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The Value and Importance of Unequivocal Sincerity: Gendered Sociability in Mary Hays's Memoirs of Emma Courtney

Jeremy Michael Davidheiser
Lehigh University

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by

Jeremy Davidheiser

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JEREMY DAVIDHEISER

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Beth Dolan
Thesis Advisor

Scott Gordon
Department Chair

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

This paper calls attention to the importance of the friendship bond in Mary Hays's *Memoirs of Emma Courtney.* I particularly isolate male-female friendships, claiming that Hays's reformative project is aimed at changing men's behavior and adapting masculinity to be receptive to the idea of women as full subjects. Building on Jessica Benjamin's work on mutual recognition, I argue that Emma desires relationships with men based on the delicate balance of assertion and recognition, alluding repeatedly to "the value and importance of unequivocal sincerity" in progressive gender relations. Analyzing her varied relationships with three men, I argue that Emma isolates friendship as an important foundation for male-female relationships, contrasting with the limited and heteronormative ways that the men value her in return.

Alas! it is a tragic tale! Friendship was the star, whose cheering influence I courted to beam upon my benighted course. The social affections were necessary to my existence, but they have been only inlets to sorrow—yet, still, I bind them to my heart! - Mary Hays, *Memoirs of Emma Courtney*

Mary Hays's relationship to radical politics was structured around her intellectual correspondences with radical men. According to biographer and critic Gina Luria Walker, Hays, in pursuit of knowledge typically reserved for men at the end of the eighteenth century, "look[ed] to a succession of 'generous men'—John Eccles, Robert Robinson, Joseph Priestley, John Disney, Hugh Worthington, George Dyer, William Frend, and William Godwin—who nourished her intellectual hunger and provided access to the public life of the mind" (12). Of the men listed, Eccles and Frend were of romantic interest to Hays, though she cultivated important and varyingly successful intellectual friendships with all of them. In the cases of romantic bonds, Hays famously struggled to balance the sexual and social elements of the relationships. Her relationship and correspondence with Eccles was particularly variable, and she "sensed the combustible sexual potential when woman and man came together in pursuit of knowledge. She urged [Eccles] to teach her what he knew as a man without hurting her as a woman" (Walker 12). This request grants us insight into Hays's awareness of the tensions between social and sexual bonds; she does not actually seek to cut off the sexual bond in favor of the social, but she insists upon a cautious awareness of both, sensing that the social bond is fragile in the face of the "combustible sexual potential" of the relationship. Hays also makes note of her complicated position in the intellectual relationship, as she feels beholden to Eccles for the knowledge he can impart, but delicately balances her dependence with her warning against the potential for his domination. The openness with

which she and Eccles could discuss problems of gender relations was exceptional in Hays's life, and Walker claims that the letters "extend the discursive boundaries in what women and men say to each other . . . such confidential correspondence offers the possibility of mutual alliance, not avoidance or antagonism" (16). This potential for "mutual alliance," based on the sincere self-expression of both parties and a careful awareness of inequalities, structures Hays's desire in Walker's reading.

Even if we accept that Eccles was ideal, Hays's novels point us to the persistent difficulties she faced in pursuing socially and intellectually robust relationships with men.[1] Her first novel, an experimental *roman á clef* called *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* (1796), focuses on the protagonist's failed relationship with a man named Augustus Harley and two secondary relationships with Mr. Francis and Mr. Montague, both fraught with inequalities as well. The novel unfolds entirely from the perspective of its protagonist in the memoirs she addresses to her adopted son,[2] interspersed with letters to the the three men who structure the narrative. These three relationships all result in disappointment, failing to reach a state of "mutual alliance" despite Emma's efforts in sincere self-representation. I take the potential for "mutual alliance" that Walker identifies in the Hays-Eccles letters to be Emma's primary desire in *Emma Courtney*, a novel that registers Hays's concerns surrounding free and open discourse between men and women. Sincere self-expression is Hays's (and consequently Emma's) method of approaching a relationship, and she desires the same in return from the men she engages—in other

1 Mary Raymond's relationship with William Pelham in *Victim of Prejudice* (1799) also suffers the effects of imposed gender norms that rupture the felicity of their childhood education—and friendship—and lead to a tragic and failed love plot.

2 This is Augustus Jr., and Emma adopts him after his father's death. The fact that the novel is written to Augustus's son emphasizing "the value and importance of unequivocal sincerity" suggests that Hays is concerned with reforming men by changing the way they view women's stories. I address this in greater detail in the conclusion.

words, she desires a “mutual alliance” with them.

To expand theoretically upon Walker's term “mutual alliance,” I look to the work of Jessica Benjamin, whose book *Bonds of Love* explores the concept she calls “mutual recognition.” Benjamin defines mutual recognition most simply as “recognizing as well as being recognized by the other” (23), and recognition for Benjamin has “any number of near-synonyms” including “affirm, validate, acknowledge, know, accept, understand, take in, tolerate, appreciate, see, identify with, find familiar” (15-16). The difficulties of mutual recognition arise from the tension between assertion—the expression of one's desires—and recognition. Both assertion and recognition are profoundly necessary for the formation of subject-subject instead of subject-object relations; when assertion meets with recognition it “makes meaningful the feelings, intentions, and actions of the self” (Benjamin 12). If one's assertion is not recognized, it becomes subordination in pursuit of recognition, and the domination/subordination dynamic is set up. In other words, the unrecognized adapts his/her self-representation in response to the other's desire, usually mirroring the other's asserted self and shoring up the dominant ego.

Benjamin specifically genders her insight into domination/subordination and the possibility for mutual recognition that is foreclosed by this binary. Like other psychoanalytic feminists, Benjamin stresses the importance of relational and intersubjective development. The modern world with its impersonality and rationality, according to Benjamin, devalues the interdependence crucial to human development by associating it with femininity. Benjamin identifies the persistence of the problem in child development:

The psychosocial core of this unfettered individuality is the subjugation of woman

> by man, through which it appears that she is his possession . . . that he is not dependent upon or attached to an other outside himself. As a psychological principle, autonomous individuality derives from the male posture in differentiation; that is, from the repudiation of the primary experience of nurturance and identity with the mother. (188)

For Benjamin, independence is a socially-constructed position that opposes a fundamental interdependence; only the dominant party experiences independence, and even for him it is an illusion that ultimately rests on his denial of any similarity between himself and the other. Independence, what she calls "unfettered individuality," is a masculine standpoint steeped in a fiction that erases the intersubjective elements of personal development.

Although rooted in psychosexual development, Benjamin's theories are expansive and applicable to many types of relationships. My focus on friendship in this paper may seem to reduce the more capacious concept of the erotic that Benjamin attends to, but I find that friendship is exactly the dynamic that Benjamin describes in the ideal form of mutual recognition, and both Hays and Emma isolate it by name and argue for its sustaining role in progressive gender relations. If the domination/subordination dynamic too often characterizes heterosexual relationships—continuing from the male child's primary rejection of the mother—then an absence or deficiency of the friendship bond seems to be at play. The friendship bond, which I will sometimes call the social bond, is distinct from the romantic or sexual bond—though the two are necessarily intertwined when both are present. A successful friendship for Hays relies upon mutual recognition—a sympathetic exchange that validates the desires of both parties—and this can exist with or without a sexual bond. Recognition is necessary as a foundation to any relationship because it allows for the existence of the other as a subject and not a vessel for the ego

and its desires. Hays's commitment to "unequivocal sincerity" is an attempt to prioritize the friendship bond with men, establishing a subject-subject relationship and preempting the artificial behavior that characterizes heteronormative relationships and solidifies a domination/subordination dynamic.

The scheme of mutual recognition allows me to more clearly make a claim about the gendered implications of "unequivocal sincerity" in *Emma Courtney*. True sincerity for Hays relies on a balance of assertion and recognition that ensures sincere self-expression as well as receptiveness to sincerity for both parties. Hays is acutely aware of the many obstacles to such a relationship between a man and woman and, I argue, uses her three male characters as case studies to explore these obstacles in depth. The novel is composed entirely of Emma's letters to Augustus's son, also named Augustus, and can be read as an attempt to correct the behavior of the men in her life through his education. She begins her memoirs by displaying concern for the younger Augustus's potential lapse into insincerity: "Has a six months' absence obliterated from your remembrance the precept I so earnestly and incessantly laboured to inculcate—the value and importance of unequivocal sincerity?" (41). As the younger Augustus is entering into a dangerous relationship with the married Joanna, Emma feels obligated to continue her intentional education of him by relating her story—one in which insincerity causes innumerable problems. This narrative frame marks *Emma Courtney* as Hays's call to reform for men who act insincerely and damage the psychological well-being of the women in their lives.

Emma repeatedly expresses both her desire for recognition and her own receptiveness to sincere self-expression—her promise to recognize—but this balance consistently dissolves into Emma's subordination or isolation as a result of unreciprocated

recognition. I argue that Emma's relationships with men showcase the societal obstacles to male-female friendships, locating them in the sexual, social, and intellectual prejudices characteristic of traditional masculinity. In other words, the complications of sexual bonds and presumed male superiority—what amounts to social dominance—frustrate Emma's attempts to make and maintain social bonds with men. The trappings of normative masculinity—the overvaluation of self-sufficiency, independence, rationality—simultaneously construct and negate Emma's desire for male-female friendship. She desires the freedom her male companions enjoy but soon realizes that these men are themselves restricted, subject to masculine prejudices that cut them off from the world in various ways. When all three men fail to recognize her as a friend and equal, she asserts herself all the more sincerely. Emma hopes that her sincerity will overcome heteronormative restrictions on gender relations by proving the worth of her intellect and unique perspective on the world's injustices, but she finds the prejudices of men immovable.

Hays's focus on "unequivocal sincerity" and its importance in progressive gender relations has many precedents in the radical political circles of the late eighteenth century. In her essay on Anna Barbauld's social circles, Anne Janowitz describes a specific "'notion of friendship'—that informal polite manner which allows rational discourse to take place . . . assimilating domestic affection and mental exercise, and apparently drawing women and men together within the circle" (67). Tracing Emma's interactions with the three men in the novel strongly suggests that this "notion of friendship" is the one she desires. This type of friendship unites "domestic affection and mental exercise," sanctioning masculine and feminine virtues and opening a space for mutual

improvement—a potential for the completion of selves fractured by gender norms. I want to situate Hays's representation of interpersonal tensions and psychological stress alongside the concerns of the radical political circles of her time—many of which she was a part of—in order to argue that *Emma Courtney* presents the obstacles to male-female friendship that persist despite the efforts of radicals to break down traditional gender barriers.

Because major critics such as Eleanor Ty, Barbara Taylor, and Walker[3] rightly draw attention to the radical female sexuality *Emma Courtney* presents, it may seem strange to focus on friendship—especially considering that two of Emma's three relationships with men are highly sexual and suffer from the inequities of such desire. However, Emma makes demands for recognition through the specific language of friendship in all three cases and argues for the importance of "unequivocal sincerity" as a foundation for each, linking the friendship bond, sincerity, and a form of mutual recognition in her analysis of gender relations. Augustus's retreat and silence after Emma's declaration of love for him forms a crucial part of the novel's sexual critique, but the resonance of this with the dismissive behavior of the other two men (for whom Emma never declares a passion) suggests a more pervasive critique of interactions between men and women. Critic Laura Mandell argues that the works of Hays are "filled with strident objections. However, these objections are not to the loss of an object of desire in which they are too deeply invested as needy women but, rather, to an inability to articulate their desires with emotional impact" (90). Mandell gestures toward my goal in this essay: to focus on Hays's exploration of the value of women's self-expression—or assertion, in

3 Others include Brian Michael Norton, Katherine Binhammer, and Tilottama Rajan.

Benjamin's language—in the eyes of men. Emma cannot express her "desires with emotional impact" to any man, regardless of her relationship with him because, Hays tells us, masculinity depends on the devaluation of women's experiences and a privileging of difference over identification.

In what follows, I will analyze each of the major relationships Emma cultivates with men, explaining how the friendship bond in each becomes a space for Hays's feminist claims of intellectual, political, and most importantly subjective legitimacy. By demonstrating the male resistance to female claims of friendship, Hays shows the reader that even exceptional men who seem somehow exempt from the prejudices of society cannot recognize women as full subjects. Emma's initial pursuit of intellectual friendship with Mr. Francis, the most politically radical man in the novel, arises from a habitual submission to perceived male superiority. Hays does not allow us to see Emma as submissive for long, however. Emma's voice is clearly heard as she asserts the difference in material conditions for women, illuminating the political inefficacy of masculinist liberal philosophy and exposing the misogyny inherent in the devaluation of emotion. When Emma *does* assert herself as a subject both intellectually and emotionally, Mr. Francis cools toward her. The competitive tendency in masculine intellectualism, which Hays establishes as one of the primary obstacles to a successful friendship between a man and woman, prevents Mr. Francis from recognizing Emma as a subject whose way of being and thinking does not need to change in order to be acceptable. His eventual dropping out of the narrative after Emma's most vehement pleas for sympathy solidifies the rupture of their social bond and his total unwillingness to connect with her emotionally or, in Benjamin's terms, to recognize her.

Turning to Augustus, I want to draw attention to an aspect of the Emma-Augustus relationship that is usually left out of the criticism. Looking to the breaking point that follows Emma's love confession, I will argue that Emma's failed attempts at maintaining a friendship with Augustus—attempts that he meets with coldness, disdain, and silence—highlight his need to be socially dominant. Augustus's refusal to maintain friendship with Emma—or even honestly explain the obstacles to the sexual relationship—represents the point of no return for male-female relationships as a product of the masculine overvaluation of the sexual in women. Once the sexual relationship has been acknowledged, its dynamics define and limit Augustus's relationship to Emma. Although Augustus embodies the hope Emma invests in politically progressive men, he suffers some of the same shortcomings as Mr. Francis, failing to display any vulnerability and choosing to remain aloof despite Emma's pleas for friendship. The introduction of a possible sexual connection destroys the early friendship before it is solidified, and Augustus begins exhibiting cold disdain for Emma's most minor expressions of good will.

Finally, I will look to Emma's relationship with Mr. Montague, from whom she seeks a reprieve from the superiority of Mr. Francis and the cold disinterest of Augustus. Mr. Montague's more developed sensibility makes him seem more emotionally receptive than the two philosophers, but his feelings of friendship are complicated by his sexual desire for Emma, which she does not return. Emma values Mr. Montague's friendship vocally and never leaves him guessing as to the status of their relationship. When Emma gives in and marries Mr. Montague, she still insists that she does not harbor a sexual passion for him and wishes to base their marriage on friendship, much to his chagrin. I

will argue that Emma's insistence on the primacy of the friendship bond, even in a husband-wife relationship, evidences distrust in the sexual relationship occasioned by the destructive nature of her relationship with Augustus. Mr. Montague is unable to accept that Emma does not harbor the same destructive passion for him as she does for Augustus, pushing him to pursue an affair of which he becomes ashamed, committing infanticide upon the product of this affair and killing himself as well. This horrific turn of events continues from Augustus's treatment of Emma and dramatizes men's intense overvaluation of the sexual bond with women, linking excessive sexual passion directly to dishonesty and failed intersubjectivity.

In all three cases, Emma articulates the importance of the friendship bond and its close relation to her ethos of "unequivocal sincerity," only to meet disinterest, disdain, and disengagement on the parts of her male companions. I make the case that Emma's interest in these three men shares a common element in her devotion to sincere self-expression and cultivating the friendship bond regardless of other attachments. Isolating the friendship bond allows us to see how Hays condemns the heteronormative anxieties that strain relationships between men and women—anxieties which she argues prevent men from recognizing women as subjects with value independent of masculine constructions of femininity. In all of these relationships, Emma is open and honest about her feelings in an attempt to gain sympathy from her companions, and in all cases she fails. The ways the men express disinterest in the social relationship differ widely, but they all allude to the failure of masculine self-construction to accommodate another full subject, a problem Emma seeks to overcome in the younger Augustus with an exercise in "unequivocal sincerity": her memoirs.

Intellectual Stimulation and the Masculine World: Mr. Francis

The primacy of male-female friendship in Emma's search for companionship cannot be adequately addressed before attending to *Emma Courtney*'s treatment of gender difference. Emma, in a letter to Mr. Francis, describes her primarily negative assessment of traditional femininity:

> I do not affect to despise, and I regularly practice, the necessary avocations of my sex; neither am I superior to their vanities . . . But all these are insufficient to engross, to satisfy, the active, aspiring, mind. Hemmed in on every side by the constitutions of society, and not less so, it may be, by my own prejudices—I perceive, indignantly perceive, the magic circle, without knowing how to dissolve the powerful spell. (116)

Here, Hays presents the reader with Emma's sophisticated understanding of social construction and the determinacy of environmental and social conditioning. Indeed, she is so acutely aware of the social construction of gendered categories that she cites her own prejudice as a limitation. Emma identifies the feminine behaviors that are constructed in order to restrict and limit female self-expression, contrasting this "hemmed in" social world with that of men who "pursue interest, honor, pleasure, as accords with their several dispositions" (116). For Emma, the world of men is unrestricted and permissive—amenable to intellectual development and self-expression "as accords with their several dispositions." This problem—seeing the masculine realm as the possibility for fuller self-expression—renders Emma's initial pursuit of friendships with men a subordinate action. She identifies with men who express themselves, as she perceives, without hindrance. Her later contact with men will reveal that the masculine realm is as socially constructed as the feminine—incomplete because founded on the repudiation of sympathy, sensibility, feeling—but she founds her desire for men on the escape from the restrictions of

normative femininity.

This original desire for knowledge and freedom of expression causes Emma to pursue intellectual friendships with men, initially with Mr. Francis, in the hopes of breaking “the magic circle.” Emma locates the point of access to a fulfilling life in those she perceives as politically progressive men—men who might allow her into their unfettered world. She first glimpses the intellectual world of men when she is staying with her father, who hosts parties for his educated friends regularly. Upon first joining these visitors, her sexual difference is marked by the gazes of her father's male companions: “Their easy compliments disconcerted me, and I shrunk, abashed, from the bold and curious eyes of the gentlemen” (56). It becomes apparent how the men at the table view her, and when Mr. Courtney reveals that she is reading classical Greek and Roman texts, one man, called the “accomplished coxcomb” responds with exemplary disapproval: “"Heavens, Mr. Courtney! You will spoil all her feminine graces; knowledge and learning, are insufferably masculine in a woman—born only for the soft solace of man!” (57). This man expresses the typical masculinist perspective on female education, emphasizing the complementarity women are supposed to embody for men. Too much learning, especially of the kind that can “spoil” “feminine graces,” will render Emma useless as a woman. Emma's knowledge is not valued or commended but scorned precisely because it might upset the hierarchical sex/gender system described in the phrase “born only for the soft solace of man!”

The nature of these lively discussions sets up the tension between Emma's intellectual capability and her socially determined position as a woman. She explains her engagement with these discussions in terms that prefigure the inequities of her friendship

with Mr. Francis: “Many of Mr. Courtney's friends were men of wit and talents, who, occasionally, discussed important subjects with freedom and ability: I never ventured to mingle in the conversations . . . I listened attentively to all that was said, and my curiosity was awakened to philosophic enquiries” (59). Emma's passivity here is not simply disengagement with the group; she endeavors to absorb the knowledge the men are creating despite her subordinate position in relation to them. The group incites in Emma the desire to learn from a mentor who will, at the very least, find it appropriate that she learn at all. Emma gets this opportunity when she later discovers that Mr. Francis is one of the men who talk with “freedom and ability” at her father's table. When she sees him again at the Morton's home—the residence of her relatives with whom she stays after her father's death—Emma refers to him as “the antagonist of the man of fashion, whose sentiments and volubility excited my youthful astonishment and indignation” (68). Mr. Francis played the philosophical radical in his visits to Mr. Courtney, and his opinions still resonate with Emma, representing a glimmer of hope among the prejudiced but learned men she has encountered.

Despite the possibility for connection, Emma feels ambivalent toward Mr. Francis, echoing the paradoxical situation she found herself in at her father's table. Mr. Francis is a learned and progressive man who does not seem to suffer from the same prejudices as his contemporaries, but Emma sees from the first that his cold intellectualism will cause tension in any relationship she attempts with him. Mr. Francis's behavior distresses Emma: “I scarcely knew whether I was most inclined to like or to fear Mr. Francis, but I determined, if possible, to cultivate his friendship” (71). This comment responds to Mr. Francis's combative, superior, and aloof demeanor as Emma sees it in

action with her aunt, Mrs. Morton: “Mrs. Morton took upon herself to entertain [the visitors, including Mr. Francis]; she exhibited her talents on various subjects, with apparent self-approbation, till a few keen remarks from Mr. Francis arrested the torrent of her eloquence” (69). This episode prefigures the contentious intellectualism Mr. Francis will use against Emma. Mrs. Morton's attempts to engage in the intellectual world, showing off her “talents on various subjects,” are shut down by “a few keen remarks” by Mr. Francis, much as Emma's philosophical musings and attempts at creating new knowledge will be foreclosed by his competitive nature. Mr. Francis's major flaw is his arrogance, and Emma foregrounds his disdain for nearly any intellectual activity besides his own as she grants us further description: “I took an opportunity, being ever desirous of active and useful employment, of offering my assistance to Mrs. Morton in the education of her young children . . . Mr. Francis remained standing in a window, his back towards us, with a book in his hand, on which he seemed intent” (69). This description comes only a paragraph after Mr. Francis “arrest[s] the torrent of [Mrs. Morton's] eloquence,” and his physical position in relation to Emma and the children underscores his feelings of superiority and disinterest in the feminine subjects Emma is teaching: “music, drawing, French, or any other accomplishment, for which my own education had capacitated me” (69). Mr. Francis's habitual disregard of these categories clues the reader in to his hypocritical susceptibility to long-standing prejudices when it comes to gender. For Emma, though, these flaws are not yet apparent as major obstacles to her friendship with Mr. Francis, and she admires his intellect deeply.

Hays carefully plots Emma's submission to Mr. Francis and complicates it from the beginning. At this early point, Emma still believes that friendship with Mr. Francis

will free her from the restraints of a stereotypically feminine life. Emma's first engagement with Mr. Francis exemplifies her subordinate position in relation to him, but it also alludes to Mr. Francis's misguided universalist claims for the liberation of an independent lifestyle—claims that will later be undermined as Emma develops a clearer understanding of the stoic philosopher's prejudices. Mr. Francis engages her after Mrs. Morton dismisses Emma's assistance in educating her children. Emma expresses some grief to which Mr. Francis replies, "'How weak is this, how unworthy of the good sense you have just manifested'" (70). Emma replies with sincerity: "'I confess it, but I feel myself, at this moment, a poor, a friendless, an unprotected being" (70). What follows is an alliance formed on the basis of rejecting feminine weakness; Mr. Francis is decidedly intolerant of such dependent behavior. Emma accepts these conditions, for now, and asks Mr. Francis to "Be to me instead of a conscience" (70). From this exchange, the attentive reader would be forced to note Emma's subordination and almost ridiculous self-effacement in the formation of this incomplete and unequal friendship. Hays does not, however, allow the reader to conclude that Emma is satisfied with a rigid mentor/student relationship, as Emma's very next encounter with Mr. Francis gives rise to her dissatisfaction with the political ethos of independence and Mr. Francis's total misinterpretation of the problem of gender.[4]

Emma's claim to the social determinacy of gendered categories directly challenges Mr. Francis's advice instead of acquiescing to the judgments of his privileged subject position. Her assertion of an intellectual self undermines Mr. Francis's abstract philosophical view. He continually urges Emma to "learn to rest on [her] own powers,"

4 See Brian Michael Norton for a thorough treatment of Mr. Francis's masculinist philosophy and Emma's relationship to that philosophy.

disregarding the societal obstacles to doing so (70). Emma articulates her complaints, however, with reason and close attention to material circumstances, actually exposing much of Mr. Francis's intellectual posturing as inadequate to her life. In response to his claim that her mind would, by "'standing alone'" "'acquire strength,'" Emma argues, "'I feel as if this would not be the case: the world appears to me a thorny and a pathless wilderness; I step with caution, and look around me with dread.—That I require protection and assistance, is, I confess, a proof of weakness, but it is nevertheless true'" (72). Without acceding to Mr. Francis's universalism, Emma uses the philosophical and political arguments she has heard Mr. Francis and others voice at her father's table, thus bringing the problem of gender to bear on liberal philosophical tenets. Mr. Francis believes this to be a fault in her logic:

> "I thought you contemned the plea of *sex*, as a sanction for weakness!"
> "Though I disallow it as a natural, I admit it as an artificial plea."
> "Explain yourself."
> "The character, you tell me, is modified by circumstances: the customs of society, then, have enslaved, enervated, and degraded woman." (72-3)

Emma establishes the connection between her emphasis on the particular material circumstances surrounding gender inequality and Mr. Francis's philosophical beliefs, which echo those espoused by William Godwin in *Political Justice* and therefore rely heavily upon the concept of socially constructed categories.[5] Mr. Francis's failure to recognize Emma's legitimate contribution to radical thought reveals itself as a shortcoming of masculine competitiveness. He starts this exchange believing he has discovered the flaw in her logic: her appeal to "sex" as a determinant of her social position in life. In this moment, Hays establishes the fact of Mr. Francis's correspondence

5 Miriam Wallace, Barbara Taylor, and Gina Luria Walker all allude to this in their readings of *Emma Courtney.*

to Godwin at the same time as she exposes “Godwinian radicalism,” to use Barbara Taylor's phrase, for its blindness to gender problems (190).

Critics universally note Mr. Francis's resemblance to William Godwin; Hays takes much of the language in the Emma-Mr. Francis letters from her actual letters to Godwin. Barbara Taylor notes, “it is the masculine bias of Godwinian radicalism, as revealed both in *Caleb Williams* and in Godwin's own letters to her, at which Hays directs her feminist reproof, delivered through an epistolary dialogue between Emma and Mr. Francis” (190). Taylor calls attention to the major political function of Mr. Francis's characterization, and my analysis makes note of the connection between masculinist politics and social domination. Focusing on the emotional inequalities of Emma's relationship with Mr. Francis emphasizes the destructive potential of a rationalist political philosophy that devalues emotionality.

Hays presents Mr. Francis's qualms as the result of anxiety about the power of emotions. He is forced to admit the soundness of Emma's logic, but he is uncomfortable with the passion with which she has expressed herself: “"I understand you: there is truth in your remark, though you have given it undue force"” (73). Unlike Emma, Mr. Francis fails to give credit where it is due; when he has to admit that Emma has exceeded his philosophical inquiry despite consistency with his school of thought, he adds a caveat that undermines the intellectual achievement of the statement. Emma responds with telling discomfort: “I hesitated—my heart was full—I felt as if there were many things which I wished to say; but, however paradoxical, the manners of Mr. Francis repressed, while they invited, confidence. I respected his reason, but I doubted whether I could inspire him with sympathy, or make him fully comprehend my feelings” (73). Emma's previous

ambivalence—her sense that she has as much to fear in Mr. Francis as to respect—has become more forceful and affecting. She makes note, particularly, of the way that Mr. Francis's cold and competitive intellectualism causes her to hesitate when expressing her concerns. At the same time as his inquisitive and liberal nature separates him from the bulk of men to whom Emma could never dream of speaking freely, his total denial of emotion as a legitimate human feature paralyzes her. He constantly insists on stoicism as a remedy for her problems, and he even attempts to undermine her arguments—entirely consistent with his own philosophy, as we have seen—by claiming that they are made with "undue force." Emma comes to a watershed moment in her relationship with Mr. Francis; she still wishes to pursue a correspondence with him after he leaves for London, but she is now sure of the limitations of his friendship.

Mr. Francis's friendship is corrupted by his need for social and intellectual domination, a problem that troubles Emma but does not dissuade her from asserting herself in an attempt to win his sympathy. She expresses some of her trepidation in speaking freely with him in her first letter:

> "My mind seemed to overflow with a thousand sentiments, that I had not the courage to express in words; but now, when the period is arrived, that I can take up my pen, unawed by your penetrating glance, unchecked by your poignant reply, and pour out my spirit before you, I feel as if its emotions are too wayward, too visionary, too contradictory, to merit your attention." (79)

Here, Emma both informs Mr. Francis of the way his demeanor silenced her in their face-to-face interactions and expresses her persistent hesitance to appear too emotional in her social observations and complaints. She has internalized Mr. Francis's contempt for emotionality, worrying that her problems do not "merit [his] attention." Emma thus alludes to her subordination in the relationship, but she continues to assert herself

nevertheless in an attempt to be recognized, communicating her recognition of Mr. Francis and the elements of his person she finds valuable: “'My harrassed [sic] mind turns to you! You will not ridicule its scruples—you will, at least, deign to reason with me, and, in the exercise of my understanding, I shall experience a temporary relief from the sensations which devour me'” (81). Emma reaches out to Mr. Francis in a time of intellectual deprivation and attempts to establish an emotional connection with him based on their philosophical exchanges.

Emma's intellectual connection with Mr. Francis is productive for her, but his position remains relatively unchanged in the narrative. In his response to her first letter, Mr. Francis contradicts Emma's musings about the state of virtue in modern society, attributing her weakness as a thinker to the flaws of her gender: “'Why will you thus take things in masses, and continually dwell in extremes? You deceive yourself; instead of cultivating your reason, you are fostering an excessive sensibility, a fastidious delicacy'” (81). Mr. Francis attempts to placate Emma by insisting that the principles of reason and virtue are “truths, which will slowly, but ultimately, prevail; in the splendour of which, the whole fabric of superstition will gradually fade and melt away” (83). This sentiment is echoed in Augustus's response to Emma's radicalism, and it seems consistent that the politically radical men Hays represents are more reformist than revolutionary. Despite later disputing Mr. Francis's political position, Emma apparently attempts to digest the letter, thinking it through as a political text: “it awakened a train of interesting reflections” (84). She values his perspective on her problems—not immediately rejecting it—and recognizes his worth as a thinker. Mr. Francis's insistence on rebuttal, contradiction, and even character defamation stands in stark contrast to Emma's

willingness to see ideas that differ from her own as valid.

Mr. Francis's coldness and impersonality become more problematic for Emma as her emotional situation worsens; the nature of their relationship, for her, has to move beyond the intellectual and into the sympathetic realm. When Emma discovers that Augustus is already married—that she has been spending a great deal of emotional energy on a man who does not value her enough to tell her this forthright—she turns to Mr. Francis in a letter composed in "the wild and incoherent language of despair" (166). Emma works, in the opening paragraphs of this letter, to configure her relationship with Mr. Francis as one of equally interested companions; she latches on to his repeated visits inquiring after her health, citing these as evidence for the strength of a friendship bond. It is apparent in the language of Emma's claims that she is actively constructing this friendship, as she alludes to Mr. Francis's tendency to respond to complaints with callousness: "'Do not chide me till I get more strength," she writes, "'I speak to you of my sorrows, for your kindness, while I was yet a stranger to you, inspired me with confidence, and my desolate heart looks round for support'" (166-7). Emma thus begins her letter to Mr. Francis by highlighting the aspects of their relationship that gesture toward mutual recognition, but she cautiously alludes to Mr. Francis's characteristic harshness, specifically requesting that he refrain from his usual lectures. This is an endeavor, on Emma's part, to transcend the strictly intellectual register of the relationship and access sympathetic engagement. She appeals to Mr. Francis's evident interest in her, but she is aware that it may not be as deep as she wishes: "'Do you, indeed, interest yourself in my fate? Call upon me, then, for the few incidents of my life—I will relate them simply, and without disguise'" (167). Emma employs the language of sincerity to

test Mr. Francis's “interest” in her situation, and one can see this whole letter as testing the depth of his sympathies. Indeed, she concludes the letter: “'If your heart be inaccessible to tender sympathies, I have only been adding more to my numberless mistakes'” (167). This plea gives us insight into Emma's trust in Mr. Francis and evidences her hope that he will prove himself exemplary among men.

Emma's confidence in Mr. Francis is repaid with precisely the “chiding” attitude she hopes he will postpone in favor of a sympathetic response. In his response, Mr. Francis is shown to be incapable of addressing Emma as a friend and not a receptacle for his unchanging philosophical ideas. In accordance with his rigid individualism, Mr. Francis chastises Emma for complaining of misfortunes “'assiduously, unintermittedly [sic], provided by yourself'” and claims that her “'conduct will scarcely admit of any other denomination than moon-struck madness, hunting after torture'” (169). Mr. Francis is unwilling to console Emma in any way that legitimizes her experience; instead, his response further isolates her and even pathologizes her emotional tumult, exempting Augustus of any fault in the situation. He is incredulous also about the weight of Emma's situation: “'But I should be ashamed of putting disappointed love into my enumerations. Evils of this sort are the brood of folly begotten upon fastidious indolence. They shrink into non-entity, when touched by the wand of truth'” (170). Here, Mr. Francis is again ascribing Emma's suffering to her own failings and, by arguing that “'evils of this sort'” “'shrink into non-entity, when touched by the wand of truth,'” he is denying the compatibility of his philosophy with Emma's feminine weakness, literally erasing her problems in his philosophical scheme.

Critics such as Taylor have cited Emma's response to Mr. Francis's philosophizing

as the novel's quintessential “feminist reproof” (190). According to Taylor, “the leading principle on which [Mr. Francis] insists is the imperative for absolute autonomy . . . What Francis/Godwin has failed to see, Emma goes on, is how the present 'customs of society,' which 'have enslaved, enervated, and degraded woman,' have corrupted intimate relations” (191). Taylor calls attention to the political ramifications of Mr. Francis's blindness—his inability to recognize that “absolute autonomy” is impossible for Emma as a woman. I argue that the emotional and intersubjective element of this exchange enriches the political work of Mr. Francis's characterization. Mr. Francis is unable to recognize Emma's problem as legitimate because he frames her issues in a philosophical and not an interpersonal context. Emma calls attention to this misrecognition: “'What does it signify whether, abstractly considered, a misfortune is worthy of the names real and substantial, if the consequences produced are the same? That which embitters all my life, that which stops the genial current of health and peace is, whatever be its nature, a real calamity to me” (171). Emma indicts Mr. Francis not only for the inadequacy of his philosophical scheme in relation to problems of socially constructed gender constraints, but for the way his intellectualism reduces and invalidates her experience. Mr. Francis minimizes the importance of Emma's problems without realizing that it is the effect, not the cause, that she hopes he will help her negotiate.

Hays sets up the problem of consolation in Mr. Francis's strict adherence to a purely intellectual discourse with Emma. Emma articulates this tension most clearly when she asks, “'Why call woman, miserable, oppressed, and impotent, woman—*crushed, and then insulted*—why call her to *independence . . . This is mockery!* Even you, wise and benevolent as you are, can mock the child of slavery and sorrow!'” (173;

emphasis in original). Emma has already clearly expressed how societal limitations render her incapable of applying Mr. Francis's remedies to her situation. She then calls out the way that his philosophy of independence obscures his perception of the gender-specific problems that she faces and truncates his sympathetic response to such problems. Beyond simply attending to the validity of his call to independence, Emma deems his repeated injunctions "mockery" and condemns his dismissal of her complaints. Later, she insists that "'by affecting to deny their force [that of her complaints], you will endeavour to deceive either me or yourself.—I have acquired the power of reasoning on this subject at a dear rate—at the expence of inconceivable suffering. Attempt not to deny me the miserable, expensive victory'" (177). Emma's self-assertion in the face of Mr. Francis's dismissal takes its most forceful shape in this moment, as she boldly claims agency in relating her story and insists that Mr. Francis unfairly accuses her of undue passion. She also undoes Mr. Francis's pure distinctions between reason and passion by arguing that she gained the "power of reasoning on this subject" "at the expence of inconceivable suffering." Her endurance of the emotional tumult that results from Augustus's rejection and silence establishes her as the expert on the situation.

I have emphasized instances of Mr. Francis failing to recognize Emma as a legitimate subject, but because he remains polite and at times indulgent, Emma does believe that he values her friendship. After her letter insisting that he is unfairly dismissive of her problem with Augustus, Mr. Francis seems to exercise some sympathy. Emma claims, "while he opposed my sentiments, as conceiving them destructive of my tranquility, [he] mingled with his opposition a gentle and delicate consideration for my feelings, that sensibly affected me, and excited my grateful attachment" (178). If the

reader takes Emma's interpretation of Mr. Francis's behavior at face value, it seems that he makes an effort to correct his callous behavior and to recognize Emma's problems as valid cause for consolation. Hays plots the total disappearance of Mr. Francis from the narrative following this final exchange in such a way that suggests Mr. Francis's sympathies to be artificial, at best working to placate Emma to avoid further conflict.

Having established the importance of letters in Emma's relationship with Mr. Francis, Hays plots the final events surrounding him using letters and silence. Emma's mental health is growing worse—Mr. Francis's visits are apparently infrequent enough that her life becomes "Sad, vacant, inactive"—and she goes to visit Mrs. Harley, Augustus's kind mother, for a "change of air" and "change of scene" (178). Upon leaving London, Emma leaves "a letter of grateful acknowledgment for Mr. Francis," signaling tangibly the importance of his support and friendship. This would be an insignificant detail if the remainder of the narrative included Mr. Francis as a friend to Emma, but Hays's next and final mention of him strongly suggests that he finds his attachment to Emma insignificant. Feeling unwelcome at the Mortons' home in London, Emma reaches out to Mr. Francis after she experiences some of Augustus's coldest comments: "I took an early opportunity of addressing a few lines to Mr. Francis, informing him of my situation and entreating his counsel. I waited a week, impatiently, for his reply, but in vain" (191). Mr. Francis's silence disturbs Emma, and Hays plots his unavailability to correspond with Emma's most acute vulnerability. Emma tells Mr. Montague, whose friendship with her is just now beginning to develop, and he "repaired, himself, to the house of Mr. Francis; and, finding it shut up, was informed by the neighbours, that Mr. Francis had quitted England, a short time before, in company with a friend, intending to make a continental

tour" (191). This description establishes Mr. Francis's intellectual privilege and suggests, by the roundabout way that Emma discovers his absence, his disinterest in maintaining the friendship bond she so values. Mr. Francis pursues an opportunity for intellectual growth that is typically reserved for men of some status, and he pursues it with a friend the reader can assume is male. Unlike Emma, who alerted him to her departure from London and thanked him for his kindness, Mr. Francis does not deem it necessary to send Emma notice of his long-term absence. This is a result of his failure to recognize Emma's interpersonal needs (often and clearly expressed) and evidences his purely self-interested relationship with her.

Hays plots Emma's discovery of Mr. Francis's absence at the lowest point of her social isolation to underscore the emotional/sympathetic failure of the relationship. Emma does not take the news of Mr. Francis's absence well: "This intelligence was a new shock to me. I called on some of my former acquaintance [sic] . . . but every one appeared too much engrossed by his own affairs to give himself the trouble of making any great exertion for others" (191). Referencing Emma's utter isolation immediately following her sad discovery, Hays allows the reader to count Mr. Francis among those men "too engrossed" to make "any great exertion for others." Emma experiences an intense bout of *ennui* following Mr. Francis's trip to the continent, and if we read his departure alongside Emma's from earlier, we can see that Mr. Francis's silence contrasts with Emma's genuine interest in keeping him informed of her whereabouts. Emma values Mr. Francis's friendship enough to share the logistics of her daily life with him in hopes of maintaining contact. Mr. Francis's understated exit from the narrative emphasizes the incidental nature of his connection with Emma. He is interested only insofar as the

relationship grants him a chance to demonstrate his intellectual superiority, fading away from Emma's life and the narrative when the relationship becomes emotionally charged, requiring the hard work of recognition alongside assertion.

The Sexual/Social Imbalance: Augustus Harley

Mr. Francis fails to function as a confidant and friend to Emma, severing ties when the emotional work of consoling her becomes a daily part of their correspondence. Emma's need for consolation is brought about by the rejection by and silence of the man she loves romantically, Augustus Harley. Augustus haunts Emma's relationships from the moment he is introduced, and he is more of an absent cause than a literal presence for much of the novel. Ty notes Augustus's characteristic silence: "Augustus repeatedly evades Emma's queries on the state of his heart and postpones replying to her letters. Her plea for 'one hour's frank conversation' with him is ignored, and Emma, like the reader, is left uncertain of his response to her passion until almost the end of the novel" (51). I would add that Augustus's silence resonates with Mr. Francis's and signals Hays's persistent concern for men's capacity to recognize women. Emma's feelings for Augustus are sexual/romantic and obviously differ from her feelings for Mr. Francis, but she again stresses the importance of open self-expression in pursuit of mutual recognition. Even after Augustus rejects Emma sexually, she insists on the maintenance of a social bond between them. In this section, I will focus on the way that Hays intertwines Emma's pleas for friendship with the sentimental drama of her spurned sexual desire for him, signaling that Emma values a social bond associated with openness and receptiveness even in the absence of a desired sexual bond. Augustus's denial and eventual "disdain" of Emma's friendship is a substantial part of his character development and a narrative element Hays returns to multiple times. This parallel issue sheds light on the heteronormative obstacles to the type of intellectual congeniality Emma and Augustus seem to share at the start of their relationship.

In focusing on Emma's desire for a continued friendship with Augustus despite romantic rejection, I do not want to shift attention away from the importance of the sexual politics of their relationship. Instead, I want to argue that Hays demonstrates the limitations normative masculinity places on male-female friendship as an expansion of her critique of heteronormativity writ large. Augustus returns Emma's sexual desire despite the obstacle of his previous marriage, but he never expresses a desire for friendship in the absence of a sexual bond. Hays perceives a stark difference in the way that men and women value each other, as Augustus's cold disinterest contrasts with Emma's frequent requests for a renewed friendship. Laments such as, "'But why am I to lose your friendship? My heart tells me, I have not deserved this,'" and "Why was I to sacrifice a friend, from whose conversation I had derived improvement and pleasure?" abound in Emma's letters and thoughts, but Augustus consistently ignores, belittles, and avoids her after realizing that their love is impossible (128, 131). This aspect of the strained relationship is not mentioned in the criticism, and I believe it constitutes a significant element in Hays's critique of masculinity continuing from Mr. Francis's refusal to engage sympathetically when Emma expresses herself plainly.

Like Mr. Francis before him, Augustus represents hope for Emma because he seems to be exceptional among men. Emma learns from her cousin Ann of the history of the Harley family. After the death of Mr. Harley, "Augustus Harley, the heir, immediately sold the estate, and divided the produce, in equal shares, between each individual of the family . . . Augustus, who had been educated for the law, disgusted with its chicanery, relinquished the profession, content to restrain his expenses within the limits of a narrow income" (85). From this history, Emma assumes that Augustus is benevolent, selfless,

and, like Mr. Francis, exempt from the prejudices that usually characterize the English gentry. This assumption proves as false as it did for Mr. Francis, and Emma finds that Augustus's need for social domination blocks the line of sincere communication between them. Hays is critical of Emma's idealization of Augustus, and her desire for him actually hinders one of the most equal relationships she has in the text: her friendship with his mother Mrs. Harley.

Whereas Emma's struggle with Mr. Francis does not involve a sexual relationship, sexual desire very clearly complicates and even trumps friendship in the case of Augustus. Augustus is absent from the Harley household when Emma is introduced, so she comes to know Mrs. Harley before she meets her son. Hays represents this relationship as nearly flawless in terms of what Emma wants: "a strong sympathy united us, and we became almost inseparable. Every day I discovered in this admirable woman a new and indissoluble tie, that bound me to her. Her cultivated understanding afforded an inexhaustible fund of instruction and entertainment; and her affectionate heart spread a charm over her most indifferent actions" (91). Here, we can see that Hays sketches a more unproblematic intellectual and social relationship between Emma and another woman—one that answers Emma's call for an instructor but does not slip into the domination/subordination dynamic. Emma's idealization of Augustus—learning of him from the community, his mother, and a portrait of him in the Harley household—becomes the only source of tension in this female friendship: "We read, we walked, we conversed together; but, with whatever subjects these conversations commenced, some associated idea always led them to terminate in an eulogium on the virtues and talents, or an expression of regret, for the absence of Augustus" (91). Hays introduces the connection

based on Augustus as harmless enough, but before long we start to see the problems with Emma's desire. What could be a healthy and stable friendship between Emma and Mrs. Harley is ultimately interrupted by Emma's sexual desire for Augustus and her unconscious transference of qualities from the mother to the son: “Without being conscious of it myself, my grateful love for Mrs. Harley had, already, by a transition easy to be traced by a philosophic mind, transferred itself to her son” (91). Emma's obsession with Augustus takes his mother out of the equation and concentrates her desire—rational and passionate alike—onto the “ideal object” Augustus (92).

Hays structures Augustus's indirect obstruction of a mutual friendship Emma's major mistake in the novel—an instance of her sexual desire misleading and deceiving her. This tension arises after Emma learns that she missed an opportunity to meet Augustus in person. Her conversation with Mrs. Harley that night was “for the first time, constrained, reserved, and painful, and we retired at an early hour to our respective apartments” (92). Mrs. Harley is very conscious of the effect her mention of Augustus's visit has, and she begins to consciously avoid mentioning him: “but the constraint she put upon herself was too evident and painful; and we no longer sought, with equal ardour, an interchange of sentiment, reserve took place of the tender confidence of friendship” (93). Here, we see Hays precisely describe a relationship of mutual recognition that is interrupted when Mrs. Harley begins withholding her thoughts and feelings, violating the code of “unequivocal sincerity” alluded to in the phrases “equal ardour,” “interchange of sentiment,” and “tender confidence of friendship.” Before she has even met him, Emma's sexual desire for Augustus disturbs her peace and consumes her thoughts.

Augustus's disruption of Emma's friendship with Mrs. Harley highlights the

tension sexual desire introduces to relationships and prefigures the harm his refusal of friendship will do to Emma. Mrs. Harley represents, in more ways than one, the potential for an equal relationship between Emma and Augustus, and she becomes an advocate of friendship after the relationship dissolves. Emma first meets Augustus as he is in a position of vulnerability, injured by an accident with a carriage; she takes him in and nurses him to health, after which he exclaims, "'My sister!—my friend!—how shall I ever pay the debt I owe you?'" (100). In this moment of gratitude, Augustus begins to acknowledge some affection for Emma utilizing terms with equitable connotations like "sister" and "friend." Mrs. Harley, too, establishes this relationship as she "folded her beloved Augustus, and myself, alternately to her affectionate bosom, calling us 'her children—her darling children!'" (100). This potentially equal space of friendship has a short life after this event—one in which Augustus "endeavoured to testify his gratitude, by *encouraging and assisting me* in the pursuit of learning and science" (102; emphasis added). Emma enjoys a lively and engaged intellectual atmosphere at the Harley household, combining her affectionate friendships for Mrs. Harley and Augustus alike, and the three come to resemble a family formed on the basis of mutual recognition. Augustus does instruct Emma, taking on an elevated intellectual role, but this instruction is not the dismissive dogmatism of Mr. Francis. Emma and Augustus enjoy a relationship in which "Every day brought with it the acquisition of some new truth; and our intervals from study were employed in music, in drawing, in conversation, in reading the *belles lettres*—in—'The feast of reason, and the flow of souls'" (103). This description suggests the strong intellectual and social tie that Emma and Augustus seem to cultivate effortlessly—one which produces in Emma a desire for a romantic bond founded on this

sturdy social bond. Indeed, Emma will insist that her feeling comes from "'An attachment sanctioned by nature, reason, and virtue, ennobl[ing] the mind capable of conceiving and cherishing it'" (112). Emma expresses her desire as multifaceted, but it rests upon a foundational social bond that supplies it with strong interpersonal as well as sexual elements. The desire is described nobly as "sanctioned by nature, reason, and virtue," suggesting the moral and intellectual basis for a union of minds.

The potential for a socially and intellectually robust romantic relationship in Augustus is the central problem of the novel, and the political ramifications of Augustus's unavailability and eventual disinterest in Emma become evident from an early point. Overhearing Augustus and his mother talking, Emma realizes before she declares her love that obstacles abound:

> "It would be a comfort to my declining years to see you the husband of a woman of virtue and sensibility: domestic affections meliorate the heart; no one ought to live wholly to himself." . . .
> "I think, perhaps, nearly with you, but my situation is, *in many respects, a peculiar one* . . . Neither do I pretend to have lived so long in the world without imbibing many of its prejudices, and catching the contagion of its habits."
> "They are so unworthy of you." (103; emphasis in original)

We are as unsure of the nature of these prejudices as Emma is at this time, but we will soon come to see that Augustus alludes to the prejudices keeping him in an unhappy marriage. Mrs. Harley herself does not know about the marriage at this point, and she assumes that he is alluding to the legal hold on his inheritance, which stipulates against marriage. Augustus's insincerity is then twofold, as he keeps both women in his life unaware of the "peculiarities" that hinder him. Hays does not condemn his admitting that he has "imbib[ed] many of [the world's] prejudices," but she will come to condemn the way that he refuses to ease Emma's pain by explaining his situation.

It is the central tragedy of the novel that Emma, assuming Augustus's friendship secure, finds his demeanor receptive to sincere self-expression and deems it safe to declare her love to him openly, violating the norms of heterosexual interaction that would have her silently await his proposal. Emma is moved to action by Augustus's impending trip to London: "I was going to lose, perhaps for ever, my preceptor, my friend! He, from whom my mind had acquired knowledge, and in whose presence my heart had rested satisfied" (109). Hays gives the reader a clear understanding of Emma's love for Augustus as based in friendship and trust. Emma laments both the loss of an intellectual companion and a sympathetic friend, cursing the norms that give her pause: "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!" (109). Leveling a thorough critique at a "pernicious system of morals, which teaches us hypocrisy can be virtue," Emma presents a great deal of anxiety about the process of revealing her affection, as it transgresses the norms of passive femininity and produces a very real affective response in her (109). Hays draws the systemic obstacles to Emma's sincerity in order to set up her false hope in Augustus's exceptionality: "He is well acquainted with the purity, and the sincerity of my heart—he will at least regard me with esteem and tender pity . . . Have I not witnessed his humanity, have I not experienced his delicacy, in a thousand instances? Though he should be obliged to wound, he is incapable of insulting, the heart that loves him" (109-110). Emma assumes from the free and open discourse she has had with Augustus that, whatever the "peculiarities" of his situation—and she is aware that he may "be obliged to wound" her heart—he is "incapable of insulting" her in this time of vulnerable sincerity. In this reflection before the act, Emma sketches the expectations of Augustus's steadfast

friendship and uses them to embolden her to make her declaration, intolerant of artifice and reluctant to let Augustus leave before the truth is revealed.

By setting up Emma's faith in Augustus as an exception to the rule—as a friend whose sympathy for her guarantees his recognition of her feelings—Hays marks Augustus's reception of Emma's declaration and, especially, his refusal to remain friends as evidence of the destructive power of normative masculinity. Augustus's response to Emma's confession combines a dismissal of the passion on which it is founded and a reluctance to express any passion himself: "'[His letter] spoke of the illusions of the passions—of the false flattering medium through which they presented objects to our view . . . There was a great part of [Emma's letter] to which he knew not how to reply . . . And now, it may be, he had better be silent . . . He was highly flattered by the favourable opinion I entertained of him'" (118). As Emma relates the contents of Augustus's letter, we see that his first recourse is to the language of rationalist philosophy; echoing the values of Mr. Francis, he starts by dismissing the rapturous feeling that in his view deceives Emma into esteeming him more highly than he deserves. While Hays in some sense argues that passion is blinding, she continually insists on the need for both passion and reason, a balance that the masculinist philosophies of Mr. Francis and Augustus disallow. Beyond his rationalist dismissal of passion, Augustus refuses to sincerely answer Emma's inquiry, claiming that there is "a great part" of her letter "to which he knew not how to reply." Augustus's failure to find the language for responding to a woman's declaration of love suggests that expectations of normative femininity count among the prejudices he has unwittingly "imbibed" from the social systems of the English gentry. Emma's confession is made on the basis of two assumptions: that

Augustus values her friendship enough to be honest with her about his extenuating circumstances, and that he is politically radical enough to accept her deviation from normative femininity.

Significantly, Emma holds on to the ethos of "unequivocal sincerity" that drives her throughout the novel, despite the problem it presents and Augustus's inability to recognize and reciprocate her sincere assertion. In her response to Augustus's curt letter, Emma holds tenaciously to the course she has begun: "'If to have been more guarded and reserved would have been more discreet, I have already forfeited all claim to this discretion—to affect it now, would be vain, and, by pursuing a middle course, I should resign the only advantage I may ever derive from my sincerity, the advantage of expressing my thoughts and feelings with freedom'" (119). Emma's defiant adherence to her sincerity resists subordination in relation to Augustus, and she insists on this ethical program as a means of keeping communication open. She asks Augustus to be frank about the status of their relationship: "'Tell me, that I have indulged too long the wild and extravagant chimeras of a romantic imagination. Let us walk together into the palace of Truth, where every one was compelled by an irresistible, controuling, power, to reveal his inmost sentiments! . . . I can no longer sustain a suspense that preys on my spirits'" (122). Hays plots this request as soon after the initial rejection as possible, highlighting the cruelty of Augustus's refusal and silence. In asserting her love for Augustus, Emma does not attempt to dominate him by refusing the complexity and unpredictability of his feelings; instead, she insists only on a return of confidence that would assuage her pain and establish equal terms.

Hays labors to show the reader that Emma, despite her passion for Augustus, is

keenly aware of the legitimacy of his feelings no matter how they differ from hers. By combining an acknowledgment of Augustus's agency with a request for friendship, Emma resists the passionate ultimatums that could answer such disappointment. Her plea for a restoration of friendship combines with a compromise that recognizes Augustus's right to refuse her romantically: "'But why am I to lose your friendship? My heart tells me, I have not deserved this! Do not suspect, that I have so little justice, or so little magnanimity, as to refuse you the privilege, the enviable privilege, of being master of your own affections'" (128). Emma ensures Augustus that, despite her continued assertion of the importance of her feelings, she also respects his no matter their nature. The primary desire for Emma, at this point, is knowledge of those feelings. Again tying her plea for friendship with a promise of recognition, Emma makes her request clear: "'I now desire only that repose which is the end of doubt, and this, I think, I should regain by one hour's frank conversation with you; I would compose myself, listen to you, and yield to the sovereignty of reason'" (129). Hays is meticulous in representing Emma's desires as entirely legitimate, considering the relationship that she has had with Augustus up to this point. Having assured Augustus that his wishes will be respected, Emma desires only that he treat her as a friend and confide in her, at once alleviating her suspense and recognizing her as a subject whose desires are valid and warrant a sincere response.

Emma privileges sincerity in her relationship with Augustus just as she does with all others. On multiple occasions, she uses the direct language that she begins the novel with, asking him to "'Remember, all my earnestness, and all my simplicity, and *learn the value of sincerity*'" and "fix upon your mind, the value of *unequivocal sincerity*'" (158; emphasis in original). Emma never holds anything back in her relations with Augustus, so

when he attempts to restore an acquaintanceship without disclosing his circumstances, the artificiality of their interactions becomes too much for her to bear. Augustus "was a perfect enigma, and every thing he said or wrote tended to increase the mystery" (134). This insincerity is condemnable by Emma's standards; it is an unwillingness both to assert and to recognize, generative of an entirely artificial and formal relationship. If Augustus values her as a friend, Emma reasons, he should wish to alleviate some of her emotional pain: "by leaving room for conjecture, [Augustus's silence] left room for the illusions of fancy, and of hope. Had I never expressed this, he might have affected ignorance of my sensations; he might have pleaded guiltless, when, in the agony of my soul, I accused him of having sacrificed my peace to his disingenuousness [sic]" (135). Here, Emma justifies her continual insistence on Augustus's honesty because she sees it as necessary for her mental health. Emma still hopes that such a request—backed up by an argument about the emotional pain he is causing—will move Augustus to sincerity and a restoration of friendship.

Hays solidifies her condemnation of Augustus's behavior when, in response to Emma's continual requests for honesty, Augustus cools toward her and begins acting indifferently—even maliciously—in letters and in person. Time passes and, Emma tells us,

> It would be endless to enumerate all the little incidents that occurred; which, however trifling they might appear in the recital, continued to operate in one direction. Many letters passed to the same purport. My curiosity was a consuming passion; but this inflexible, impenetrable, man, was still silent, or alternately evaded, and resented, my enquiries. We continued, occasionally, to meet, but generally in company. (138)

Emma's initial confession of love and her subsequent requests for friendship break down

the social bond on Augustus's side, and, by repeating Emma's pleas and the compromising language of them—"I required no particulars, but merely requested to be assured of a *present, existing, engagement*"—Hays condemns Augustus's behavior as unduly cruel and stubborn (135; emphasis in original). The reader is struck by the tragic turn of Emma's relationship with Augustus, changing from an intimate and open friendship to the shadow of an incidental acquaintanceship. Emma tells us that, beyond silence and evasion, Augustus actually begins to "resent" her "enquiries." Her assertion of a wounded heart and troubled mind is entirely unsuccessful, and Augustus seeks only to avoid vulnerability by ignoring her questions and, eventually, acting openly hostile to her.

Perhaps the plainest evidence for Hays's criticism of Augustus arises in his increasingly dismissive behavior that, in taking over his general disposition, moves beyond distaste for Emma's questions and into disdain for her personality. Emma repeatedly calls attention to this callousness in her letters to him, admitting her faults but asking him to see his own: "'I, also, have made many mistakes—have been guilty of many extravagances. Yet, distrust the morality, that sternly commands you to pierce the bosom that most reveres you, and then to call it virtue' . . . I concluded with expressing a wish to see him—'merely as a friend'—requesting a line in reply" (140). This is just one of many examples of Emma asking Augustus to look critically at his own behavior and acknowledge the pain that he is causing her; Augustus's total dismissal of Emma's moral argument is yet another instance of his failure to recognize her as an agent, an intellectual, a friend. As Emma continues to insist on Augustus's sincerity, he "grew captious, disputatious, gloomy, and imperious—the more I studied to please him, the less

I succeeded" (140). From a confidant who aided and encouraged Emma's social and intellectual growth, Augustus has come to resemble a more malicious Mr. Francis, disapproving of Emma's "conduct, [her] opinions, [her] sentiments" (140). Emma tells us, "my frankness offended him . . . He seemed to overlook all my efforts to please, and, with a severe and penetrating eye, to search only for my errors—errors, into which I was but too easily betrayed, by the painful, and delicate, situation, in which I had placed myself" (140-1). Augustus's exceptional freedom with Emma in intellectual pursuits has disappeared; he responds to her attempts to restore some kind of friendship by disavowing any similarity with her, chastising her differences in opinion by deeming them "errors." The "painful, and delicate" situation in which Emma finds herself is occasioned by Augustus's behavior, and Hays criticizes him doubly by showing us the ways he preys upon her vulnerability in social situations.

Augustus's disavowal of likeness with Emma illustrates a political impasse for gender relations that figures significantly in her critique of late eighteenth-century progressivism. Having established Augustus's disavowal of Emma socially and intellectually, Hays presents us with a scenario at the home of the Melmoths that combines political debate with the interpersonal problems the Emma-Augustus relationship highlights. In response to Emma's pacifist argument that soldiers are murderers, the conservative Mrs. Melmoth asks Augustus, "'Pray sir . . . are you of Miss Courtney's opinion—do you think it right to call soldiers murderers?" (143). Augustus's response at once betrays his radical politics and demonstrates the newfound distance he places between himself and Emma: "'Upon my word, Madam,' with an air of irony, ' you must excuse me from entering into such nice distinctions—when ladies differ, who shall

presume to decide?'" (143; emphasis added). We can easily read this quip, delivered with an "air of irony," as a betrayal of Augustus's true character. As we see throughout the novel, he has no qualms about debating and would not typically abstain from rendering an opinion on a politically important question; Augustus's dismissal of the question rests upon the distance he places between himself and the "ladies"—Mrs. Melmoth and Emma—who are at that moment debating. In quipping about the proper barriers between men and women in social situations, Augustus appears like the men of fashion that Emma remembers from her father's house parties.

Hays presents Augustus's withdrawal from the conversation as symptomatic of his growing disdain for Emma, not a change in his politics. Only moments later at this same social function, Augustus engages in a spirited debate about the justification for slavery with another man, Mr. Pemberton, arguing with all of the reverence for "freedom" and "humanity" that Emma remembers from their early friendship. When Emma approaches Augustus alone after the debate, she attempts to connect with him politically. Regarding the company they had just left, "I expressed my disappointment, disgust, and contempt, in terms, it may be, a little too strong" (146). "Too strong" or not, Emma's opinions are not so far from Augustus's as the reader knows him. His response falsely disavows any likeness of feeling with Emma: "'I was fastidious,' Augustus told me, 'I wanted a world made on purpose for me, and beings formed after one model . . . I was a romantic enthusiast—and should endeavour to become more like an inhabitant of the world'" (146). Augustus reduces Emma's political radicalism—which he previously expressed a great deal of agreement with—to the selfish and immature complaints of an emotional woman. He confirms this gendered contempt: "'Triflers can give no serious occasion for

uneasiness:—the humours of superior women are sometimes less tolerable'" (146). Unaware of the irony of his contempt for "superior women," Augustus begins resorting to gendered language and assumptions that, on a societal level, bar women from expressing themselves intellectually.

Hays shows the reader that Augustus's misogynistic behavior is a result of his own disavowed vulnerability. The situation analyzed above is nothing like the many spirited intellectual conversations he, his mother, and Emma had before the introduction of sexual desire to the Emma-Augustus relationship. Emma's accidental discovery of Augustus's secret—his previous and still-existing marriage—should allow Augustus to renew his friendship with Emma because the emotional pain of telling her the truth is passed. The fact that he continues to refuse Emma's friendship despite the removal of this obstacle is telling and situates his attitude toward Emma as a repression of emotionality pathological to masculinity, more deeply rooted in his character than the reader assumed. Hays evidences this by having Augustus dismiss not only Emma's injunctions to friendship, but his own mother's suggestion: "'behold in Emma your sister—*your friend!*—confide in her—she is worthy of your confidence!'" (183; emphasis in original). Emma believes that this request, enhanced by the gravity of the situation—by its inclusion in a deathbed speech—will change Augustus's attitude and mark a turning point for their relationship. Attempts to console Augustus only produce hostility, as Emma detects that Augustus is unhealthily dealing with his loss:

> Augustus behaved towards me with distant, cold, respect. I observed in his features, under a constrained appearance of composure, marks of deep and strong emotion. I recalled to my mind the injunctions of my deceased friend—I yearned to pour into his bosom the balm of sympathy, but, with an aspect bordering on severity, he repressed the expression of those ingenuous feelings which formed

my character, and shunned the confidence I so earnestly sought. (184)

Even with the obstacle of Augustus's previous engagement removed, his behavior is "distant" and "cold," and he responds with hostility to Emma's most basic displays of compassion. Hays presents this behavior especially critically as she positions it after Mrs. Harley's final attempt to reunite Augustus and Emma and restore the familial bonds that once held the three of them together in sympathetic friendship. This plot point calls back to the unrestrained pleasures of the trusting and reciprocal relationships formed at the Harley household, and Hays clearly marks the distance between that moment and now.

While Emma has continually attempted to both assert herself and recognize Augustus's position, Augustus has succeeded in shutting down both of these endeavors. Hays gives us some insight into his selfish understanding of the situation. We are not to forget that Augustus does return Emma's romantic feelings, and this underscores his denial of the friendship bond all the more forcefully. In one of Emma's most direct pleas for friendship—the first time that she makes the request in person—Augustus's ironic attempt at differentiating his feelings from Emma's is telling: "'Permit me to ask you . . . whether, absorbed in your own sensations, you allowed yourself to remember, and to respect, the feelings of others?'" (188). Emma's reply asserts Hays's reading of the situation: "'We have both erred—why should we not exchange mutual forgiveness? Why should we afflict each other? Friendship, like charity, should suffer all things and be kind!'" (188). Augustus replies, "'My mind . . . is differently constituted,'" refusing to acknowledge the shared responsibility for emotional tumult that Emma, throughout, has insisted upon. Emma's direct use of the term friendship here further affirms the great value that she places on it in contrast to Augustus. He is unable to see how his conduct is

unfair and fails to “respect” the “feelings of others” far more egregiously than Emma's.

Augustus never demonstrates the self-critical behavior we see in Emma, suggesting his failure to recognize in Emma's assertions of her emotional pain any real culpability. Even on his deathbed, when he reveals that he loved Emma the whole time, Augustus cannot take full responsibility for his behavior and devaluation of friendship: “'yet, my conflicts were, even, more cruel than yours—I had not only to contend against my own sensibility, but against yours also'” (205-6). That Augustus still does not realize how he became “absorbed” in *his* “own sensations” and failed to “respect the feelings of others” strikes the reader as absurd at this point in the narrative, and Hays takes advantage of this tender moment to reveal his inability to take responsibility as a failure of recognition and an overvaluation of his own suffering. Within this scheme, we can see how Augustus's “sensibility,” affected as it was by the impossibility of his sexual relationship with Emma, responds only to the grief of sexual frustration and does not register the importance of friendship, nor the countless opportunities that he had to restore it. This ultimate failure evidences the power of a masculine system of values that cannot accommodate the importance of an intimate relationship with a woman outside of the conjugal and domestic space of legitimized sexual desire.

The Tragedy of Sexual Passion: Mr. Montague

Recoiling from Augustus's deceit, cruelty, and selfishness, Emma seeks restorative and friendship-based relationships, finding a foothold in an unlikely companionship with Mr. Montague. Mr. Montague does not possess the intellectual enthusiasm of Mr. Francis and Augustus, and his old-world sensibility—bordering on effeminacy—seems to be a result of his distance from the cold rationalism that characterizes the two "philosophers." Although his sensibility sets him apart, Mr. Montague suffers from often excessive behavior: "[he is] full of fire and vivacity, with imperious manners, an impetuous temper, and stubborn prejudices" (68). Lacking the cold and rational demeanor of Mr. Francis and Augustus, Mr. Montague presents a different obstacle to forming a friendship based on "unequivocal sincerity." Mr. Montague's is a residual form of masculinity in Hays's eyes, characterized by a lively sensibility but employing that sensibility primarily to court women.[6] The flaw attached to this is Mr. Montague's anxiety about forming a sexual relationship with Emma, which he fiercely desires despite Emma' insistence that her affection for him is platonic. Hays distinguishes Mr. Montague's coercion from Emma's confession of love to Augustus because Emma's response to Mr. Montague, unlike Augustus's to her, is sincere from the first. Mr. Montague's continued insistence on a sexual bond contrasts with Emma's attention to preserving a friendship with Augustus even after she is rejected sexually.

Mr. Montague's sexual desire for Emma is all-consuming and forecloses a strong social bond with her time and again. From the first, we see that his sympathies for Emma are tied up in his hope for sexual reward. Seeing Emma's despair at the Mortons' ill

6 Claudia Johnson informs my understanding of Mr. Montague's specific type of masculinity and its relation to power.

treatment of her, Mr. Montague proposes marriage as the solution: “After some expression of sympathy for the distress which he had witnessed, apologies for his intrusion, and incoherent expressions of respect and regard, he somewhat abruptly offered his hand and heart to my acceptance . . . yet, he expressed himself with the air of a man who believes he is conferring an obligation” (88). Mr. Montague hastily declares his love for Emma, proposing marriage as a solution to her qualms with her current living situation. Hays gives the reader this early exposure of the self-interested origin of Mr. Montague's sympathetic behavior, but Hays distinguishes this employment of sympathy from an incapacity for sympathy. Mr. Montague is capable of sympathetic connection, evidenced by his delicate and often affected sensibility, but his understanding of gender relations is even more limited than that of Mr. Francis and Augustus. He cannot understand how “a woman in [Emma's] situation, unprepossessed, could reject so advantageous an establishment” (88), and this limitation prevents him from directing his sensibility toward establishing a friendship with Emma. He instead comes to rely on expressions of affected sensibility to entice Emma's sympathy and keep alive the hope of their romantic attachment.

Hays goes to great lengths to show that Emma, unlike Augustus who occupies a similar position in terms of unrequited love, is both honest about her feelings and sympathetic to Mr. Montague's injuries. Disgusted by Mr. Montague's passionate insistence that “His love . . . was converted into vengeance by my scorn” (89), Emma turns away and intends to leave Mr. Montague to weep alone. Emma's expression of sympathy that follows is an example of her moral imperative to recognize all subjects, regardless of her differentiation from them:

> I turned from him somewhat disdainfully; but, instantly recollecting myself, I stepped back, and apologized for the harsh manner into which I had been betrayed by his abrupt address, vehement expostulation, and the previous irritated state of my mind . . . "Will you allow my own wounded feelings to be an excuse for the too little consideration with which I have treated *your's*? [sic] Can you forgive me?" added I, in a conciliating tone, holding out my hand. (89; emphasis in original)

Emma's sympathy again strives toward mutual recognition in its language, acknowledging the complexities behind the feelings of both parties and working toward an understanding of each party as a full subject. Emma describes this urge to apologize and conciliate as "recollecting myself," suggesting that her turn to disdainful behavior is uncharacteristic—she is "betrayed" into a "harsh manner" by a number of factors combining at this moment. Having analyzed her own harsh feelings, she acknowledges that her emotional state devalues Mr. Montagues, asking forgiveness for her temporary lapse in recognition, "holding out [her] hand" in an attempt to establish an affective relationship that moves past this conflict: "'Let us no more . . . renew these impressions. I thank you sincerely for the sympathy you have manifested for my situation'" (89). Despite Mr. Montague's unwieldy passions and his insistence on a love/hate relationship, Emma feels that his sympathy is genuine and requires thanks.

Whether or not Mr. Montague's sympathies are genuine, his inability to register friendship as a valuable relationship to have with a woman clearly aligns him with the other two men in Emma's life. Mr. Montague identifies Emma's "esteem" for him—a word she uses affectionately, demonstrating this time and again—as a "frigid reward" that evidences her "cold inflexibility" (90). Despite numerous expressions of sympathy, Mr. Montague consistently attaches this concern to romantic interest, suggesting that Hays identifies his sympathy as real but limited by the dynamics of heterosexual partnership.

Mr. Montague structures his sense of self around the concept of romantic love, perceiving any other relationship with Emma as a slight to his vision of a heteronormative relationship based on the man's sexual domination. This drive for domination and possession is evidenced in his love/hate dynamic toward Emma—as he himself describes it—and in his constant filtering of his relationship with Emma through the lens of her "fatal attachment" to Augustus (211).

Like the other two relationships, Emma's relationship with Mr. Montague is full of potential for friendship, adding more weight to the eventual foreclosure of this possibility. At a time of intense vulnerability for Emma, Mr. Montague distinguishes himself from Mr. Francis and Augustus by demonstrating real sympathy and a willingness to listen to her complaints:

> his gentle accents, and humane attentions, awakened me from my reverie. Ever accessible to the soothings of kindness, I endeavoured to exert myself, to prove the sense I felt of his humanity. Gratified by having succeeded in attracting my attention, he redoubled his efforts to cheer and amuse me. My dejected and languid appearance had touched his feelings, and, towards the end of our journey, his unaffected zeal to alleviate the anxiety under which I evidently appeared to labour, soothed my mind and inspired me with confidence. (190)

Emma's description of this interaction evidences a surprising level of mutuality; Emma recognizes Mr. Montague's assertion of sympathy, he notes this recognition and amplifies his expression of sympathy. The exchange of assertion and recognition here produces in Mr. Montague an "unaffected zeal to alleviate [Emma's] anxiety," suggesting that, at this moment, he values her well-being independent of a possibility of reward. Hays presents a situation wherein Emma's suffering is so evident that it bypasses Mr. Montague's self-interest and allows him to recognize her as a subject in need of sympathetic engagement. Emma perceives in his eyes "the most lively, and tender, commiseration" (190), allowing

her to hope for a healthy friendship in their future.

The tragedy of this relationship is the return of Mr. Montague's romantic obsession, a problem that ruins what mutual friendship they have cultivated by voiding the sincerity of their expression. Emma tells us that "at times, his tender concern seemed sliding into a sentiment still softer, which obliged me to practise more reserve: he was not insensible of this, and was frequently betrayed into transient bursts of passion, which, on my repelling with firmness, he would struggle to repress, and afterwards absent himself for a time" (192-3). Despite feeling real affection for Emma, Mr. Montague is unable to accept the many "firm" rejections with which she meets his proposals. The continued resurgence of Mr. Montague's romantic feelings stifles the friendship and causes Emma "to be more guarded in [her] behavior" (195). Mr. Montague's insistence on a romantic relationship directly leads to artificiality in the behavior of both parties, suggesting again the connection Hays sees between friendship and sincerity.

The eventual marriage of Emma and Mr. Montague might seem to undermine my argument that Emma values, above all, a friendship with him, but the particular circumstances of their marriage actually amount to a strong friendship bond that Emma now prefers to romantic passion. Even in marriage, Emma's affection is based on "rational esteem" and friendship, not the tumultuous and unequal passions that characterized her connection to Augustus: "I felt for my husband a rational esteem, and a grateful affection:—but those romantic, high-wrought, frenzied emotions, that had rent my heart during its first attachment . . . no longer existed" (197).[7] It is important to note that "rational esteem" for Emma still implies a strong emotional bond and does not

7 See Barbara Taylor for a discussion of companionate marriage and its potential for countering the oversexualization of women.

resemble Mr. Francis's or even Augustus's cold rationality. Explaining the value of this connection to Mr. Montague, who wishes she felt for him as she did for Augustus, Emma extols the reasonable affection she has for him: "'To you, I owe every thing—life, and its comforts, rational enjoyment, and the opportunity of usefulness. I feel for you all the affection that a reasonable and a virtuous mind ought to feel—that affection which is compatible with the fulfilling of other duties'" (197). The "rational enjoyment" Emma experiences in her marriage to Mr. Montague is preferable to her passion for Augustus, which was obsessive and all-consuming, preventing her from enjoying the company of others or the pursuit of individual recreation. By this point in the novel, Emma has come to understand and condemn the destructiveness of one-sided relationships, believing she has found an opportunity to escape them.

Emma's marriage to Mr. Montague allows her to grow intellectually and socially—at least temporarily—in ways that her previous relationships foreclosed. She describes the process by which her "wearied spirits began now to find repose" in "a respectable circle of acquaintance" and an ability to help her husband in his medical profession: "I occasionally applied myself to the study of the physic, anatomy, and surgery . . . by which means I frequently rendered myself essentially serviceable to my friend; and, by exercising my understanding and humanity, strengthened my mind, and stilled the importunate suggestions of a heart too exquisitely sensible" (196-7). Emma's ability to help Mr. Montague in his medical pursuits styles her as an equal partner in the marriage, providing her with the genuine peace and well-being she lacked in her previous friendships with men. Having set up this relationship as a contrast to the problematic dynamics of Emma's relationships with Mr. Francis and Augustus, Hays moves to show

the breakdown of the marriage and Mr. Montague's tumultuous affair and suicide, identifying his masculine pride and envy as the obstacles to a long-lasting peace.

Mr. Montague's passionate actions signal the elements of male-female relationships that he values and those which he cannot see as worthwhile. Hays clearly condemns Mr. Montague's affair with Rachael, their servant, as his actions have little consequence for him as a man, but pose a problem for Rachael by rendering her "'emphatically *ruined*'" in the eyes of society (209). Emma attempts to salvage her relationship with Mr. Montague after her discovery of his affair: "In vain I tried to rectify the principles, and subdue the cruel prejudices, of my husband. I endeavoured to shew him every mark of affection and confidence. I frequently expostulated with him, upon his conduct, with tears—urged him to respect himself and me" (209). Hays's language here emphasizes Emma's expression of sympathy and the role of "confidence" in her attempts at conciliation. She seeks to console him by alluding to the trusting relationship they have had to this point, and her reproof of him, while forceful, does not seek to essentialize his mistake as a fault in his character. Emma urges Mr. Montague to "respect himself and [her]," noting the restoration of their confidence as a benefit to both parties and carefully avoiding a self-important castigation at this sensitive moment.

In all of the tumult of Mr. Montague's decline and suicide, Emma is represented as struggling to restore a relationship based on "confidence," presenting a potential for sincerity and forgiveness despite the emotional pain he occasioned. Mr. Montague's envy of the sentiments Emma held for Augustus consumes him regardless of any intervention she tries to make: "These agitations seemed daily to encrease [sic]—all my efforts to regain his confidence—my patient, unremitted, attentions—were fruitless. He shunned

me—he appeared, even, to regard me with horror" (210). The value that Mr. Montague places on possessing Emma sexually—being the master and sole object of her affections—entirely displaces any compassionate interaction with her at this point. He comes "to regard [her] with horror," signaling that he has slipped again into a vengeful hatred for her, unable to recognize either her right to self-determination or the very real affection she has repeatedly expressed for him. In Mr. Montague's case, his possessive masculinity is as self-damaging as it is harmful to Emma and Rachael.

Mr. Montague's damaged and melancholic subjectivity is easily the most pernicious force in the text. After committing infanticide, but before the reader or Emma is aware of it, Mr. Montague suffers a mental breakdown from which Emma is totally unable to rescue him. Finding him alone writing what seems to be his suicide note, Emma describes the scene: "I . . . beheld him sitting at a table, a pen in his hand, and paper before him. On the table lay his pistols—his hair was disheveled—his dress disordered—his features distorted with emotion" (211). Hays signals Mr. Montague's instability before we discover that he committed infanticide—"'Oh! that cruel, barbarous man . . . It was *he* who did it!'" (213)—and we are faced with the inevitability of tragedy, learning that all of Emma's attempts at consolation cannot break him out of a destructive melancholia. The violence of Mr. Montague's passion is literalized when Emma attempts to calm him: "I folded my arms round him—I wept—I deprecated his anger—I entreated to be heard . . . At length, forcibly bursting from me, I fell on the floor, and the blood gushed from my nose and lips . . . [he] raised me from the ground; and, clasping me to his heart, which throbbed tumultuously, burst into a flood of tears" (211). This scene of accidental violence stemming from Mr. Montague's rejection of Emma's compassion literalizes the

abusive relationship Mr. Montague had been cultivating the whole time. Emma attempts to hold Mr. Montague and convey her sympathy for him, but his frustration and anger trump any compassion and he accidentally injures Emma, only to realize the horror of what he has done and "burst into a flood of tears."

Mr. Montague conceives of himself as too far gone for reparations, and his obsession with Emma's previous relationship with Augustus persists even after the latter's death. Hays tells us that many months have passed since Augustus's death, but Mr. Montague still cites Emma's passion for Augustus as a primary cause of his mental instability. Responding to Emma's plea for a sincere explanation of his troubles (she still does not know he killed the product of his affair with Rachael), Mr. Montague exclaims, "'To be ingenuous, belongs to a purity like yours!—Guilt, black as hell!—conscious, aggravated, damnable, guilt!—*Your fatal attachment*—my accursed jealousy—Ah! Emma! I have injured you—but you are, indeed, revenged!'" (211; emphasis in original). Mr. Montague, in a frenzy and rejecting Emma's sympathy, manages to conjure the explanation for his behavior and the reason he cannot confide in her. His crime is heinous and occasioned, as he says, by her "fatal attachment" and his "accursed jealousy"; the problem of his possessiveness leads, in a chain of inevitable tragedies, to an affair, infanticide, and suicide, expressing with melodrama the widespread destruction implicit in entitled male sexuality. Mr. Montague acknowledges that he was at fault in misrecognizing Emma and too forcibly asserting his own desires: "'Excellent, admirable, woman!—Remember, without hating, the wretch who has been unworthy of you—who could not conceive, who knew not how to estimate, your virtues!'" (212). Despite painting him as hopelessly bereft, Hays allows Mr. Montague a moment of insight that

posits his inability to recognize Emma and value the subjectivity that she asserts as the root of his problems and the mistake for which he is most penitent.

Mr. Montague's suicide despite the lessons he learns from Emma dramatizes the deep psychological basis for his masculine pride and envy. In his suicide note, Mr. Montague begins by questioning his upbringing and lamenting the fact that his potential source of reform—Emma—came too late in his life: "'Amidst the reflections which press, by turns, upon my burning brain, an obscure consciousness of the prejudices upon which my character has been formed, is not the least torturing—because I feel *the inveterate force of habit*—I feel, that my convictions come too late!'" (216; emphasis in original). At this too-late stage, Mr. Montague is aware of his flaws and traces them to the "stubborn" prejudices that Emma identified in him from the first (68). "The inveterate force of habit" that steeped Mr. Montague in his envious desire for Emma's self-destructive passion is a problem pathological to a sexually possessive form of masculinity, and Mr. Montague's self-reflective criticism of this state of mind is evidence of the hope Hays sees for reform among men. Emma receives this suicide note only pages before the conclusion of the novel, and Mr. Montague's realization sets the reader up to witness Emma's rearing of the younger Emma—her daughter from marriage to Mr. Montague—and the younger Augustus, an experiment in co-education and sympathetic friendship that promises to disrupt the cycle Hays illustrates throughout the novel.

The Future of Male-Female Friendship: The Younger Augustus and Emma

Following from Mr. Montague's tragic death, Emma traces the process of raising and educating the younger Emma and Augustus to illustrate how she fights the inculcation of "confused systems of morals" in her children (217). This final chapter spans many years and gives the reader insight into the intentional educational process to which Emma exposes her children. Emma informs us of the co-educational nature of their early years: "I endeavoured to form your young minds to every active virtue, to every generous sentiment.—You received, from the same masters, the same lessons, till you attained your twelfth year; and my Emma emulated, and sometimes outstripped your progress" (218). Emma represents both the younger Emma and Augustus as bright and active learners, so Emma's surpassing Augustus at times serves more to illustrate the equal intellectual capacities of men and women than to position her as his superior.[8] The educational process that these children undergo serves to deliberately address gender inequalities and strike a balance between traditionally gendered virtues: "Every little exuberance in your disposition, which, generated by a noble pride, sometimes wore the features of asperity, was soothed into peace by her gentleness and affection: while she delighted to emulate your fortitude, and to rise superior to the feebleness fostered in her sex, under the specious name of delicacy" (219). The balance of masculine and feminine virtues that Emma sought throughout her life and relationships is here accomplished. We get the sense that, as Emma and Augustus are raised together, they mix gendered virtues with ease and consider those virtues equally. This is the mutual recognition that Emma desired from the men in her life, accomplished in the next generation by establishing the

8 See Mary's education alongside William in *Victim of Prejudice* for another example of the felicity of co-education and the damage of institutional education.

importance of both reason and emotion from birth.

Despite Emma's equal treatment of her children, she does seem more intent on the younger Augustus avoiding the prejudices that attend masculine educational and professional systems. Fearful of what might change in Augustus when, as a man, he goes to be educated elsewhere, Emma condemns the insincerity of that world of status: "The study of law, is the study of chicanery.—The church, the school of hypocrisy and usurpation! You could only enter the universities by a moral degradation, that must check the freedom, and contaminate the purity, of the mind, and . . . *poison virtue at its source*, and lay the foundation for a duplicity of character" (219; emphasis in original). Emma's fear for Augustus is precisely that he will become like the learned men she has known throughout her life. Privileging a personal and anti-institutional mode of education, Emma condemns the major professional paths for men of wealth and status, claiming that even the universities will lead to "moral degradation" and undo the socially just mindset Augustus has gained from her instruction. These realms of exclusively male education would allow Augustus's privilege to go unchecked, divorcing him from the gender-progressive setting of his mother's home and her co-educational environment.

Emma also relates to her son the importance of the memoirs themselves in educating him, referring to them as an exercise in sincerity that is not without its pain and difficulty, but is all the more necessary for the emotional work undergone. Feeling an even stronger bond to the younger Augustus after the untimely death of the younger Emma—at only fourteen—Emma concentrates all of her hope in Augustus's potential for reforming men and preventing future tragedies: "I have unfolded the errors of my past life—I have traced them to their source—I have laid bare my mind before you, that the

experiments which have been made upon it *may be beneficial to yours!*" (220; emphasis added). Emma is willing to undergo the pain of her narrative—relating information that is humiliating and socially unacceptable—in order to "inculcate . . . the value and importance of unequivocal sincerity" (41) in the younger Augustus. Hays positions *Emma Courtney* as a text for Augustus's consumption to signal that Emma is concerned with reforming masculinity; the trials of her life have been so painfully related to ensure that they "may be beneficial to [Augustus]," encouraging him to avoid the "principle of deception, that sanctifies error," which she sees as constitutive of societal inequalities (220).

The hope that Emma invests in the younger Augustus is tied to his understanding of more virtuous emotional attachments, and she explicitly names friendship as the most important element of her life thus far. Despite all of the tragedies of Emma's relationships, she insists that "Friendship was the star, whose cheering influence I courted to beam upon my benighted course. The social affections were necessary to my existence, but they have been only inlets to sorrow—*yet, still, I bind them to my heart!*" (220). The value Emma places on "the social affections" combined with her co-educational parenting suggests that Augustus's reform will be contingent on his absorbing the virtues of sincere and open friendship. Emma sees the older Augustus reformed in his son: "let me behold my Augustus, escaped from the tyranny of the passions, restored to reason, to the vigor of his mind, to self controul, to the dignity of active, intrepid virtue" (221). Emma's praise of "active, intrepid virtue" over the "tyranny of the passions" does not suggest that she devalues emotionality—her intentional education of the younger Emma and Augustus strongly supports the value of emotionality in her scheme of reform—but

instead points to the problems in overvaluing the romantic and sexual bond to the detriment of the social and intellectual. A reasonable and balanced friendship, based on the combination of intellectual and emotional virtues, emerges as the model for moving forward in gender relations.

Emma Courtney, with its repetition of tragedies occasioned by insincerity, serves as a lesson in sincere self-expression and, most importantly, the receptiveness to sincere self-expression necessary for strong "social affections." The three men who contribute to Emma's construction of "the value and importance of unequivocal sincerity" fail her in many ways, but Hays traces all of these failures to the inability for men, brought up to devalue women socially, to recognize a woman's sincere self-expression and validate her feelings. Concluding her novel with a gesture toward future generations, Hays lays out a program of co-education that promises to validate both the masculine and feminine virtues of all people, breaking down the gendered barriers to simultaneously intellectual and emotional bonds between men and women. The starting point for this reform is "unequivocal sincerity," an ethical program to which Emma is loyal throughout her varied relationships with men. Hopeful but cautious, *Emma Courtney* posits a solution to gendered oppression that relies on the union of sincere assertion and recognition, locating in friendship the forces capable of breaking down long-standing barriers between the sexes.

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Vita

Jeremy Davidheiser graduated from Moravian College in 2013 and will graduate with a Master's from Lehigh in 2015. He is interested in Romantic-era literature, the novel form, and questions of gender and sexuality with particular focus on masculinity. He will be attending Notre Dame in the Fall 2015 to pursue his Ph.D. in English literature.