, which hints at the ending community that permits Elizbeth and Jane to remain close:

> Elizabeth had now but little time for conversation with her sister; for while he was present, Jane had no attention to bestow on anyone else; but she found herself considerably useful to both of them in those hours of separation that must sometimes occur. In the absence of Jane, he always attached himself to Elizabeth, for the pleasure of talking of her; and when Bingley was gone, Jane constantly sought the same means of relief (387).

The engagement between Mr. Bingley and Jane occurs shortly after the marriage between Lydia and Wickham, which is a relief because the Bennet's fear of Lydia becoming a fallen woman that I will address later on. The fact that Elizabeth is close to Mr. Bingley considers him a brother even before the marriage between Jane and Mr. Bingley highlights the importance of Jane and Elizabeth's sororal relationship. Jane expresses such joy caused by her engagement and wishes Elizabeth to find a man who makes her just as happy. That man turns out to be Mr. Darcy and with the help of the Gardiners, Elizabeth is allowed to admit her feelings for Mr. Darcy have changed for the better.

After the relationship between Jane and Bingley is ironed out, Mrs. Gardiner reveals that Darcy paid Wickham to marry Lydia. If Darcy hadn't paid Wickham, Lydia would have been a fallen woman and this would have dragged the entire family name down. After hearing from Mrs. Gardiner about what Darcy has done for the Bennet family, Elizabeth is eager to thank him. He questions her if her opinion on him has changed and Elizabeth realizes her feelings towards Darcy have developed. Although Elizabeth had insulted Darcy after his first proposal, he instead took her criticism to heart to change to become a better man. He acknowledges that he was ignorant and had not treated her properly:

> I was spoilt by my parents, who, though good themselves (my father, particularly, all that was benevolent and amiable), 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; to wish at least to think meanly of their sense and worth compared with my own. Such I was, from eight to eight and twenty; and such I might still have been but for you, dearest, loveliest Elizabeth! What do I not owe you! You taught me a lesson, hard indeed at first, but most advantageous. By you, I was properly humbled. I came to you without a doubt of my reception. You showed me how insufficient were all my pretensions to please a woman worthy of being pleased (409-410).

Instead of expressing anger at Elizabeth, Darcy recognizes that he is privileged and did not treat Elizabeth with the respect she deserves. He admits to his mistakes and fixes them before he is willing to bare his heart to Elizabeth once again. Elizabeth's close relationships both with Jane and Mrs. Gardiner allow her to admit she loves Darcy. The marriage between Darcy and Elizabeth is regarded as one of the most memorable Austen marriages because Darcy admits his mistakes and the marriage helps create the ideal community at the end of the novel.

Once Elizabeth is engaged to Mr. Darcy, she is overjoyed to share the news and she first informs her older sister of the engagement. This reinforces how the marriage permits the close relationship between Jane and Elizabeth to flourish. After telling Jane of her engagement, Elizabeth exclaims to Jane "My sole dependence was on you," (413) which highlights the close relationship between the two sisters. The importance of the sororal relationship between Elizabeth and Jane is emphasized when Elizabeth talks about being dependent on Jane. The ending to *Pride and Prejudice* concludes with two joyous marriages for the eldest Bennet daughters with Elizabeth's marriage to Mr. Darcy and Jane's marriage to Mr. Bingley. A close community is created between the Darcy household at Pemberley once Mr. Bingley "bought an estate in a neighbouring country to Derbyshire, and Jane and Elizabeth, in addition to every other source of happiness, were within thirty miles of each other" (427). The marriages of the two eldest Bennet daughters creates a wonderful community, which allow friendships and sister relationships to thrive. Kitty and Georgiana are included in the community while Mary is left with the Bennets and Lydia is excluded because of her marriage with Wickham. I argue that we

ought to have some sympathy towards Lydia, which I will cover in my next chapter. This is the mark of a good Austen marriage because the relationship is a partnership and the community includes the woman's friends prior to her marriage. Instead of the woman being a pet or possession of her husband, she is treated like an equal and she is not isolated from her female friends and family.

Although it is not solely a female-female relationship, another important relationship is the friendship between Elizabeth and the Gardiners. The significance of the Gardiners cannot be underestimated because they are the ones who brought Elizabeth to Pemberley where she runs into Darcy. The Gardiners represent an ideal marriage union and are a role model to Darcy and Elizabeth. At the end of the novel, Austen writes "Darcy, as well as Elizabeth, really loved [the Gardiners]; and they were both ever sensible of the warmest gratitude towards the persons who, by bringing her into Derbyshire, had been the means of uniting them" (431). The Gardiners are the driving force behind the marriage between Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy. Mrs. Gardiner informs Elizabeth that Mr. Darcy is the one who paid Wickham to marry Lydia, which completely changes Elizabeth's attitude toward Mr. Darcy. She expresses her gratitude countless times and she realizes that she does return Mr. Darcy's feelings of love. In this case, the relationship between Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth improved through the Gardiners' help.

Circling back to Elizabeth's own mother, I argue that Mrs. Gardiner is the mother figure that Elizabeth and Jane deserve. Instead of caring about the happiness of her children, Mrs. Bennet is so concerned with marrying off her daughters to anyone who could provide for them. She is insistent that Elizabeth accept the proposal from Mr. Collins, while her husband is aware that such a marriage would be detrimental to Elizabeth. We are invited to think negatively about

Mrs. Bennet because of her foolishness and greed. Once Elizabeth and Jane marry, the narrator states,

> Happy for all her maternal feelings was the day on which Mrs. Bennet got rid of her two most deserving daughters. With what delighted pride she afterwards visited Mrs. Bingley, and talked of Mrs. Darcy, may be guessed. I wish I could say, for the sake of her family, that the accomplishment of her earnest desire in the establishment of so many of her children produced so happy an effect as to make her a sensible, amiable, well-informed woman for the rest of her life; though perhaps it was lucky for her husband, who might not have relished domestic felicity in so unusual a form, that she still was occasionally nervous and invariably silly (427).

Mrs. Bennet is presented as an ignorant mother who is regarded negatively especially when she tries to coerce Elizabeth to marry Mr. Collins. The fact that Austen says "the day on which Mrs. Bennet got rid of her two most deserving daughters" makes Elizabeth and Jane sound like burdens to Mrs. Bennet.

Unlike his wife, Mr. Bennet is part of the community because he has been supportive of Elizabeth all throughout the novel. While Mrs. Bennet pushes Elizabeth toward Mr. Collins, Mr. Bennet discourages her by saying, "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" (125). He recognizes his second daughter would be miserable if she married Mr. Collins and goes against what his wife wishes by supporting her decision not to marry Mr. Collins. I argue that because Mrs. Bennet was not incorporated in the community at the end of the novel, we are meant to think of Mrs. Gardiner as the ideal mother to Elizabeth. The marriages between Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth and between Jane and Mr. Bingley allow them to create the community that they wish. As such, Mr. Bennet is incorporated in the community and welcome to visit Pemberley frequently. Because it is not stated that Mrs. Bennet is welcome at Pemberley the same way as her husband, I argue that the community purposefully excludes her due to her choices as a mother. Instead of isolating

Elizabeth from her father, Jane, and the Gardiners, the marriage permits these relationships to strengthen, which represents an ideal marriage. Instead of being forced into Darcy's social circle, Elizabeth and Darcy create a large community together.

Mansfield Park: Forgoing Female Friendships

The heroine of *Mansfield Park*, Fanny Price, was born into poverty because her mother married a poor man in the navy. Fanny's mother, Frances Price, has nine children with Lieutenant Price, but they are unable to take care of all the children. As a result, Mrs. Norris encourages her sister Lady Maria Bertram to take in Fanny. Exemplifying how a marriage disrupts sister relationships, the bonds between the Ward sisters are diminished especially in regard to Fanny's mother. Fanny's relationship with Mrs. Norris, Lady Bertram, Maria, and Julia is strained because they consider her inferior. The closest female relationship Fanny has is with the opinionated Mary Crawford, who visits Mansfield Park with her brother Henry. Edmund Bertram, Fanny's cousin and love, is infatuated with Mary Crawford, which creates a confusing love triangle in Fanny's mind where she views Mary as her competition. In reality, Edmund does not view Fanny as a potential wife until after he dismisses Mary Crawford for defending a "fallen" woman. Once Edmund chooses to marry Fanny, her status in society is elevated to the same level as Julia and Maria and Fanny's friendship with Mary Crawford ends. Unlike the heroines in *Sense and Sensibility* and *Pride and Prejudice*, Fanny Price lacks a close relationship with her sisters until the end of the book when Susan becomes Fanny's replacement. The cycle of using one of Mrs. Price's daughters as free labour continues and Fanny becomes oppressive to her sister Susan. Susan's arrival indicates the reproduction of a subservient role that we are invited to condemn because it negatively impacts the sororal bond between Fanny and Susan.

Although Fanny does not try to oppress her sister, she rises to a role that places her in a position above her sister and she does not prevent the other Bertrams from exploiting Susan.

The former Ward sisters consist of Miss Maria or Lady Bertram, Miss Frances or Mrs. Price, and unnamed Miss Ward who became Mrs. Norris. Although we never see much interaction between Fanny's mother and her sisters, and we have no idea how close the sister bonds were prior to marriage, Austen explores how Fanny's mother marries a poor lieutenant, which lowers her social status. Miss Maria was lucky enough to marry the wealthy Sir Thomas of Mansfield Park and Miss Ward married a clergyman keeping her generally in the same social class as she was prior to her marriage. When Mrs. Price married the poor lieutenant, she decided not to tell her sisters until after the wedding took place. This marriage severed Mrs. Price's relationship with her sisters, but Lady Bertram and Mrs. Norris remained close to each other. After they were informed about Mrs. Price's marriage,

> Lady Bertram, who was a woman of very tranquil feelings, and a temper remarkably easy and indolent, would have contented herself with merely giving up her sister, and thinking no more of the matter: but Mrs. Norris has a spirit of activity, which could not be satisfied till she had written a long and angry letter to Fanny, to point out the folly of her conduct, and threaten her will all its possible ill consequence. Mrs. Price in her turn was injured and angry, and an answer which comprehended each sister in its bitterness, and bestowed such very disrespectful reflections on the pride of Sir Thomas, as Mrs. Norris could not possibly keep to herself, put an end to all intercourse between them for a considerable period.
>
> Their homes were so distant, and the circles in which they moved so distinct, as almost to preclude the means of ever hearing of each other's existence during the eleven following years…By the end of eleven years, however, Mrs. Price could no longer afford to cherish pride or resentment, or to lose one connection that might possibly help her. A large and still increasing family, an [sic] husband disabled for active service, but not the less equal to company and good liquor, and a very small income to supply their wants, made her eager to regain the friends she had so carelessly sacrificed (4-5).

This passage reveals the isolating nature of marriage because Mrs. Price is cut off from her two sisters once she marries a poor uneducated man. Unfortunately, it was not uncommon for women to choose between marrying for love and marrying for financial stability. Mrs. Price married for

love, but as a result she ended up in poverty. The fact that "Lady Bertram…would have contented herself with merely giving up her sister" demonstrates that she does not wish to have a relationship that would drag down the family name. This emphasizes yet another point of marriage: that it is not just a marriage between two individuals, but also the union of the entire family. The lack of a close sororal relationship for Mrs. Price is the opposite of the close relationships between Elizabeth and Jane Bennet or Elinor and Marianne Dashwood. Despite having her pride, Mrs. Price recognizes that she requires monetary aid and she is "eager to regain the friends she had so carelessly sacrificed." Having thrown away her sisters for the man she loved, Mrs. Price recognizes that she had acted impulsively and regrets her decision. Because her marriage forced her to choose between her husband and her sisters, we are forced to acknowledge that marriages have the potential to socially isolate a woman.

Despite advocating for the Bertrams to take in young Fanny, Mrs. Norris still looks down on Fanny and encourages Julia and Maria to do the same. The Bertram women also perceive Fanny in a negative way where she is considered inferior, which prevents any intimate friendships between Fanny and her cousins Maria and Julia. This treatment of Fanny encourages the reader to pity her because she is treated similar to a slave by the Bertram family. Because Mrs. Norris, Lady Bertram, Maria, and Julia all treat Fanny horribly, she does not have a positive female relationship until the arrival of Mary Crawford. Similar to Elizabeth Bennet, Mary Crawford is outspoken, witty, and charismatic. She instantly draws in Edmund, although I argue that he uses Mary as an example of a bad woman and Fanny remains malleable at Edmund's subtle behest.

As expected from the marriage plot, Fanny Price marries her love, Edmund Bertram, which would appear to be an ideal union especially since it elevates her status in society.

Although Fanny does marry whom she loves, I argue that we are meant to perceive the marriage as detrimental for Fanny for two reasons. First, the marriage to Edmund prevented her from becoming friends with Mary Crawford. Second, Edmund is a manipulative character although he does have a couple of kind moments, but ultimately, he treats Fanny like a servant. Third, unlike the charming Darcy, Edmund dislikes the headstrong Mary Crawford and prefers the moldable and demure Fanny.

Early on, the reader recognizes that Fanny Price develops feelings towards her cousin Edmund, who instead only has eyes for Mary Crawford. Although Mary would be a wonderful friend for Fanny, Fanny cannot see past her jealousy and thinks negatively about the other woman. Although Mary Crawford does not end up married to Edmund, the tentative friendship between Mary and Fanny is dissolved when she is dismissed from Edmund's life. However, she seems content living with her half-sister, Mrs. Grant. Through the lens of heterosexual relationships, Mary Crawford appears to fail, yet Austen doesn't portray her mourning the loss of her relationship with Edmund. Instead, Mary is a radical figure who defends the fallen woman, Maria Bertram, and talks about marriage as a transaction or means to elevate oneself in society.

Despite the fact that he considers Mary's views on marriage as cynical, Edmund is captivated by Mary for almost the entire novel until she defends Maria Bertram. While in Mansfield, Mary tells her half-sister

> With all due respect to such of the present company as chance to be married, my dear Mrs. Grant, there is not one in a hundred of either sex who is not taken in when they marry. Look where I will, I see that it is so; and I feel that it must be so, when I consider that it is, of all transactions, the one in which people expect most from others, and are least honest themselves (53).

This assessment is intriguing because later on in the novel Sir Thomas forces his eldest daughter Maria to marry the wealthy Mr. Rushworth. The forced marriage causes Maria to become a

fallen woman, which I will discuss later, and it also highlights how Maria is a commodity and the marriage is an example of a transactional marriage. We are inclined to agree with Mary that marriage is a transaction because we are presented with marriages that are all poor or unideal. After hearing Mary's thoughts on how marriage is a transaction, Mrs. Grant says "You are as bad as your brother, Mary; but we will cure you both. Mansfield shall cure you both—and without any taking in. Stay with us and we will cure you" (54). The "cure" for Mary and Henry Crawford would be marriage, which is what they both avoid for different reasons. Instead of pitying Mary for not marrying Edmund, I argue we should think of the subversion as a blessing and not condemn Mary for failing to adhere to the heteronormative marriage.

Edmund's verbal proclamations of his love for Mary cause Fanny to be jealous of Mary and thus she refuses to become close friends with Mary. She believes the other woman's views on marriage are cynical, and her envy of Mary captivating Edmund overshadows the potential for an intimate friendship between the two women. Fanny becomes jealous when she realizes that Edmund is infatuated with Mary, and it hurts her when she sees romantic moments between Mary and Edmund. His adoration of Mary leads to him confide in Fanny to the point where it hurts her. Initially Fanny expresses dislike of Mary Crawford, but over time her opinion changes. When Edmund asks how she perceives Mary after Mr. Rushworth's visit to Mansfield, Fanny states, "I like to hear her talk. She entertains me; and she is so extremely pretty, that I have great pleasure in looking at her" (74). Fanny admits that Mary has charm and eventually a friendship forms after Maria and Julia leave Mansfield Park for Brighton. The friendship continues as Mary writes letters to Fanny about her continued interest in Edmund and Fanny is blind to Mary's kindness. An example of her kindness is that Mary expects Fanny to be out to society because she considers her a part of the Bertram family. The Bertram family considers her more of a slave

up until Sir Thomas returns from Antigua and showers her with affection that she had never received before. The tentative friendship between Mary and Fanny is destroyed once Edmund decides to turn his attention to Fanny, which I will address later on. His marriage to Fanny ensures that she remains a constant in his life because "Fanny's friendship was all that [Edmund] had to cling to" (532). His motives to marry Fanny are purely selfish, which is expected for Edmund. I argue that he tries to use Fanny to isolate Mary from her other friends, but once he dismisses Mary, he ends up isolating Fanny from any female friends.

Janet Todd[1] focuses on how Mary Crawford fails to adhere to the ideal female form and how this results in her dismissal from Mansfield. Todd points out that

> When Edmund's eyes are opened to Mary's real character and when he comes to share Fanny's opinion, he understands Mary's lack of femininity: she has, he realizes, 'no feminine…no modest loathings' for the sins of her brother (p. 455). To preserve femininity as an ideal, then, Mary must be ejected, condemned to spinsterhood and loneliness.

Focusing on the dismissal of Mary from Edmund's life, Todd writes about this event in a positive light because Fanny is free to marry Edmund. I argue that the dismissal of Mary Crawford is important because she is dismissed for attempting to redeem Henry's older sister, Maria Rushworth, who eloped with Mary's brother Henry Crawford. I argue that because Austen invites us to disapprove of the Mansfield Park community, we should think negatively of the marriage between Fanny and Edmund. Because Edmund is manipulative and Fanny is naive, we should mourn the lost friendship between Mary and Fanny because it was a friendship without ulterior motives. Mary Crawford ends up living with Mrs. Grant, but instead of being "condemned to spinsterhood and loneliness," I argue she is free from the transaction of marriage and not restricted by the prison that is Mansfield Park. Once Edmund rejects Mary, she moves

[1] Janet M. Todd "Female Friendship in Jane Austen's Novels." *The Journal* 39.1: 29-43

into a house with her half-sister on her mother's side, Mrs. Grant. From the perspective of a heterosexual marriage plot novel, it would appear that Mary loses because she never marries Edmund. In Mary Crawford's mind, she is saved from marriage which is an institution that she openly dislikes. The marriage between Fanny and Edmund is one to ensure that Fanny never leaves Edmund's side.

All throughout the novel, Edmund makes remarks about Mary being a headstrong woman who is the opposite of Fanny. In *Pride and Prejudice*, these qualities are admired in Elizabeth Bennet, but other characters condemn such qualities in Mary Crawford. Although other characters perceive Mary negatively, I argue that Austen invites us to side with Mary over the other characters. Most, if not all, of the characters in *Mansfield Park* are dislikeable in some way, but I argue that we are invited to pity Fanny instead of Mary. Austen invites us to disapprove of the Mansfield Park community and pity Fanny for marrying into the family that treated her so deplorably. Not only is Edmund manipulative, he also disapproves of certain female friendships, specifically Mary's friendship with Mrs. Fraser and Lady Stornaway. He writes to Fanny saying,

> I look upon her intimacy with those two sisters as the greatest misfortune of her life and mine. They have been leading her astray for years. Could she be detached from them!—and sometimes I do not despair of it, for the affection appears to me principally on their side. They are very fond of her; but I am sure she does not love them as she loves you. When I think of her great attachment to you, indeed, and the whole of her judicious, upright conduct as a sister, she appears a very different creature, capable of everything noble, and I am ready to blame myself for a too harsh construction of a playful manner (488-489).

Edmund reveals his desire to isolate Mary from her female friends and to keep her to himself. Unlike the marriages that encourage the friendships between the eldest Dashwoods and the eldest Bennets, Edmund wants to take Mary for himself and expresses his hatred for her friends. He doesn't care about how Mary perceives her friends and he deems "her intimacy with those two sisters as the greatest misfortune of her life and mine." He disapproves of Mrs. Fraser and Lady

Stornaway and wants to limit Mary's social circle to exclude the two other women. However, Edmund does encourage the friendship between Fanny and Mary because he views this friendship as beneficial to him. He manipulates Fanny early on to become friends with Mary because the friendship is beneficial for him and draws Mary closer to him. Such a friendship between Mary and Fanny would allow Edmund to isolate Mary from the other two women especially because he recognizes that Mary is fond of Fanny. This is an example of Edmund's manipulation and desire to control his potential wife instead of having an equal.

Similar to Janet Todd, D.A. Miller's book *Narrative and Its Discontents: Problems of Closure in the Traditional Novel* approves of the expulsion of the Crawfords from Mansfield. He categorizes both Henry and Mary Crawford as flirts and argues that they resist the closure of the novel, which seems similar to Todd's argument about expelling Mary. Miller points out that Henry's proposal to Fanny could be an ending to his flirting, but because Henry does not marry Fanny, he runs off with Maria Bertram. I disagree with his assessment because Henry truly did care for Fanny which is demonstrated when he offers his help to her. Early in the novel, Fanny realizes that Henry and Mary both have negative views on marriage and vocally express their dislike for marriage. I argue that Henry's willingness to propose to Fanny proves that he did have the potential to not be a flirt and become part of the closure to the marriage plot. Henry would be a better match for Fanny because he is the only character to recognize that Fanny is mistreated.

I argue there was the potential for Fanny choose Henry when she recognizes that he does have redeeming qualities. Angelika Zirker discusses the obvious possibility of Fanny marrying Henry, especially when she recognized his development. I argue that Henry's development in the novel is reminiscent of the change in Mr. Darcy from *Pride and Prejudice*. The shift in narrative when Henry confesses to Mary that he is determined to marry Fanny is important because it

emphasizes Henry's genuine feelings. In other novels we don't always witness the interactions between "minor" characters, but in this case Austen includes the conversation between Mary and Henry. Mary is delighted by Henry's declaration that he is determined to marry Fanny because Mary is fond of Fanny. Although Mary seems to be emphasizing how Henry's happiness will increase by marrying Fanny, she also states: "What an amazing match for her! Mrs. Norris often talks of her luck; what will she say now? The delight of all the family indeed! And she has some *true* friends in it" (338). If Fanny marries Henry, she would have "*true* friends" like Mary and Mrs. Grant, who look out for her well-being. As stated earlier, Fanny's jealously prevents her from accepting Mary's friendship because she views Mary as the competition.

Not only does Fanny refuse to accept Mary's friendship, but she also rejects Henry's proposal and I argue Austen invites us to disapprove of Fanny's choice to dismiss the Crawfords. Instead of marrying Edmund, I argue Fanny should have married Henry because he genuinely has her best interests at heart. While trying to convince Fanny to marry him, Henry acknowledges his character flaws in the same way Mr. Darcy recognized his own mistakes. Henry's words demonstrate that he genuinely cares about Fanny in a way that I argue Edmund does not. After dismissing Mary, Edmund is quick to swap his affections to Fanny and I believe it is not convincing. In her article "'The Road to Happiness': Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*" Zirker discusses merit, which Henry includes in his proposal.[2] Henry argues that he deserves Fanny. Looking at the proposal, I find that Henry recognizes the importance of changing his actions to deserve Fanny and he expresses genuine care for Fanny. Henry states:

> "I am happier than I was, because I now understand more clearly your opinion of me. You think me unsteady—easily swayed by the whim of the moment—easily tempted—easily put aside. With such an opinion, no wonder that—But we shall see.—It is not by protestations that I shall endeavor to convince you I am wronged, it is not by telling you

[2] Angelika Zirker, "'The Road to Happiness': Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*." *Connotations: A Journal for Critical Debate* 20.2 (2011): 135-6.

> that my affections are steady. My conduct shall speak for me—absence, distance, time shall speak for me.—*They* shall prove, that as far as you can be deserved by any body, I do deserve you.—You are infinitely my superior in merit; all *that* I know.—You have qualities which I had not before supposed to exist in such a degree in any human creature. You have some touches of the angel in you, beyond what—not merely beyond what one sees, because one never sees any thing like it—but beyond what one fancies might be." (397)

Instead of excusing his behavior or deeming Fanny's judgment incorrect, Henry states "My conduct shall speak for me" indicating the significance of actions. Building off my comparison with Darcy, Elizabeth's opinion changes after Darcy pays Wickham to marry Lydia and refusing to take credit. Although in this moment, Fanny does not believe Henry, she recognizes a change in Henry later on in the book. Instead, Fanny is flustered by Henry's proposal and rejects him, which leads to Sir Thomas and Edmund chastising her. Despite not agreeing with how Sir Thomas and Edmund try to coerce Fanny to marry Henry, I believe Edmund made valid points about Fanny and Henry being a good match. Fanny has the right to not marry a man she does not want to marry, but I argue her feelings towards Henry change when he visits her and her family in Portsmouth.

While Fanny is in Portsmouth visiting her family, Henry pays the Prices a visit, which at first flusters Fanny because she is embarrassed by the state of her home and the manners of her family members. Despite not liking Henry, she still wishes to make a good impression and she believes that her family will cause Henry to think negatively of her. He wishes to talk alone with Fanny, but Mrs. Price admits she does not have the luxury to waste time, so Henry ends up accompanying Fanny and Susan to some stores. Along the way, the trio runs into Mr. Price and Fanny thinks Henry

> must be ashamed and disgusted altogether. He must soon give her up, and cease to have the smallest inclination for the match; and yet, although she had been so much wanting his affection to be cured, this was a sort of cure that would be almost as bad as the complaint; and I believe, there is scarcely a young lady in the united kingdoms, who

> would not rather put up with the misfortune of being sought by a clever, agreeable man, than have him driven away by the vulgarity of her nearest relations (466).

Fanny hopes Henry will stop pursuing her, but she doesn't want him to stop simply because of her family. Instead of ridiculing the Prices, Henry acts extremely cordial, which impresses Fanny and she acknowledges that he is a gentleman. The next day Henry returns to the Price household to accompany them to church. To Fanny's dismay and Henry's delight, he is able "to consider the Miss Prices as his peculiar charge" (474), which allows him to spend more time with Fanny. Although she is once again uncomfortable, she does recognize that Henry is charming even though she continues to compare him to Edmund. I argue that Henry would be the best match for Fanny because he is one of the only characters who recognizes the corruption of Mansfield Park and how the Bertrams abuse Fanny. He expresses his concern for Fanny:

> After a moment's reflection, Mr. Crawford replied, "I know Mansfield, I know its way, I know its faults towards you. I know the danger of your being so far forgotten, as to have your comforts give way to the imaginary convenience of any single being in the family. I am aware that you may be left here week after week, if Sir Thomas cannot settle everything for coming himself, or sending your aunt's maid for you, without involving the slightest alteration of the arrangements which he may have laid down for the next quarter of a year. This will not do. Two months is an ample allowance; I should think six weeks quite enough.—I am considering your sister's health," said he, addressing himself to Susan, "which I think the confinement of Portsmouth unfavourable to. She requires constant air and exercise. When you know her as well as I do, I am sure you will agree that she does, and that she ought never to be long banished from the free air and liberty of the country. —If, therefore" (turning again to Fanny), "you find yourself growing unwell, and any difficulties arise about your returning to Mansfield—without waiting for the two months to be ended, that must not be regarded as of any consequence, if you feel yourself at all less strong or comfortable than usual, and will only let my sister know it, give her only the slightest hint, she and I will immediately come down, and take you back to Mansfield. You know the ease and the pleasure with which this would be done. You know all that would be felt on the occasion." (476)

This passage reveals Henry's awareness of Fanny's situation and sympathy for her. He is aware of the abuse she endures at Mansfield, but he also recognizes that she would be happier at Mansfield. He acknowledges Sir Thomas does not care for Fanny the way he cares for his own

children and he offers the aid of himself and his sister to Fanny. When he says "if you feel yourself at all less strong or comfortable than usual, and will only let my sister know it, give her only the slightest hint, she and I will immediately come down, and take you back to Mansfield" it seems like he is willing to drop anything to help her. This type of compassion from Henry is something we don't see in Edmund and this changes Fanny's perspective of Henry Crawford to be more positive. This type of generosity is what I'd associate with Colonel Brandon or Mr. Darcy, who are men who did end up marrying heroines. I argue we are meant to Fanny's rejection of Henry Crawford as a poor choice because her marriage to Edmund keeps her within the system that oppressed her.

Danielle Barkley's article "Exit Strategies: Jane Austen, Marriage, and Familial Escape" discusses the continued oppression of Fanny. Barkley states "Fanny, then chooses to remain within a family circle shrouded in antagonism, not within an environment depicted as a safe haven. Because she marries a fraternal figure and in doing so reaffirms her position within a family that functioned as a family of origin, she does not fully achieve the autonomy and potential available within an exogamous match." (216) I argue we are meant to perceive the community at Mansfield Park as deplorable and Austen invites us to disapprove of the marriage between Fanny and Edmund. In addition to oppressing Fanny, we recognize that Edmund is a manipulative character who is pro-slavery and he treats Fanny like a slave. Her marriage to Edmund permits her to remain at Mansfield Park, which I argue is a horrendous ending because Fanny remains with the community that treated her like a slave. Although Fanny's status is elevated due to her marriage, her sister Susan becomes Fanny's replacement. Instead of having any fulfilling friendships or sororal bonds, Fanny rejects Mary Crawford's friendship and Fanny's change in status creates an opening for a servant that her sister Susan fills.

Although Fanny's friendship with Mary ends, Fanny's younger sister arrives at Mansfield to replace Fanny. After Fanny's marriage to Edmund, her status in society is elevated and she is somewhat more respected. However, Susan becomes Fanny's replacement and the cycle of subservience continues. At the end of the novel, Sir Thomas' attitude towards Fanny changes and he treats her like a member of the Bertram household. It is revealed that:

> Fanny was indeed the daughter that he wanted. His charitable kindness had been rearing a prime comfort for himself. His liberality had a rich repayment, and the general goodness of his intentions by her deserved it. He might have made her childhood happier; but it had been an error of judgment only which had given him the appearance of harshness, and deprived him of her early love; and now, on really knowing each other, their mutual attachment became very strong. After settling her at Thornton Lacey with every kind attention to her comfort, the object of almost every day was to see her there, or to get her away from it.
>
> Selfishly dear as she had long been to Lady Bertram, she could not be parted with willingly by her. No happiness of son or niece could make her wish the marriage. But it was possible to part with her, because Susan remained to supply her place.—Susan became the stationary niece—delighted to be so!—and equally well adapted for it by a readiness of mind, and an inclination for usefulness, as Fanny had been by sweetness of temper, and strong feelings of gratitude. Susan could never be spared. First as a comfort to Fanny, then as an auxiliary, and last as her substitute, she was established at Mansfield, with every appearance of equal permanency. Her more fearless disposition and happier nerves made everything easy to her there. With quickness in understanding the tempers of those she had to deal with, and no natural timidity to restrain any consequent wishes, she was soon welcome and useful to all; and after Fanny's removal succeeded so naturally to her influence over the hourly comfort of her aunt, as gradually to become, perhaps, the most beloved of the two. In her usefulness, in Fanny's excellence, in William's continued good conduct and rising fame, and in the general well-doing and success of the other members of the family, all assisting to advance each other, and doing credit to his countenance and aid, Sir Thomas saw repeated, and for ever repeated, reason to rejoice in what he had done for them all, and acknowledge the advantages of early hardship and discipline, and the consciousness of being born to struggle and endure. (546-547).

The treatment of Susan is deplorable because Fanny becomes her mistress and Austen points out "Susan could never be spared." I argue that we are encouraged to dislike Susan and Fanny being accepted into Mansfield and that we should pity them. Sir Thomas's attitude towards Fanny changes when he recognizes that she is the ideal daughter, but this does not excuse his treatment of her at the beginning of the novel. At the beginning of the novel, Sir Thomas stresses the

importance of reminding Fanny that "she is not a *Miss Bertram*" (12), which justifies the Bertrams' deplorable treatment of her. I argue we are meant to be appalled and disgusted by the marriage between Fanny and Edmund. Instead of ending up in a wonderful community like Elizabeth and Jane, Fanny is trapped in a community comprised of her oppressors and she eventually becomes the oppressor to her sister Susan. All in all, I argue that Austen invites us to disapprove of the Mansfield Park community and we should pity Fanny for marrying into such a deplorable family because it separated her from all friends that Edmund disliked.

Emma: Groomed by the Groom

The titular heroine of Jane Austen's *Emma* is a controversial figure who Jane Austen speculated wouldn't be a likeable character by many readers.[3] I find Emma Woodhouse's friendships with Miss Taylor and Harriet Smith and her complicated relationship with Jane Fairfax take priority over her finding a husband. At the beginning of the novel, Emma's older sister, Isabella, is already absent from Hartfield and living sixteen miles away in London. The novel begins with a marriage and consequent end to an intimate friendship; Emma's former governess, Miss Taylor, is no longer proximate to Emma when the woman marries and becomes Mrs. Weston. Austen writes "it was true that her friend was going only half a mile from them; but Emma was aware that great must be the difference between a Mrs. Weston only half a mile from them, and a Miss Taylor in the house" (5). Although Emma claims that she was the matchmaker for Miss Taylor and Mr. Weston, she expresses remorse over the loss of her friend. Left alone with her hypochondriac father as her only company, Emma longs for a female

[3] See *A Memoir of Jane Austen* by James Edward Austen-Leigh: "She was very fond of Emma, but did not reckon on her being a general favourite; for, when commencing that work, she said, 'I am going to take a heroine whom no one but myself will much like'" (158).

companion. Her prayers are answered when Mrs. Goddard brings along Miss Harriet Smith whom Emma finds beautiful and the two become friends. Emma's relationship with the women in her life is one where she is the dominant figure and I argue her relationships with females have underlying homoerotic tensions. Aside from Harriet, Emma also fixates on the stunning Jane Fairfax who intrigues and infuriates Emma. Similar to how Emma lost her sister and governess to marriage, she ends up losing Harriet and Jane. Out of desperation for companionship and to reinforce her dominant social position over Harriet, Emma decides to marry her brother-in-law Mr. George Knightley. Her marriage to Mr. Knightley is not ideal, but it permits Emma to retain her masculine-like dominance. I argue that the marriages in these novels disrupt fulfilling female friendships and that Austen writes the marriage in such a way where the happiness of the protagonists is dubious at best.

The most important fact to remember is that Emma's status is that although she is a woman, she doesn't need to marry for material wealth, which allows her to avoid marriage until the end of the novel. Emma focuses her attention on Harriet Smith and Jane Fairfax because she never has to worry about losing her position in society. Emma resembles a male lover and is possessive of both women. When Harriet is first introduced, Austen writes that "[Harriet] was a very pretty girl, and her beauty happened to be of a sort which Emma particularly admired" (22). As the novel progresses, the sexual undertones become more apparent and Emma starts to become possessive of Harriet. With Jane Fairfax, Emma initially dislikes the other woman for being reserved, but she does acknowledge Jane's physical beauty and eventually wants to befriend the other woman. Throughout the book, Emma's female-female relationships have underlying homoerotic tensions as Emma becomes protective of Harriet and eventually Jane in a typically masculine manner. Emma's relationship with Harriet develops in such a way where

Emma almost acts like a male lover and she wants to keep Harriet to herself. Early on in the novel we discover that Mr. Martin develops feelings for Harriet and Emma's thoughts are that "those soft blue eyes and all those natural graces should not be wasted on the inferior society of Highbury and its connections" (22-23). As a wealthy member of society, Emma has the ability to look down upon those around her and she encourages Harriet to do the same. When Mr. Martin sends a letter to propose to Harriet, the younger girl turns to Emma for guidance in how to reply. Although Emma doesn't outright state that Harriet should refuse the proposal, Harriet picks up on the fact that Emma disapproves of Mr. Martin. Susan Korba's article "'Improper and Dangerous Distinctions': Female Relationships and Erotic Domination in *Emma*" incorporates the argument that

> Emma, in fact, manages to "win" Harriet away from a male rival. When she comes to realize that Robert Martin poses a serious threat to her relationship with Harriet, her amused tolerance of Harriet's connection to the Martin family changes, and "other feelings arose" (149).

To avoid losing Harriet to Mr. Martin, Emma persuades Harriet to focus her attentions on Mr. Elton. Mr. Knightley believes that the Martins are a fine family for Harriet to marry into and he questions why Emma would discourage Harriet from marrying Mr. Martin. Knightley finds it necessary to tell Emma that Mr. Elton is too fine of a gentleman to marry Harriet and has countless eligible females that Harriet would have to compete with to win his favour. Emma states, "If I had set my heart on Mr. Elton's marrying Harriet, it would have been very kind to open my eyes; but at present I only want to keep Harriet to myself" (70). Despite her ostensible pretensions, she seems to recognize it is unlikely that Mr. Elton would choose to marry Harriet without Emma's meddling matchmaking. If Harriet were to accept Mr. Martin's proposal, he would have Harriet immediately and Emma would lose her friend eight chapters into the novel. By encouraging this romance between Harriet and Mr. Elton, Emma is delaying the inevitable

loss of her intimate friendship with Harriet. In her relationships with other females, Emma displays a few traits that are typically masculine, especially because she enjoys being dominant in her relationships with other women.

On the other end of the spectrum, Emma meets a woman from Highbury her age who refuses to bend to her will—Jane Fairfax. At first Jane irritates Emma, but as the novel progresses, Emma begins to admire the intelligence and beauty of Jane. In one particular scene, Emma admits that "[Jane] is a sort of elegant creature that one cannot keep one's eyes from; I am always watching her to admire" (184). Emma admits her admiration of Jane based on how the other woman carries herself because she is "always watching her to admire." Although Jane Fairfax is not wealthy like Emma, Korba discusses how Jane is more of Emma's equal than Harriet, despite her financial situation. As a potential wife, Jane is in some ways more eligible than Emma due to her reserved behavior and piano skills. Because there were no records or television, musical entertainment depended on people and instruments.

As an unwed woman, Jane turns to become a governess because there was no security in her secret engagement to Mr. Frank Churchill. Frank is the Churchill heir, so he depends on his aunt's approval for marriage. As a result, Frank cannot be publicly engaged to Jane and instead of Jane waiting around in hopes that she can marry, she takes action and comes close to becoming a governess. Korba argues:

> Once it becomes clear that Jane can no longer avoid the grim necessity of the "governess-trade," and that her departure from Highbury is immanent [sic], her state of pitiable vulnerability is reassuringly confirmed for Emma. It is at this point that Emma desires to "win" her: "the person, whom she had been so many months neglecting, was now the very one on whom she would have lavished every distinction of regard or sympathy" (156).

There is once again Emma's desire to "win" the women around her because of her desire to dominate. Because Jane refuses to submit to Emma, there is initial negative tension between the

two women as Emma looks for flaws for in Jane. When Emma realizes that she will lose Jane to the governess trade, Austen writes

> When [Emma] took in [Jane's] history, indeed her situation, as well as her beauty; when she considered what all this elegance was destined to, what she was going to sink from, how she was going to live, it seemed impossible to feel anything but compassion and respect (179).

This scene represents Emma's sympathy towards Jane, which is surprising because Emma is not a compassionate character. This particular passage emphasizes the change in Emma when she acknowledges that Jane is going to lose everything. This is a sense of womanly solidarity as well as Emma trying to establish a more cordial relationship after learning her rival is going to sink from her current position. Even if Jane had not ended up with Frank Churchill, she would have left Highbury to become a governess. Mr. Knightley highlights the importance of timing of the death of Frank's aunt when he states, "His aunt is in the way—His aunt dies" (467). Mrs. Churchill's death is what saves Jane from the governess trade because the death allows Frank to publicly announce his engagement with Jane. This disruption of a developing friendship between Emma and Jane further reinforces the idea that female friendships are a way to temporarily avoid the marriage plot.

I argue that we are meant to view Frank Churchill's marriage to Jane Fairfax is unsatisfying because Frank is willing to risk his engagement to Jane for the sake of money and the marriage prevents a friendship between Emma and Jane from forming. I find Frank a deplorable character when his secret engagement to Jane is revealed to Mrs. Weston. As soon as the engagement is revealed to Emma, she feels horrendous because Frank had used her to avoid suspicion about his engagement. Frank uses Emma to avoid suspicion about relationship with Jane and he is a despicable character for flirting with Emma in front of Jane. Frank is manipulative and it is evident he is holding out for more money because he could have

reconnected with the Westons instead of waiting for his aunt to die. Emma feels immense sympathy and indignation for Jane Fairfax because Jane likely considered her a rival for Frank's affection. Emma is appalled that Jane was willing to keep the secret engagement for so long especially because there was no security. By keeping the engagement secret, Frank ensures he will receive the Churchill money and Jane is at risk of not having a place to live if Frank breaks off the engagement. Because there was no witness when the engagement was made, there is no guarantee that Frank will follow through with his promise. Knowing this, Emma deduces that Jane was in love with Frank where she was no longer using her brain. Jane was aware of her position as a secret fiancée, so she decides to work to be a governess and dissolves her engagement. Fortunately for Jane, Mrs. Churchill dies at the same time Frank receives news of Jane breaking off the engagement. The timely death of Mrs. Churchill allows the engagement to become public and it is the engagement which destroys developing friendship between Jane and Emma. D.A. Miller argued that the Crawfords from *Mansfield Park* resist closure in the marriage plot novel because they are flirts and I argue Frank Churchill is also a flirt. Because of this fact, I argue that Frank shouldn't have married Jane and we are presented with another marriage besides Emma and Mr. Knightley that is dubious. To prevent anyone from believing he feels any emotion towards Jane, he avoids talking about her and mock her appearance. Frank forces Jane to remain his secrete fiancée and he leaves Jane to wait for his aunt to die. Instead of waiting, Jane takes matters into her own hands and decides to become a governess. Unlike Henry who recognized Fanny was being treated deplorably, Frank treats Jane in a deplorable manner for the sake of remaining the Churchill heir and he still marries Jane.

Focusing on the primary dubious marriage, we are invited to disapprove of marriages that negatively impact the protagonist's female friendships, such as Mr. Knightley's marriage to

Emma. Emma's feelings for Knightley are dubious at best because, I argue, the marriage is a way to prevent Harriet from becoming her equal. If Harriet had married Mr. Knightley, she would then become Mrs. Knightley and become Emma's social equal. Korba argues that Emma's marriage to Mr. Knightley is a way to keep Harriet submissive but I argue it keeps Harriet in a lower position. Emma's marriage to Mr. Knightley ends the friendship between Harriet and Emma, so it does not matter whether Harriet is submissive. When Mr. Knightley confesses his feelings for Emma she realizes "that Harriet was nothing" (469), which reaffirms her status is society. The fear of Harriet rising above Emma in status is horrifying to Emma because she is a dominant woman. Emma's marriage to Mr. Knightley prevents the primary friendship with Harriet from remaining constant. Having already lost Isabella, Miss Taylor, and Jane Fairfax, Emma's marriage to Knightley effectively destroys the remaining female friendship with Harriet.

Although Emma marries George Knightley, the only man to point out her rude behavior and chastise her for her mistakes, she continues to remain dominant instead of taking on a submissive role. Tiffany F. Potter's article "'A Low but Very Feeling Tone': The Lesbian Continuum and Power Relations in Jane Austen's *Emma*" discusses how Emma is the atypical female protagonist because Mr. Knightley moves into her house instead of the reverse. Potter states,

> Emma is perhaps the first heroine quite consciously and actively to reject her assigned sex role and to function narratively as a woman who resists from within the system of power, eventually capitulating to social convention in her marriage, but triumphing over it in a small but significant way by maintaining her independent position in her own home as Knightley moves into her domain. Emma is still within the dominant social system, but she has claimed a small piece of ground within it for herself (197).

This idea of Emma refusing to conform to social expectations is an indication of her masculine-like qualities. She is also controlling and possessive of Harriet in a way that a male lover would

be, which furthers the argument about Emma's own dominance. This is a unique ending because although Emma may not be in a happy marriage, she does not submit to Mr. Knightley. At the end of the novel, despite the fact she marries Mr. Knightley, Emma still retains her own dominance which prevents her from being completely subdued by the heteronormative narrative.

Although Emma seems to retain her dominance, I argue we are invited to condemn the unideal marriage between Emma and Mr. Knightley because it is not a partnership like that of the Gardiners. Instead, Mr. Knightley shapes Emma into his ideal bride when he corrects her in a patronizing manner. Although Mr. Knightley is always right when he corrects Emma, I argue that we should condemn the marriage between Mr. Knightley and Emma because he treats her like a daughter instead of a wife. In the case of Edmund Bertram, his marriage to Fanny ensures that she is submissive and I argue this is similar to Mr. Knightley's marriage to Emma. During the conversation when it is revealed that Mr. Knightley is in love with Emma, there is a conversation as their relationship as friends. Emma says, "as a friend, indeed, you may command me.—I will hear whatever you like. I will tell you exactly what I think" (468). By stating "you may command me" emphasizes that although Mr. Knightley moves into the Woodhouse home, he still has control over Emma. I argue the marriage is even more disturbing when Mr. Knightley acknowledges that he was wrong in his correction of her when he says,

> "Do you?—I have no doubt. Nature gave you understanding:— Miss Taylor gave you principles. You must have done well. My interference was quite as likely to do harm as good. It was very natural for you to say, what right has he to lecture me?—and I am afraid very natural for you to feel that it was done in a disagreeable manner. I do not believe I did you any good. The good was all to myself, by making you an object of the tenderest affection to me. I could not think about you so much without doating on you, faults and all; and by dint of fancying so many errors, have been in love with you ever since you were thirteen at least."
>
> "I am sure you were of use to me," cried Emma. "I was very often influenced rightly by you—oftener than I would own at the time. I am very sure you did me good. And if poor little Anna Weston is to be spoiled, it will be the greatest humanity in you to

> do as much for her as you have done for me, except falling in love with her when she is thirteen."
>
> "How often, when you were a girl, have you said to me, with one of your saucy looks—'Mr. Knightley, I am going to do so-and-so; papa says I may, or I have Miss Taylor's leave'—something which, you knew, I did not approve. In such cases my interference was giving you two bad feelings instead of one" (504).

This revelation is horrifying because Mr. Knightley has loved Emma since she was thirteen before she was of marrying age and he was grooming her to be his ideal wife. He acknowledges that his correction of her "was quite as likely to do harm as good." The idea of Mr. Knightley doating on Emma sounds like fatherly love instead of a romantic love. To say "when you were a girl…with one of your saucy looks" sounds perverted and almost pedophilic especially since this is when Emma was thirteen. Mr. Knightley treats Emma in a paternal fashion, so it is disturbing for Emma to marry him.

Although Austen wrote marriage plot novels, I argue that we are invited to condemn marriages that end female friendships and isolate the woman from her preexisting social connections. I argue we should be skeptical of the marriage between Emma and Knightley because it destroys female friendships and reinforces the husband's power over his wife. The marriage is not a partnership and although Knightley moves into the Woodhouse estate, he still holds power over Emma. The fact that Knightley admits that he was shaping her into his ideal wife reminds me of how Edmund shaped Fanny into the demure wife. While Fanny is evidently the demure wife, Emma retains some of her dominance because Knightley moves into the Woodhouse household. At the same time, Emma becomes more submissive because she marries a man who has been trying to shape her into the perfect wife since she was a teenager. As a result, I believe Austen invites us to condemn the marriage between Knightley and Emma the same way we should condemn the marriage between Fanny and Edmund. Although these

marriages end the novel, we should not approve of them because of how they cause Fanny and Emma to remain subservient as well as isolate the protagonists from their friends.

Chapter Three: Pitying the Fallen Woman and Adulteresses

Wollstonecraft, Hays, and Austen were radical writers whose novels address the inequities women faced in the late eighteenth to the early nineteenth century particularly in regard to marriage, divorce, and sex. While Austen wrote marriage plot novels, Wollstonecraft and Hays avoided the marriage plot and instead wrote novels that prioritize female-female friendships over the heteronormative hegemony to marry. By creating inarguably awful marriages, Wollstonecraft and Hays focus on female friendships that help the "fallen" women find some type of camaraderie with one another in a world meant to oppress women. Wollstonecraft and Hays both wrote novels centered around "fallen" women, while Austen demotes these women to minor characters because she was publishing in the Regency Era, which was a more conservative time than the 1790s. Austen, on the other hand, directs attention toward marriages that either destroy female friendships or preserve them. In Austen's first novel *Sense and Sensibility* the fallen woman is only mentioned by other characters, and *Mansfield Park* incorporates Elizabeth Inchbald's play *Lovers' Vows* which features a fallen woman. Austen's novel *Emma* is the only published novel that shows an illegitimate child as a speaking character. All three novelists invite us to sympathize with the fallen women, which highlights patriarchy's inequities towards women and the commodification of women's bodies.

Defining the Fallen Women

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines the fallen woman as "a woman who has lost her chastity, honour, or standing, or who had become morally degenerate; (sometimes) a prostitute" (*OED*, s.v. "fallen"). The term "fallen woman" dates as far back as 1659 in reference to the Fall in Genesis in the Bible where Eve eats the forbidden fruit. By disobeying the patriarch, God the

Father, Eve becomes the fallen woman because she falls from God's grace and she becomes mortal—capable of dying. This connects to the idea of the fallen women being created by going against the desires of their father. The word fall means "to give in to temptation; to lapse morally; to sin; *spec*. (esp. of a woman) to have a sexual encounter outside marriage" (*OED*, s.v. "fall"). Another definition of the fallen woman is "a woman who has lost her good reputation by having sex with someone before she is married" (*Cambridge Dictionary*, s.v. "fallen woman"). Both definitions of the fallen woman focus on the loss of chastity, virtue, and virginity. In 1821, shortly after Jane Austen died, Byron's play *Marino Faliero* discusses the "fallen woman" briefly in Act II, scene I. The play is written about Marino Faliero, who was the 55th Doge of Venice. In Byron's play, the Doge condemns the fallen woman when he says, "The once fall'n woman must for ever fall; / For vice must have variety, while virtue / Stands like the sun, and all which rolls around / Drinks life, and light, and glory from her aspect." (Act II, Scene I, lines 395-398). In other words, there are countless vices, or ways to sin, but only one way to be virtuous. The Doge believes a fallen woman cannot be redeemed because she has committed an atrocious sin. Another term for the fallen woman is the ruined woman. The *OED* defines ruin as "to dishonour (a woman) by seducing, then abandoning her. Now chiefly historical" (*OED*, s.v. "ruin"). A ruined woman is the same as a fallen woman, but the blame is shifted from the fallen woman onto the person who dishonoured her.

I use the term "fallen woman" loosely to refer to adulteresses, unmarried women who engage in sexual activities, and prostitutes. Both Wollstonecraft's protagonist Maria Venables, who is an adulteress, and Hays' heroine Emma Courtney, who is a sexually transgressive woman, befriend fallen women. The friendships between protagonists and the other fallen women transcend the divisions created by social classes and provide comfort. Austen represents

the fallen women as minor or offstage characters and encourages readers to have sympathy for them. Austen additionally includes women who fall but who are fortunate enough to be redeemed by marriage. Although we are not invited to like these redeemed fallen women, I argue Austen encourages us to sympathize with them because they are trapped by a patriarchal system that would brutally punish them and their families for having fallen. In addition, the nearly-fallen women are imprisoned by their husbands who isolate them from fulfilling female friendships.

The Adulteress and the Prostitute

Mary Wollstonecraft's *The Wrongs of Woman, or Maria* includes three fallen women—Maria Venables, Jemima, and George Venables' impregnated mistress. The primary friendship is between Maria Venables and Jemima, and this friendship causes Maria to become an adulteress. As a guard at the asylum, Jemima introduces Maria to Mr. Darnford and protects the two lovers when they meet. As stated in my first chapter, Jemima's friendship with Maria lasts longer than Maria's relationship with Darnford based on the speculated endings. The short snippet provided by Godwin suggests that Maria nearly overdosed, but Jemima's arrival with Maria's daughter prevents Maria from killing herself. Maria also encourages her daughter to think of Jemima as a second mother, which indicates a family unit that excludes a father figure and instead has two mothers.

As an illegitimate child Jemima is the product of a "ruined" (92) woman because Jemima's mother was seduced under the false pretense of marriage. Eleanor Ty's *Unsex'd Revolutionaries: Five Women Novelists of the 1790s* highlights that Jemima's status as a lower-class illegitimate child places her at the mercy of the men around her. Ty states:

> An illegitimate child born of a poor servant girl, Jemima's whole life has been a series of exploitations by men, particularly of her sexuality. Luce Irigaray has observed that

> women are marked phallicly by their fathers, husbands, procurers. And this branding determines their value in sexual commerce. Woman is never anything but the locus of a more or less competitive exchange between two men, including the competition for the possession of mother earth.
>
> Raped and impregnated by her master at sixteen, Jemima is used by one man after another. (38)

Wollstonecraft presents two different women: Jemima, a lower-class illegitimate child, and Maria Venables, a middle-class married woman. Because of Maria's social status her virginity is valued and protected so she remains eligible for marriage. Although Maria's virginity is protected, Jemima's virginity is not protected, and as a result, the rape of Jemima is not treated as a crime by legal standards. As a former prostitute or sex worker, Jemima's body is a commodity, but she uses this to her advantage and she works within the patriarchal system meant to oppress women. She works her way to a respectable position as an asylum guard, while Maria is placed behind bars despite her social status. By placing Jemima in a position of power over Maria, Wollstonecraft could have made Jemima unsympathetic and uncaring, similar to Jemima's step-sister. Instead, Jemima is empathetic, and Maria and Jemima are able to form a friendship that transcends the boundaries created by social class.

While in the asylum, Jemima provides Maria with reading materials from another person in the asylum. The other reader turns out to be Darnford, who eventually leaves a note meant for Maria in one of the novels. Jemima plays the role of the messenger who delivers notes between Darnford and Maria as well as the guard who supervises their rendezvous. Over time Maria and Darnford become friends and eventually lovers. Maria challenges the definition of a husband when she considers herself a widow even though Venables is alive. Instead of considering Venables her husband, Maria says she was "widowed by the death of my uncle" (159) because her uncle loved her. She additionally views her lover Darnford as her husband, indicated when Wollstonecraft writes, "As her husband she now received him, and he solemnly

pledged himself as her protector—and eternal friend.—" (165). By considering the death of her uncle as widowing her and referring to Darnford as her husband, Maria focuses on love being necessary for someone to be considered a husband. As a result, Venables is not Maria's husband because he does not love her and consistently abused her for the entirety of their marriage.

Although Wollstonecraft invites the readers to side with and pity Maria, the court is not swayed by Maria's statements to protect Darnford and condemns her for being an adulteress. While in front of the court Maria states that she married Venables when she was young and ignorant: "I yet submitted to the rigid laws which enslave women, and obeyed the man whom I could no longer love" (171). She argues that she yielded to the oppressive law and her husband, Venables, although it did not benefit her. Maria also points out that she cares for Venables' illegitimate child even though she is not obligated. Maria tries to justify that she is not a sinful woman, especially because Venables was actively engaging in adultery while they lived together. She remained faithful regardless of Venables' infidelity, and Maria defends Darnford saying:

> 'I claim then a divorce, and the liberty of enjoying, free from molestation, the fortune left to me by a relation, who was well aware of the character of the man with whom I had to contend.—I appeal to the justice and humanity of the jury—a body of men, whose private judgement must be allowed to modify laws, that must be unjust, because definite rules can never apply to indefinite circumstances—and I deprecate punishment [upon the man of my choice, freeing him, as I solemnly do, from the charge of seduction.][1]
>
> 'I did not put myself into a situation to justify a charge of adultery, till I had, from the conviction, shaken off the fetters which bound me to Mr. Venables.— While I lived with him, I defy the voice of calumny to sully what is termed the fair fame of woman.— Neglected by my husband, I never encouraged a lover; and preserved with scrupulous care, what is termed my honour, at the expence of my peace, till he, who should have been its guardian, laid traps to ensnare me. From that moment I believed myself, in the sight of heaven, free—and no power on earth shall force me to renounce my resolution.'(173)

[1] Brackets appear in text to indicate the additional writing from Godwin

Maria tries to "appeal to the justice and humanity of the jury—a body of men, whose private judgement must be allowed to modify laws, that must be unjust" indicating her hope that they will recognize she is not a sinful woman. She argues by saying she was never unfaithful to her husband while living with him despite his neglect. Although her husband was unfaithful, Maria preserved her honour and was not searching for a lover regardless of Venables' actions. By arguing about the mistreatment of Venables, Maria once again asserts that Venables was not her husband because he didn't preserve her honour when he tried to use her body as a commodity to pay off part of his debt.

Instead of viewing Maria as an adulteress, Wollstonecraft invites us to sympathize with and pity Maria because of all the horrors she faced while married to Venables. After years of running, Maria is caught by Venables while trying to leave England and he steals her daughter from her before sending Maria to the asylum. Wollstonecraft portrays the judge as unsympathetic and writes:

> The judge, in summing up the evidence, alluded to 'the fallacy of letting women plead their feelings, as an excuse for the violation of the marriage-vow. For his part, he had always determined to oppose all innovation, and the new-fangled notions which incroached on the good old rules of conduct…What virtuous woman thought of her feelings?—It was her duty to love and obey the man chosen by her parents and relations, who were qualified by their experience to judge better for her, than she could for herself. As to the charges brought against the husband, they were vague, supported by no witnesses, excepting that of imprisonment in a private mad-house. The proofs of an insanity in the family, might render that however a prudent measure; and indeed the conduct of the lady did not appear that of a person of sane mind. Still such a mode of proceeding could not be justified, and might perhaps entitle the lady [in another court] to a sentence of separation from bed and board, during the joint lives of the parties; but he hoped that no Englishman would legalize adultery, by enabling the adulteress to enrich her seducer. Too many restrictions could not be thrown in the way of divorces, if we wished to maintain the sanctity of marriage; and, though they might bear a little hard on a few, very few individuals, it was evidently for the good of the whole.' (174)

The judge condemns Maria for attempting to use her emotions to justify her infidelity and protect her seducer. Wollstonecraft encourages us to sympathize with Maria, the adulteress, and

Darnford, her seducer, because ultimately Venables is the villain. Although the seducers were not always punished, Maria's punishment is inevitable because her body was the property of her husband Venables. Although Maria might consider herself divorced, legally her body remains a commodity of Venables, which is why he tried to use her sex as a way to pay off some of his debt. In *Road to Divorce: England 1530*-1987, Lawrence Stone explains:

> Most adulterous wives were rejected and abandoned by their lovers as soon as the first transport of sexual passion had worn off. Only those whose husbands also wanted a divorce in order themselves to remarry, and those lovers were willing to marry them, could look forward to a happy resolution of the affair (339-340).

It was unlikely for the adulteress to end up with a happy ending, and had Wollstonecraft ended the book with the seventeen completed chapters, the book would have ended with the punishment of Darnford and Maria. In all four of the "scattered heads from the continuation of the story" (175), Maria and Darnford go their separate ways. In the fourth version, Darnford is unfaithful which leads to Maria's suicide. The detached paragraphs which include Jemima finding Maria's daughter, is the one happy ending which additionally doesn't include any mention of Darnford. Although we will never know the intended ending, the written fragment of Maria taking the laudanum indicates the importance of Jemima, which reaffirms my argument about female friendship as an alternative to marriage.

Emma Courtney and Her Husband's Mistress

Mary Hays' *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* focuses on the passionate titular character Emma Courtney, who falls in love with the married Augustus Harley. Although she never is intimate with Augustus, her open desires and bold actions would categorize her as a sexually transgressive woman, but not a fallen woman. Unlike Maria Venables, Emma Courtney remains unpunished despite her lack of propriety. Although Emma is not a fallen woman, Rachel, her

husband's mistress and servant to the household, is a "fallen" woman because she is an unmarried woman who engages in sexual intercourse. Emma does not begrudge Rachel for sleeping with Montague, instead she decides to include Rachel in her family at the end of the novel. Similar to how Jemima is a second mother to Maria's daughter, Hays invites us to perceive Rachel as a maternal figure to Emma's daughter Emma and her adopted son Augustus. As stated in my first chapter, this friendship outlasts Emma's marriage to Montague and additionally it provides a happy ending for the fallen woman Rachel.

Although she is not a fallen woman, Emma Courtney is open about her sexual desires, which conservatives around Hays' time condemned. During the time when Hays was publishing, the patriarchy desired women who were submissive and passive. Instead, Emma openly expresses her desires and surprisingly she is never punished. Eleanor Ty focuses on how Emma acts in a way that defies conventional gender standards and states:

> In expressing her ardour, Emma is not only asserting the existence of female desire, but also challenging the objectification and silencing of women. By professing her feelings, she ceases to be merely the 'object of transaction' in a cultural exchange, as Irigaray puts it, but becomes a subject initiating desire (*Unsex'd Revolutionaries*, 50).

By challenging the societal norms, Emma Courtney draws attention to female desire, which is a radical subject for Hays to address. Although there was a rise in companionate marriages, the inequalities between the men and women prevailed. As stated in my introduction, Lawrence Stone emphasizes how companionate marriages were more beneficial for men than for women. Because men were allowed to actively pursue the woman they wanted, women were limited in their selection based on who decided to pursue them. Emma Courtney does not adhere to the socially imposed role of the passive woman and instead she openly pursues Augustus Harley. As a woman open about her desires, Emma is condemned by other characters of the novel, but she remains firm in her belief that she should express her desires.

After Augustus Harley's death, Emma becomes ill and she hires Rachel, an eighteen-year-old girl, to help her take care of her daughter and aid with different household obligations. One day, Emma witnesses an intimate moment between Montague and Rachel where they were holding hands. Later, Emma chastises Montague because Rachel is a naive young woman and she believes he is acting improper, which is ironic due to her inappropriate behavior with Augustus Harley. While eating dinner with Montague, Emma says:

> 'It is well, sir, I am inured to suffering; but it is not of *myself* that I would speak. I have not deserved to lose your confidence—this is my consolation;—yet, I submit to it:—but I cannot see you act in a manner, that will probably involve you in vexation, and intail upon you remorse, without warning you of your danger. Should you corrupt the innocence of this girl, she is emphatically *ruined*. It is the strong mind only, that, firmly resting on its own power, can sustain and recover itself amidst the world's scorn and injustice. The morality of an uncultivated understanding, is that of *custom*, not of reason:—break down the feeble barrier, and there is nothing to supply its place—you open the flood-gates of infamy and wretchedness. Who can say where the evil may stop?'
>
> 'You are at liberty to discharge your servant, when you please, madam.'
>
> 'I think it my duty to do so, Mr Montague—not on my own, but on *her*, account. If I have no claim upon your affection and principles, I would disdain to wait your conduct. But I feel myself attached to this young woman, and would wish to preserve her from destruction!' (182)

Once again returning to the idea of the ruined woman, Emma is more concerned with how Rachel will be affected should Montague become intimate with her. She does not care that Montague's interest has strayed because she was never attached to her husband in a romantic sense. She is concerned about the well-being of Rachel and settles her out in the country. Similar to how Colonel Brandon settles Eliza II in the country, Emma places Rachel in the country where she is away from gossip and anything scandalous. Later on, after Montague hurts her, Emma finds Rachel who appears on the cusp of death and finds out that Montague has killed her child. Once again, Emma is not perturbed by Montague's affair but rather how Montague's actions have negatively impacted Rachel and turned her into the fallen woman.

Although Rachel was not seduced under the false pretense of marriage, Montague was able to use his position as head of the house to coerce Rachel into sleeping with him. Had Rachel refused, Montague would have been able to fire her and she wouldn't have financial or legal support. By inviting Rachel to become part of her family, Emma disregards the other woman's status as a servant and role as Montague's mistress. By forming a friendship with Rachel, Emma prevents Rachel from being homeless and struggling financially in a way Emma herself did. Rachel is not reliant on a man where her body is a commodity and she is rather saved by Emma who treats her more as an equal. Although there was initially the power imbalance because Rachel was a servant, Emma considers the other woman part of her family. As such, the sexually transgressive woman, Emma, who shamelessly pursues a man helps the fallen woman, Rachel, from falling further.

Minor Fallen Women Facing Major Dilemmas

In three of the four Austen novels that I focus on, I found there were female characters who are "fallen" women, some in the subcategory of adulteresses. In the case of *Emma,* Austen doesn't include a "fallen" woman, but the natural-born Harriet Smith is the product of a "fallen" woman. Instead of writing hatefully about sexually transgressive women, Austen treats such characters with compassion in a way that is similar to Wollstonecraft and Hays. Compared to the other two novelists, Wollstonecraft and Hays, Austen published in the 1810s which included an increase in censorship. As such, the fallen women and adulteresses were only minor characters or in the background of her published novels due to what was socially acceptable at the time. Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* and *Mansfield Park* depict two nearly fallen women, Lydia Bennet

and Julia Bertram, who are ultimately redeemed by marriage, showing a slim hope for unmarried fallen women.

On the other hand, Austen's adulteresses are not so fortunate because they are unable to be redeemed. Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* and *Mansfield Park* include adulteresses who are punished for their infidelity. We learn that marriage is a means of financial security and once a married woman has fallen into adultery, she is almost certainly cut off from the family. There are cases where women are fortunate enough to marry for love and are able to live comfortably, but this is not always the case in Austen's novels. Similar to the fallen women, adulteresses are women who are condemned in a way that would not happen if they were men. There is no such thing as the fallen man because men who commit adultery or have sex outside of marriage are rarely punished legally. The punishment of the adulteresses and the "fallen" women is an incentive for women to remain in horrible marriages and supports my argument that marriage is an oppressive regime.

As I discussed in the introduction, there used to be a double standard for men and women regarding marriage and sex outside of marriage. Both adulteresses, Eliza Williams in *Sense and Sensibility* and Maria Bertram in *Mansfield Park*, marry without love, and they are punished by their families for their subsequent infidelity. In the case of Eliza, she was held hostage by Colonel Brandon's father and brother until she agreed to marry Colonel Brandon's brother. Maria Bertram, on the other hand, marries the wealthy Mr. Rushworth simply for his money. She feels no emotional attachment to Mr. Rushworth, and I argue we are meant to pity Maria because of her absent parents who do not have a loving relationship and fail to create an affectionate family. Remarkably, Austen doesn't condemn the fallen women and she invites the readers to feel compassion for the adulteresses. Austen uses minor characters to represent the inequities

with Hardwicke's law, the unfairness of the divorce laws, and the injustices married women faced.

The Fall from Innocence into Sexual Experience

Austen's first published novel *Sense and Sensibility* includes an adulteress and a fallen woman who, although they are never presented to the reader, are important characters to Colonel Brandon's backstory. Colonel Brandon, the man who eventually marries Marianne, tells Elinor that his love for Marianne arose because she reminds him of his former love Eliza, who was robbed of her fortune, driven into adultery by her unloving husband, and confined to a spunging-house due to her debts. As discussed in the introduction, Colonel Brandon and Eliza had attempted a Gretna Green marriage, but unfortunately, they were betrayed by a servant. The betrayal resulted in the relocation of Colonel Brandon and the confinement of Eliza until she conceded defeat and married Colonel Brandon's brother. After being coerced into a marriage with a man who did not love her, Eliza escaped the household holding her prisoner and consequently she lost her vast fortune to Colonel Brandon's father and brother. Although Eliza is never represented in the novel and she is only talked about by others, Austen's inclusion of this minor character demonstrates the corruption of marriage. The way Colonel Brandon speaks about his love causes Elinor to feel great pity for Eliza I despite the fact she was an adulteress and loosely a "fallen" woman. He tells Elinor:

> My brother had no regard for her; his pleasures were not what they ought to have been, and from the first he treated her unkindly. The consequence of this, upon a mind so young, so lively, so inexperienced as Mrs. Brandon's, was all but too natural. She resigned herself at first to all the misery of her situation; and happy had it been if she had not lived to overcome those regrets which the remembrance of me occasioned. But can we wonder that with such a husband to provoke inconstancy, and without a friend to advise or restrain her, (for my father lived only a few months after their marriage, and I was with my regiment in the East Indies) she should fall? (234)

Describing Eliza's actions leading to her "fall" causes me think about the "fallen woman," which is a term I use loosely to encapsulate sexually liberated women who are punished by the patriarchy. I am distinguishing the line between adulteresses and "fallen" women, but I realize that there is some overlap, which is represented in the case of Eliza I. Doubling back to my argument in the introduction, I focus on how there is no fallen man, meaning there is a double standard for marriages in regard to adultery and divorce. If a woman commits adultery, this is automatically a reason for divorce; however, if a man has an affair, his wife does not have the right to ask for divorce.

Although Colonel Brandon had no obligation to care for his first love, he gave Eliza back some of her dignity as he cares for her during the short remainder of her life. After the death of his love, Colonel Brandon becomes the guardian of Eliza's daughter who is also named Eliza. We learn that Eliza II was seduced by the contemptible John Willoughby while she was in Bath with a couple of friends and fell pregnant. Colonel Brandon tells Elinor that Willoughby "had left the girl whose youth and innocence he had seduced, in a situation of the utmost distress, with no creditable home, no help, no friends, ignorant of his address! He had left her promising to return; he neither returned, nor wrote, nor relieved her" (237). Colonel Brandon explains his sudden disappearance from the group—comprised of the Middletons, the Dashwood women, Willoughby, and Mrs. Jennings—during the visit to Whitwell. The cause for his disappearance was that he had learned the whereabouts of Eliza II and rushed off to find her.

After hearing that deplorable John Willoughby had impregnated and abandoned Eliza II, Elinor feels sympathy for the fallen woman who falls when she loses her virginity and falls pregnant while unmarried. Because a woman's body became the property of her husband, she is supposed to be untouched by other men and save herself for her husband. The double standards

regarding female versus male sexual behavior continue in our present day, especially because women are judged more harshly for having sexual relations compared to men. Elinor had cautioned Marianne against being alone with Willoughby because of the implications that something salacious might occur and the rumors that were bound to spread when an unmarried woman is alone with a man. The deplorable Willoughby had not only beguiled Marianne, but he also seduced and impregnated Eliza II under the promise of returning. While explaining his perspective to Elinor, Willoughby attempts to blame Eliza for her lack of sexual inhibitions:

> "Remember," cried Willoughby, "from whom you received the account. Could it be an impartial one? I acknowledge that her situation and her character ought to have been respected by me. I do not mean to justify myself, but at the same time cannot leave you to suppose that I have nothing to urge—that because she was injured she was irreproachable, and because I was a libertine, *she* must be a saint. If the violence of her passions, the weakness of her understanding—I do not mean, however, to defend myself. Her affection for me deserved better treatment, and I often, with great self-reproach, recall the tenderness which, for a very short time, had the power of creating any return. I wish—I heartily wish it had never been. But I have injured more than herself; and I have injured one, whose affection for me—(may I say it?) was scarcely less warm than hers; and whose mind—Oh! how infinitely superior!"—
>
> "Your indifference, however, towards that unfortunate girl—I must say it, unpleasant to me as the discussion of such a subject may well be—your indifference is no apology for your cruel neglect of her. Do not think yourself excused by any weakness, any natural defect of understanding on her side, in the wanton cruelty so evident on yours. You must have known, that while you were enjoying yourself in Devonshire pursuing fresh schemes, always gay, always happy, she was reduced to the extremest indigence"
>
> "But, upon my soul, I did *not* know it," he warmly replied; "I did not recollect that I had omitted to give her my direction; and common sense might have told her how to find it out."
>
> "Well, sir, and what said Mrs. Smith?"
>
> "She taxed me with the offence at once, and my confusion may be guessed. The purity of her life, the formality of her notions, her ignorance of the world—every thing was against me. The matter itself I could not deny, and vain was every endeavour to soften it. She was previously disposed, I believe, to doubt the morality of my conduct in general, and was moreover discontented with the very little attention, the very little portion of my time that I had bestowed on her, in my present visit. In short, it ended in a total breach. By one measure I might have saved myself. In the height of her morality, good woman! she offered to forgive the past, if I would marry Eliza. That could not be—and I was formally dismissed from her favour and her house…" (365-366).

Instead of allowing Willoughby to protest that Eliza II was also at fault for "the violence of her passions," Elinor states that Willoughby must be held accountable for his part in impregnating Eliza and abandoning both her and the baby. Willoughby claims that Eliza II should not be considered a saint and that Colonel Brandon would have been biased in his telling of poor Eliza II's story. Elinor defends Eliza II when she says, "Do not think yourself excused by any weakness, any natural defect of understanding on her side, in the wanton cruelty so evident on yours." Not only does Elinor recognize Willoughby's mistakes, Colonel Brandon is disgusted by Willoughby when he discovers what happened to Eliza II. Colonel Brandon displays his generous heart once again when he moves her and the child to the countryside. Instead of punishing her for her actions, he challenges Willoughby to a duel. Colonel Brandon tells Elinor "we met by appointment, he to defend, I to punish. We returned unwounded, and the meeting, therefore, never got abroad" (239). Because the duel did not cause injury to either party the news of the duel was never talked about, but Colonel Brandon clearly states his intentions were "to punish" Willoughby. As far as punishment goes, Willoughby is disinherited by his aunt Mrs. Smith after he refuses to marry Eliza II, but he is fortunate enough to marry the wealthy Miss Grey, although the marriage is not one of love. Punishing Willoughby for his horrendous actions is radical because the "fallen" woman is typically the one who takes the fall, so to speak, for the actions of both the man and woman. Unfortunately, Mrs. Smith eventually forgives Willoughby because of his marriage to Miss Grey and she reinstates him as her heir. The worst punishment Willoughby faces is being temporarily disinherited and then losing Marianne to Colonel Brandon. Despite his alleged love for Marianne, he was able to move beyond his grief and didn't die from heartbreak. By allowing Willoughby to live without punishment, Austen incites anger

and frustration towards the situation. Austen invites us to sympathize with Eliza I and her daughter, Eliza II, despite the fact both are "fallen" women.

I argue that because Jane Austen was writing in a more conservative time than Wollstonecraft and Hays, she was only allowed to include fallen women and adulteresses as minor characters. Although these characters are minor, Austen invites us to pity these women instead of condemn them. Claudia Johnson writes:

> For Austen, however, to have foregrounded the tales of the Elizas would have entailed earmarking a progressive stance, which she evidently did not want to do. Their stories, while stopping decidedly short of pardoning failures of female chastity, nevertheless divulge the callousness of the ruling class, and they would not be out of place beside such unequivocally radical novels as Hays's *Victim of Prejudice* (1799) and Inchbald's Rousseauvian *Nature and Art* (1796). As if to defuse the sensitivity of the subject matter, Austen distances herself from the story of the two Elizas by tucking it safely within the center of *Sense and Sensibility* and delegating its narration to the safe Colonel Brandon (55).

I agree with Claudia Johnson's argument that Austen distances herself from the Elizas, but I argue that Austen was unable to take an openly progressive stance on the Elizas. During the time when Austen was writing, there was a change in what was allowed to be published compared to when Mary Hays and Mary Wollstonecraft were writing, which I discuss in my earlier chapters on those women. Although *Sense and Sensibility* was published a little more than a decade after Hays's *Victim of Prejudice*, there was a regression in what topics were allowed to be published. This is demonstrated by Austen's unpublished *Lady Susan*, which depicts a sexually open woman as the main character. If Austen had attempted to publish such a radical piece, it likely would not have been published. I argue that Austen was unable to focus directly on adulteresses and "fallen" women because the 1810s were not as openly radical as the 1790s. I argue that Austen addresses the issues of marriage by pointing out how it is a closed system and women were pushed towards marriage.

Austen's novel *Mansfield Park* includes the adulteress Maria Rushworth, formerly Miss Bertram, and references Inchbald's play *Lovers' Vows*, which is centered around a fallen woman and her illegitimate son. In the home production of Inchbald's play, Maria is cast as Agatha, the fallen woman within the play which hints at her fate at the end of the novel when she runs away with Henry Crawford. As stated in my chapter on Jane Austen, Edmund expels Mary Crawford over her suggestion of redeeming the fallen woman, Maria. Mary feels pity towards Maria and wishes to use her influence over her brother Henry to encourage him to marry Maria. I earlier argued that Fanny could have ended up with Henry had he not run off with Maria and that we should welcome a relationship between Henry and Fanny. I argue we are invited to pity Maria because her marriage to Mr. Rushworth was not a happy one but, rather, a marriage for money's sake. In addition, Sir Thomas is aware his daughter does not feel any romantic emotions towards her husband, but he encourages the marriage regardless.

Although Maria is represented as a deplorable character because of how she mistreats Fanny, I argue we are encouraged to pity Maria in the end despite her status as an adulteress. Unlike Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy, who had the Gardiners as a model couple, Maria Bertram does not have a loving couple that influences her to marry for love. Similar to how Mr. and Mrs. Bennet neglect their daughters, mainly the three youngest, the Bertram parents neglect all four of their children and treat Fanny like a slave. As a result, the Bertram children do not feel any attachment to their parents:

> The Miss Bertrams were much to be pitied on the occasion; not for their sorrow, but for their want of it. Their father was no object of love to them, he had never seemed the friend of their pleasures, and his absence was unhappily most welcome (37).
> Lady Bertram did not go into public with her daughters. 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, who desired nothing better than a post of such honourable representation, and very thoroughly relished the means it afforded her of mixing in society without having horses to hire (40).

The fact that the Bertram children fear their father indicates the lack of a close relationship and the authoritarian power that Sir Thomas exerts over his children. Using his influence and power, Sir Thomas encourages the loveless relationship between Mr. Rushworth and Maria. Obsessed with his reputation and enchanted by a quiet household with subservient family members, Sir Thomas is horrified when Julia and Mr. Yates, and Maria and Henry elope. Referring to my second chapter, I find Sir Thomas's change in behavior toward Fanny occurs once he recognizes that she is the ideal daughter—submissive and demure. Both Edmund and Sir Thomas either neglect Fanny or use her for their own needs, treating her like a slave. Maria's elopement with Henry turns Maria into an adulteress, while Henry remains untainted.

The fact that Lady Bertram and Sir Thomas are not a loving couple and distance themselves from their children, Maria lacks both a model couple and female friends. If she had a close female friendship, she might have been dissuaded from marrying Mr. Rushworth or at least avoided becoming the fallen women. Although Maria has a younger sister Julia, we are forced to acknowledge that two girls are not close to one another. When the Crawfords first arrived, Maria and Julia view each other as competition for Henry's attention. When Henry proposes to Fanny, both Maria and Julia are appalled because they consider Fanny inferior. Although the novel invites the potential romance between Fanny and Henry, ultimately Henry runs off with Maria Rushworth, turning Maria into an adulteress. Maria was under the impression that Henry would marry her and was sorely disappointed when she realized it would not happen. Sir Thomas refuses to allow Maria back into the family, fearful of what people would say and worried that Maria would negatively impact the community. If he permitted Maria to return to the Bertram household, potentially other children would disobey their parents and follow Maria's example.

On the other hand, Sir Thomas is willing to accept Julia and Mr. Yates because she was unmarried and she ends up marrying Mr. Yates.

In the end of the novel, Maria is forced to live with her deplorable aunt Mrs. Norris, which is the one time she has another female looking after her. Although Mrs. Norris is by no means a generous character, her willingness to take in an adulteress is an important ending to Maria's story. Instead of sex work or being confined to a spunging house, Maria is fortunate enough to be able to rely on her aunt. Mary Crawford's idea would have been the ideal alternative where Maria would have been accepted back into Mansfield once Henry married her. However, Edmund is appalled by this idea and horrified that Mary suggest the Bertrams should redeem Maria. While Maria's ending is not as evidentially tragic as Eliza I William's ending, I argue Austen invites us to pity both adulteresses. Eliza and Maria were both in loveless marriages and seduced into eloping simply because they lacked female friendships that would have discouraged them from making such decisions.

Salvation by Means of a Man

Turning towards another category of "fallen" women, Austen incorporates temporarily fallen women who are redeemed through marriage to represent a sliver of hope for the fallen woman. In *Pride and Prejudice* Mr. Darcy pays George Wickham to marry Lydia Bennet so that the entire Bennet family will not be ruined. His actions cause Elizabeth to reevaluate her opinion of him and she realizes that she loves Mr. Darcy. In *Mansfield Park* Julia Bertram runs off with Mr. Yates, but her family welcomes her back after she marries him. The difference between Julia and Maria is that Julia was unmarried when she ran away with Mr. Yates, which allows her to be redeemed. Although we are not inclined to like either Lydia or Julia, I argue we should recognize

that the patriarchal system was unfair to women and we ought to have sympathy for these characters. I argue we do not have to approve of Lydia or Julia, but we should recognize that they were in danger of becoming fallen women, which is discriminatory because Wickham and Yates would not have been punished.

Although Austen does not make Lydia Bennet or Julia Bertram likable, I argue we should feel pity towards both redeemed fallen women because the patriarchy treats women deplorably. In the case of Lydia, her family made excuses for her unruly behavior instead of teaching her what is socially acceptable. Because she was not close to Jane or Elizabeth or any other positive female role models, I argue we need to feel more compassion towards Lydia. Kitty could have become a fallen woman, but she was fortunately saved by Elizabeth and Jane. Once Kitty was "removed from the influence of Lydia's example, she became, by proper attention and management, less irritable, less ignorant, and less insipid" (428). In *Sense and Sensibility*, Marianne's relationship with Elinor helps save her from becoming a fallen woman, but neither Julia nor Lydia has close female friendships to prevent them from making poor decisions.

All throughout *Pride and Prejudice*, Lydia is represented as an irksome airheaded character who is often neglected by her family. Eventually she runs off with Wickham under the impression that he will marry her. In her letter to Harriet, Lydia states, "I am going to Gretna Green, and if you cannot guess with who, I shall think you a simpleton" (321). This idea of the Gretna couple is explained by O'Connell who states that Lydia and Wickham "are the stereotypical Gretna couple: a giddy under-age bride and a caddish officer groom" (219). I argue that, although we are invited to disapprove of Lydia, we should pity her for being ensnared by Wickham and spoiled by her parents which prevents her from recognizing her transgressions. O'Connell explains Gretna marriages in regard to Hardwicke's law:

> Representations of Gretna weddings quickly developed a romance iconography, which channelled old clandestine tropes of itinerancy, fortune-hunting and improper femininity to new ends. Young lovers fled north along the turnpike to be married secretly after a breakneck carriage ride to the Scottish border. The groom was usually a dashing adventurer, often a military officer, and his bride-to-be an heiress, love-struck, and underage. Angry parents or guardians followed in hot pursuit (191).

After Lydia runs away with Wickham, all of the remaining Bennet daughters are at risk of becoming unmarriageable and Mr. Collins seizes the opportunity to rub in their misfortune. Had he married Elizabeth, his reputation would also be at risk because of Lydia's actions. While writing to Mr. Bennet, Mr. Collins says "Let me advise you then, my dear Sir, to console yourself as much as possible, to throw off your unworthy child from your affection for ever, and leave her to reap the fruits of her own heinous offense" (327-328). In other words, Mr. Collins encourages Mr. Bennet to punish Lydia the same way God punished Eve and "leave her to reap the fruits of her own heinous offense." Had Lydia not married Wickham, she had a life of sex work or something equally unpleasant to endure. Austen positions us to dislike Mr. Collins' words and to sympathize with women in Lydia's position. Fortunately, Lydia does end up marrying Wickham to the delight of the Bennets and she returns to the household as Mrs. Wickham instead of as a fallen woman. Unbeknownst to Lydia, Mr. Darcy agrees to pay Wickham to marry Lydia, which prevents all of the Bennet daughters from being ruined by Lydia's poor choice. The fact that Lydia is excluded from the community at the end of the novel emphasizes the isolating nature of her marriage. Lydia is left with only the deplorable Wickham for company, which is a horrendous ending.

In *Mansfield Park* Julia is in a similar situation as Lydia where her parents neglect her and their marriage is not a loving relationship. As stated in earlier section, Maria is unredeemable due to her status as an adulteress. Because Julia was unmarried when she eloped with Mr. Yates, she is redeemable, especially because Mr. Yates is willing to marry her. Austen

writes “Julia’s match became a less desperate business than [Sir Thomas] had considered it at first. She was humble and wishing to be forgiven, and Mr. Yates, desirous of being really received into the family, was disposed to look up to him and be guided.” (534) While Maria is banned from Mansfield, Julia is welcomed back into the family with open arms, which is not an ideal ending because she still lacks any close female friends and she remains under the tyrannical power of her father. Austen writes: “That Julia escaped better than Maria was owing, in some measure, to a favourable difference of disposition and circumstance” (539). Austen’s use of “escaped” indicates that Julia had fallen, but she was redeemed by her marriage to Yates. If she had been married prior to eloping with Yates, she would not have been welcomed back into the family even if she had married Yates. Although Julia’s marriage with Yates does not seem as horrible as Lydia’s marriage to Wickham, I argue we are still meant to pity her because she was compelled to marry Yates and the relationship is not a partnership.

Despite the fact Lydia and Julia are fortunately saved by marriage, I argue they are simultaneously compelled to marry, which traps them within an oppressive system where their husbands own them. Considering that we are inclined to pity the “fallen” women, I argue that we should think negatively of the marriages that redeem the fallen woman. Unlike the marriage between Elizabeth and Darcy or between Elinor and Edward, Julia and Lydia are in relationships where they become the property of their husbands. We are invited to pity Lydia and Julia because both were neglected by their parents and lacked female relationships. Austen encourages the reader to sympathize with adulteresses and redeemed fallen women although we might not like them as characters.

Conclusion

Acknowledging the importance of female-female friendships and sympathizing with the "fallen" woman alters how we read the novels of Wollstonecraft, Hays, and Austen. While Wollstonecraft and Hays explicitly disregard the heteronormative marriage, Austen subtly invites us to disapprove of marriages that disrupt female-female friendships. All three novelists challenge the heteronormative marriage and emphasize the inequities caused by the patriarchy. Wollstonecraft addresses the problems with divorce and custody laws while Hays highlights how the patriarchy forced women to rely on men for financial security. Both novelists mention abortions and incorporate unconventional families that exclude the father while including two mothers. Austen's marriage plot novels present bad marriages that disrupt female friendships and isolate women, and good marriages that expand a woman's social circle. All three writers comment on the significance of female-female friendships; Wollstonecraft and Hays use these friendships to subvert marriages while Austen uses theses friendships to highlight the differences between good and bad marriages.

While Wollstonecraft and Hays are explicitly radical, Austen is more subtle when denouncing the patriarchy. Although Austen's novels are centered around the marriage plot, I argue Austen creates dubious marriages to highlight that a bad marriage can be isolating. All three novelists emphasize the importance of female-female friendships, but Austen also includes the rejection of such friendships in her novels *Mansfield Park* and *Emma*. I argue that Austen invites us to disapprove of the marriages that end *Mansfield Park* and *Emma* because the marriages end female friendships and reduce female agency separate from one's husband's authority. Austen's relegation of fallen women to minor characters does not dismiss their importance but, rather, encourages readers to ponder why these characters are still significant to

the novel. All three novelists emphasize the importance of friendships and invite us to condemn marriages that isolate females from their social circles.

Over the course of the twenty-first century, marriage has developed to be for two individuals who love one another, which is the reason why same-sex marriage was finally legalized in the United States in 2015. In their novels, Wollstonecraft, Hays, and Austen represent how marriage was in their time a form of patriarchal control and hard-won material security. Although there are still people who oppose same-sex marriage, it is a matter of love and equal justice. All three novelists highlight how marriage was a corrupt institution, and in the present day the prevention of marriage is a matter of inequality. To legalize same-sex marriage refutes the importance of reproduction as a basis of marriage. If opposite-sex people are unable to reproduce due to medical reasons or don't desire to reproduce, they are not banned from marriage.

Although Wollstonecraft and Hays do not explicitly create same-sex relationships, they include families that have two mother figures—Jemima and Maria as mothers to Maria's daughter, and Rachel and Emma as mothers to Emma II and the adopted Augustus Harley II. By creating unconventional families, both Wollstonecraft and Hays were radical for their time and refuted the nuclear family. Despite their fascinating works, Wollstonecraft's and Hays' novels aren't as commonly read as Austen. Because they are not commonly known, we don't watch movies adaptations of *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* or *The Wrongs of Woman*. Romanticism was a period about the beauty of fragments and architectural ruins, and Wollstonecraft and Hays write about a different type of ruins—the ruined woman.

Austen's best known novels are created into countless versions of television shows and movies. Unfortunately, these shows and movies remove the political aspects of the novels by

reducing the story to nothing more than a romantic comedy. Extracting the politics from the novel is truly taking away the substance of the novel. For example, why should we pity Lydia Bennet and Julia Bertram? What is the significance of Eliza I and II in *Sense and Sensibility*? How do female friendships and sororal relationships affect the heroine's choices? Should we disapprove of the marriage that ends the novel? Without answering these questions, the movie adaptations of Austen's novels are romanticized in a way that overlooks all the subtle political messages Austen includes. By writing this thesis, I hoped to recover the significance of female relationships and highlight the importance of the fallen woman.

Bibliography

Austen, Jane. *Emma*. Edited by Richard Cronin and Dorothy McMillan. *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Jane Austen*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

Austen, Jane. *Later Manuscripts*. Edited by Janet Todd and Linda Bree. *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Jane Austen*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

Austen, Jane. *Mansfield Park*. Edited by John Wiltshire. *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Jane Austen*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

Austen, Jane. *Pride and Prejudice*. Edited by Pat Rogers. *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Jane Austen*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

Austen, Jane. *Sense and Sensibility*. Edited by Edward Copeland. *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Jane Austen*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

Austen-Leigh, James Edward. *A Memoir of Jane Austen*. London: R. Bentley, 1870.

Bannet, Eve Taylor. "The Marriage Act of 1753: 'A Most Cruel Law for the Fair Sex'." *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 30.3 (spring 1997): 223–254.

Barkley, Danielle. "Exit Strategies: Jane Austen, Marriage, and Familial Escape." *Persuasions: The Jane Austen Journal* 36 (2014): 214–222.

Beauvoir, Simone de. *The Second Sex*. Translated by Constance. New York: Vintage Books Edition, 2011.

Bennett, Ashly. "Shame and Sensibility: Jane Austen's Humiliated Heroines." *Studies in Romanticism* 54.3 (2015): 377–400.

Brooks, Marilyn L. "Hays, Mary (1759–1843)" *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.

Brumberg, Joan Jacobs. "'Ruined' Girls: Changing Community Responses to Illegitimacy in Upstate New York, 1890–1920. *Journal of Social History* 18.2 (1984): 247–272.

Butler, Marilyn. "Austen, Jane (1775–1817), *Novelist*." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.

Burke, Edmund. *Reflections on the Revolution in France*. Edited by L. G. Mitchell. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Byron, George Gordon. "Marino Faliero." *The Complete Poetical Works*. Vol. 4. Edited by Jerome J. McGann. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986.

Canuel, Mary. "Jane Austen, the Romantic Novel, and the Importance of Being Wrong." *The Shadow of Death: Literature, Romanticism, and the Subject of Punishment*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007. 84–114.

Engels, Friedrich. *The Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State*. Translated by Alick West. New York: Penguin Classics, 2010.

Golightly, Jennifer. "Reproduction in British Women's Novels of the 1790s." *The Secrets of Generation: Reproduction in the Long Eighteenth Century*. Edited by Raymond Stephanson and Darren N. Wagner. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018. 278–296.

Harth, Erica. "The Virtue of Love: Lord Hardwicke's Marriage Act." *Cultural Critique* 9 (1998): 123–154.

Hays, Mary. *Memoirs of Emma Courtney*. Edited by Eleanor Ty. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Hays, Mary. *The Victim of Prejudice.* Edited by Eleanor Ty. Peterborough: Broadview Press, 1998.

Holmes, Ann Summer. "The Double Standard in the English Divorce Laws, 1857-1923." *Law & Social Inquiry* 20.2 (1995): 601–620.

Irigaray, Luce. *This Sex Which is Not One.* Translated by Catherine Porter with Carolyn Burke. *This Sex Which Is Not One*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985.

Johnson, Claudia L. *Equivocal Beings: Politics, Gender, and Sentimentality in the 1790s—Wollstonecraft, Radcliffe, Burney, Austen*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995.

Johnson, Claudia L. *Jane Austen: Women, Politics, and the Novel.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988.

Korba, Susan M. "'Improper and Dangerous Distinctions': Female Relationships and Erotic Domination in *Emma*." *Studies in the Novel* 29.2 (1997): 139–163.

Langford, Paul. "Burke, Edmund (1729/30–1797)." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.

Lemmings, David. "Marriage and the Law in the Eighteenth Century: Hardwicke's Marriage Act of 1753." *Historical Journal* 39.2 (June 1996): 339–360.

Lott, Anna. "Staging a Lesson: The Theatricals and Proper Conducts in *Mansfield Park*." *Studies in the Novel* 38.3 (2006): 275–287

May, Leila S. "Jane Austen's 'Schemes of Sisterly Happiness.'" *Philological Quarterly* 81.3 (Summer 2002): 327–358.

McKeon, Michael. *The Secret History of Domesticity: Public, Private, and the Division of Knowledge.* Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2005.

Norton, Brian Michael. "*Emma Courtney*, Feminist Ethics, and the Problem of Autonomy." *The Eighteenth Century* 54.3 (2013): 297–315.

O'Connell, Lisa. *The Origins of the English Marriage Plot: Literature, Politics and Religion in the Eighteenth Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019.

Perry, Ruth. "Interrupted Friendships in Jane Austen's *Emma*." *Tusla Studies in Women's Literature* 5.2 (1986): 185–202.

Poovey, Mary. *The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer: The Ideology as Style in The Works of Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Shelley, and Jane Austen.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984.

Potter, Tiffany F. "'A Low but Very Feeling Tone': The Lesbian Continuum and Power Relations in Jane Austen's *Emma*." *ESC: English Studies in Canada* 20.2 (1994): 187–203.

Preus, Nicholas E. "Sexuality in *Emma*: A Case History." *Studies in the Novel* 23.2 (1991): 196–216.

Rajan, Tilottama. "Autonarration and Genotext in Mary Hays' *Memoirs of Emma Courtney*." *Studies in Romanticism* 30.2 (1993): 149–176.

Scheuermann, Mona. *Her Bread to Earn: Women, Money, and Society from Defoe to Austen*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1993.

Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. *Epistemology of The Closet*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990.

Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. "Jane Austen and the Masturbating Girl." *Critical Inquiry* 17.4 (1991): 818–837.

Shaffer, Julie. "Ruined Women and Illegitimate Daughters: Revolution and Female Sexuality." *Lewd and Notorious: Female Transgression in the Eighteenth Century*. Edited by Katharine Kittredge. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003. 283–318.

Stafford, William. "Narratives of Women: English Feminists of the 1790s." *History* 82.265 (1997): 24–43.

Stone, Lawrence. *Road to Divorce: England, 1530–1987*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990.

Stone, Lawrence. *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500–1800*. New York: Harper & Row, 1977.

Taylor, Barbara. "Wollstonecraft [*married name* Godwin], Mary (1759–1797)." *Oxford English Dictionary of National Biography*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017.

Todd, Janet M. *Mary Wollstonecraft: A Revolutionary Life*. Oxford: Bloomsbury, 2000.

Todd, Janet M. "Female Friendship in Jane Austen's Novels." *The Journal of the Rutgers University Libraries* 39.1 (1997): 29–43.

Ty, Eleanor. *Unsex'd Revolutionaries: Five Women Novelists of the 1790s*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993.

Wolfram, Sybil. "Divorce in England 1700–1857." *Oxford Journal of Legal Studies* 5.2 (1985): 155–186.

Wollstonecraft, Mary. *The Wrongs of Woman.* Edited by Gary Kelly. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Zirker, Angelika. "'The Road to Happiness": Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*" *Connotations: A Journal for Critical Debate*, 20.2 (2011): 131–154.