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# Companionate and Pedagogic Marriage Models in Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* and *Emma*

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Companionate and Pedagogic Marriage Models in  
Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* and *Emma*

Kandace Hansen Wheelwright

A thesis submitted to the faculty of  
Brigham Young University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts

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## ABSTRACT

### Companionate and Pedagogic Marriage Models in Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* and *Emma*

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Jane Austen, seen by some as the mother of all chick-lit, is synonymous with tales of love and marriage. Generally, scholars have classified the types of marriages Austen writes about as either companionate (a marriage based on love) or pedagogic (a marriage based on an older man training a younger woman to be his ideal wife). In comparing the companionate and pedagogic marriage models in Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* and *Emma*, however, one finds that these traditional definitions and classifications of the companionate and pedagogic marriages prove to be complicated. The companionate marriage is not only a marriage based on love, but also takes into account rank, wealth, social status, religious values, and moral character. The pedagogic marriage, on the other hand, includes not only a marriage where an older man takes a younger woman and "trains" her to be the perfect wife for him, but also when a woman admires a man's values and approach to the social world and changes her behavior to reflect those attitudes.

Elinor Dashwood and Edward Ferrars from *Sense and Sensibility* and Frank Churchill and Jane Fairfax from *Emma* are classified by scholars under the companionate marriage model. However, neither of these couples fits into the companionate model due to Elinor and Jane's lack of fortunes and Edward and Frank's lack of good character. Marianne Dashwood and Colonel Brandon from *Sense and Sensibility* and Emma Woodhouse and Mr. Knightley from *Emma* are classified by scholars under the pedagogic marriage model. Marianne and Brandon would fall under the category of the woman changing her behavior to reflect the behaviors of a superior man, while Emma and Knightley would fall under the category of an older man training the younger woman to be his wife. Marianne does undergo a transformation, but it is not a result of Brandon's values or influence. She changes based on self-reflection and then turns to Brandon and falls in love with him. Emma and Knightley, on the other hand, do start out with a mentor-pupil relationship. However, as the novel progresses, so does their relationship. By the end of the novel, Emma and Knightley equally teach each other and discover a relationship based on mutual respect and love. Therefore, none of the relationships fall neatly into their assigned categories; each relationship is more nuanced and full of complexities that can't easily be classified. By more clearly understanding the complexities involved in each relationship, readers can gain an even greater appreciation for Austen, thus helping them to value Austen as more than an author of chick lit.

Keywords: Jane Austen, Marriage, Love, Companionate, Pedagogy, Sense and Sensibility, Emma

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Companionate and Pedagogic Marriage Models in  
Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* and *Emma*

In the early decades of the twentieth century, literary critics began to change their approach to Jane Austen and her works. From Austen's death up through the beginning of the modernist era, Austen was mainly admired for her portrayal of characters and social manners, often referred to affectionately as "Dear Aunt Jane" (a label coined in 1870 by Austen's nephew James Edward Austen-Leigh). However, in 1911, A.C. Bradley delivered a lecture that commenced critics' changing views on Austen, helping them to see Austen in a more serious academic light as an important moralist (Trott 92-93). Yet, scholarship on Austen still had a long way to go, particularly in dealing with her most prevalent topic—love and marriage.

Research on Austen expanded in the 1930s, but still relatively little was written on marriage and love in her work. In 1941, Geoffrey Gorer approached Austen psychoanalytically, and in 1957, E.E. Duncan-Jones compared marriage proposals in Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* to those of Richardson's *Pamela*. It was only in the 1960s, however, that a significant body of scholarship began to appear on love and marriage in Austen's comic plotting.<sup>1</sup> Among the decade's more important studies on the subject was J.F.G. Gornall's "Marriage and Property in Jane Austen's Novels" (1967), which convincingly argued that social equality and character were just as important to an Austenian marriage as affection and property.

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<sup>1</sup> Louise Maunsell Field's "The Spinster Looks at Marriage" and "Not for Love" discusses the important literary portrayals of spinsterhood and romantic love, but her arguments are not specific to Austen herself. Gorer argues that the heroines in *Sense and Sensibility*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Mansfield Park*, and *Emma* all reject their mother figures due to the pain caused by the mothers and as a result marry men similar to their fathers. For Gorer, Austen's heroines experience a substitute Oedipus Rex conflict through their marriages because it is only with their fathers that they have satisfactory and fulfilling relationships. E.E. Duncan-Jones' "Proposals of Marriage in *Pride and Prejudice* and *Pamela*" argues that Austen had Richardson's *Pamela* in mind when she wrote Darcy's first declaration of love to Elizabeth Bennet. For additional early scholarship on Austen, see Langdon Elsbree's "Jane Austen and the Dance of Fidelity and Compliance" (1960), Robert Liddell's *The Novels of Jane Austen* (1963), W.A. Craik's *Jane Austen: The Six Novels* (1965), George R. Bramer's "The Quality of Love in Jane Austen's Novels" (1966), and Lloyd W. Brown's "The Comic Conclusion in Jane Austen's Novels" (1969).

One might assume the surge in historicist criticism over the past thirty years would have led to a host of new contextual studies of marriage in Austen. However, that has not necessarily been the case. Many critics have briefly discussed marriage in Austen's works—to some degree Austen can't be mentioned without talking about marriage—but the discussion has been scattered and of a secondary focus. For example, Claudia Johnson's *Jane Austen: Women, Politics, and the Novel* (1988) includes a chapter on each of Austen's six canonical novels, but while marriage is mentioned, social politics and non-conjugal familial relationships overshadow and divert attention from the marital relationships. Likewise, William H. Galperin's significant book *The Historical Austen* (2003) barely discusses marital themes, and Janet Todd's 2005 *Jane Austen in Context* analyzes almost every theme in Austen historically *except* love and marriage.<sup>2</sup>

Fortunately, within the last six years two major books have more specifically focused on marriage in Austen. *Marriage, Writing, and Romanticism* (2009) by Eric Walker brilliantly surveys Austen's and Wordsworth's writings from a historical standpoint. Walker notes how “often in the reading of literary culture marriage either slips by unremarked or, more often, becomes a token for different debates about self or society” (5). He clearly sees the need for a more nuanced discussion of marriage and Austen. Yet, he also states that his book focuses primarily on Romantic marriages during the Regency period, particularly after the end of the war in 1815 and therefore limits his discussion to Austen's last two novels, *Emma* and *Persuasion* (2). While all of Austen's novels were published during the Regency Era, not all of them were written during the Regency. As a result, there is still much to be gleaned from the marriages (in

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<sup>2</sup> Other historical novels about Austen that skirt the marriage themes include Tony Tanner's *Jane Austen* (1986), Mary Evans' *Jane Austen and the State* (1987), Deborah Kaplan's *Jane Austen Among Women* (1992), Mary A. Favret's *Romantic Correspondence: Women, Politics and the Fiction of Letters* (1993), Roger Sales' *Jane Austen and Representations of Regency England* (1994), Clara Tuite's *Romantic Austen: Sexual Politics and the Literary Canon* (2002), Mary Jean Corbett's *Family Likeness: Sex, Marriage, and Incest from Jane Austen to Virginia Woolf* (2008), and Edward Copeland and Juliet McMaster's *The Cambridge Companion to Jane Austen* (2011).

*Sense and Sensibility*, *Pride and Prejudice*, and *Northanger Abbey*) that are not directly related to this time period and need to be further explored.

Hazel Jones also entered the discussion in 2009 with her book *Jane Austen and Marriage*. Like Walker, Jones describes courtship and marriage practices during Austen's lifetime. She discusses these practices in relation to *all* of Austen's works, but she also conflates the discussion with Austen's life. Jones usefully traces acceptable and unacceptable social practices of the time. She thoroughly examines how the concepts of courtship, love, and marriage were evolving throughout the Romantic era, and she applies these historical concepts and beliefs to Austen's characters. She also explains these concepts through the lives of Austen and her contemporaries, providing a nuanced understanding of courtship and marriage expectations during the Romantic era. However, like Walker, Jones does not exhaust all the important components of the heroines' marital relationships. Jones acknowledges that "any book about marriage in Jane Austen's time is sure to feature contradictions and complexities and this one is no exception" (1). Yet, any shortcoming of the book does not reside with the contradictions and complexities of marriage; rather, it lies with Jones' puzzling conclusion that "the final pages of every Austen novel celebrate the very best kind of union, based on compatibility, affection, and respect" (1). If Jones more carefully applied the standards and expectations of the Romantic era to some of the heroines' marriages, she would recognize that not *every* marriage in the final pages of Austen's works is based on compatibility, affection, and respect. For that reason, it is critical to take an even closer historical look at some of the marriages Austen wrote in order to come to a more accurate analysis.

Drawing upon the varied approaches to Austen's romances, I have identified three terms I will use to describe the most common types of marriages prevalent during the late eighteenth and



early nineteenth centuries: mercenary, companionate, and pedagogic. A few scholars have classified the motivations behind some of the heroines' marriages as mercenary.<sup>3</sup> It may be true that Elizabeth Bennet realized her desire to marry Mr. Darcy upon seeing Pemberley. There's a high possibility Emma married Mr. Knightley in order to maintain her status as the highest female in Highbury society. And Colonel Brandon's wealth most likely did not inhibit Marianne's notion of love. However, even if material desires played some part in these marriages, it's hard to make the case that these marriages—or any of the other heroines' marriages—were formed solely for mercenary purposes.<sup>4</sup> A combination of other factors, including companionate and pedagogic aspects, have more relevance in each heroine's marriage. Therefore, because most scholars' classifications of the heroines' marriages revolve around either the companionate or pedagogic, my discussion in this essay will be limited to focusing solely on these two models by looking at two relationships in each category and determining how neatly they fit into their ascribed category.

Before delving into the argument, a quick summary of the two marriage models I'll be focusing on and the ideologies surrounding them is necessary to provide appropriate context for this essay. The companionate marriage is a marriage of two supposedly equal partners who choose to marry for love. According to most scholars' accounts, this model would include Elinor Dashwood and Edward Ferrars in *Sense and Sensibility*, Elizabeth Bennet and Fitzwilliam Darcy

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<sup>3</sup> See Rachel M. Brownstein's chapter "Looking for Jane" in *Why Jane Austen?*, Marjorie Garson's chapter "Resources and Performance: *Mansfield Park* and *Emma*" in *Moral Taste: Aesthetics, Subjectivity and Social Power in the Nineteenth-century Novel*, and Marilyn Francus's "'Where Does Discretion End, and Avarice Begin?' The Mercenary and the Prudent in Austen."

<sup>4</sup> Austen does portray purely mercantile pursuits and marriages with minor characters, including Isabella Thorpe, John Thorpe (*Northanger Abbey*), Lucy Steele, John Willoughby with Sophia Grey (*Sense and Sensibility*), Lydia Bennet with George Wickham, Charlotte Lucas with William Collins (*Pride and Prejudice*), Mary Crawford, Maria Bertram (*Mansfield Park*), Philip Elton with Augusta Elton (*Emma*), and Mrs. Clay (*Persuasion*).

in *Pride and Prejudice*, and Anne Elliot and Frederick Wentworth in *Persuasion*.<sup>5</sup> The pedagogic marriage, on the other hand, involves an older man taking a young girl under his wing and “training” her to be the perfect wife. Examples of this model typically include Colonel Brandon with Marianne Dashwood in *Sense and Sensibility*, Henry Tilney with Catherine Morland in *Northanger Abbey*, Edmund Bertram with Fanny Price in *Mansfield Park*, and George Knightley with Emma Woodhouse in *Emma*.<sup>6</sup>

At times, however, these categories can be muddled. In *Emma*, for instance, Frank Churchill and Jane Fairfax’s marriage is not as fully companionate as it would seem, nor is Elizabeth and Darcy’s relationship in *Pride and Prejudice*. Additionally, Emma and Knightley’s marriage in *Emma* as well as Fanny and Edward’s marriage in *Mansfield Park* involve much more than a simple pedagogic model. Essentially none of the heroines’ marriages can be neatly confined to either the companionate or the pedagogic marriage model, and it is for this purpose that a deeper examination of both relationships is necessary.

For lack of space, it is necessary to confine our discussion to two novels: *Sense and Sensibility* and *Emma*. I have chosen these two novels because they were initially conceived at vastly different periods of Austen’s life. *Sense and Sensibility* was Austen’s first novel, with the first manuscript transcribed in 1795. *Emma*, on the other hand, was Austen’s penultimate novel, written twenty years later in 1815. A comparison between these two novels, therefore, allows us to see if Austen’s ideals of the companionate and pedagogic relationships remained the same or if her ideals evolved over time. Additionally, there are many similarities between the companionate and pedagogic relationships in *Sense and Sensibility* and *Emma*, and no other

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<sup>5</sup> Robert Irvine, William H. Magee, Marilyn Butler, Claudia Johnson, and Hazel Jones place some, if not all, of these relationships in the companionate category.

<sup>6</sup> Lionel Trilling, Juliet McMaster, Julie Shaffer, Paula Marantz Cohen, Patricia Menon, and Patrick Fessenbecker have identified and discussed these relationships as pedagogic.

Austen novel fully explores both types of relationships as thoroughly as these two novels. By separating these two novels from Austen's others and looking deeply at each major relationship in them, we can come to a greater historical understanding of the complicated companionate and pedagogic elements of marriage and how Austen employed those elements in each of her works.

### The Companionate Marriage

In order to have a clear understanding of the four marriages I wish to discuss in *Sense and Sensibility* and *Emma*, we must first have a sense of how Austen's contemporaries viewed marriage. According to the leading modern historian of British marriage, Lawrence Stone, the aristocratic and gentry classes (the classes explored in Austen's novels) experienced a shift in how marriages were formed during the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: "Mate selection was determined more by free choice than by parental decision and was based as much on expectations of lasting mutual affection as on calculations of an increase in money, status or power" (656). Stone explains that during this time, the choice of a spouse was generally left up to the person to be married, assuming that he or she would choose someone who occupied the same rank and had a similar fortune (394). According to John R. Gillis, children were given a certain latitude in their marriage partners, but the design of the courtship process sought to prevent children from making a poor choice (135). Robert P. Irvine notes that if parents did not like the choice their child made, they had the right to veto it and propose a more suitable choice (22).<sup>7</sup> Aristocratic and other landowning parents were particularly involved in the decision-making process because "there was [more] at stake politically and economically" (22). However, as Keith Wrightson clarifies, below the aristocracy, starting with the gentry, the choice of a marriage partner ultimately resided with those entering into the marriage (86-87).

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<sup>7</sup> Irvine also notes that "a young woman's feelings, in particular, had been granted an authority in questions of 'the heart' that they had never had before" (22).

Alan Macfarlane claims that during the eighteenth century, the most essential prerequisite for a marriage was love (175). However, Hazel Jones states that, despite the changing attitudes about love and marriage, “the arranged marriage was alive and well” (19). Macfarlane makes clear that, whether or not a marriage was arranged, both partners still had to consent to the marriage for it to be valid (129). Therefore, the final choice in marriage partners resided with the children (142).

So how does the companionate marriage play a role in all of this, and how exactly did Austen’s contemporaries classify the companionate marriage? It’s easy to assume that the companionate marriage was a marriage founded on love or affection between two partners. However, the companionate marriage encompasses so much more, including some serious stipulations. Peter Earle explains, “Moralists emphasized that marriage should be based on love, or at least on affection, and warned young people against tying themselves for life to someone in whom they only had a material interest” (189).<sup>8</sup> Marrying without love or primarily for ambition, money, or social status was considered evidence of poor judgment and a lack of character (W. Jones 28), and doing so could be very detrimental to a relationship because there was a greater likelihood for abuse or neglect to occur. Austen explores such a scenario in *Northanger Abbey*, where Isabella Thorpe sees marriage primarily as a tool for acquiring wealth and social connections. Disastrously, this leads her to double-cross one man in order to achieve greater wealth and social connections through marriage to another man. However, things don’t go as she planned, and she ends up marriage-less as a result.

On the other end of the spectrum, marrying only for love could be detrimental to a relationship also, because love was never considered to be the only factor in the choice of a

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<sup>8</sup> Irvine said the companionate marriage had to do with “as much a matter of sympathy, of a meeting of minds, complementary habits of thought, conversation and manners, as it [had] to do with sexual desire” (22-23).

companion (W. Jones 24).<sup>9</sup> Earle states that even though contemporaries stressed the importance of affection in marriage, few would have thought it sufficient grounds to base a relationship on. He goes on to explain that “material interest, character, social position and often religion had to be taken into consideration” and needed to be balanced against affection (189). According to William Cobbett, a radical contemporary of Austen’s, “the things which [men] ought to desire in a wife are, 1. chastity; 2. sobriety; 3. industry; 4. frugality; 5. cleanliness; 6. knowledge of domestic affairs; 7. good temper; 8. beauty”—in that order (79). One or both partners could be sacrificing much if they only took love into consideration without balancing other aspects of the relationship.<sup>10</sup> Hazel Jones notes that if it was reproachable to marry solely for money, it also didn’t make much sense to marry without it, and “many choices were made with an eye to monetary gain *and* emotional happiness. Affection was desirable, but if a good income made the heart beat a little faster, well, that was understandable” (7). An example gone wrong of someone who didn’t take money into consideration was Fanny Price’s mother in *Mansfield Park*. Frances Ward had a comfortable life, but through her marriage of love to a poor sailor, she gave up all of the comforts she was used to and was forced into living in a small, vulgar, and dirty house with little income. To add insult to injury, her husband was a drunkard, defying William Cobbett’s number two desirable characteristic in a spouse—sobriety. Frances’ social degradation contributes greatly to her unhappiness in her marriage.

Earle explains that most people viewed the ideal companionate marriage as an “equality of fortune, rank and religion, together with mutual affection” (189). Marrying someone of a different social class or fortune could be problematic to one’s own social standing by straining

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<sup>9</sup> Jones adds that love came to be seen as the “necessary foundation . . . for a successful and ethical Christian marriage” (24).

<sup>10</sup> Stone also notes that sexual desire and romantic love (as opposed to affection) were condemnable means of marrying someone (281).

and possibly even alienating important relationships, one example from *Emma* being Mr. Weston and his first wife. In spite of Mr. Weston and Miss Churchill's love for each other, they were in different social ranks, setting them apart. Her family disapproved of him, even after the two were married, and this disapproval led to significant tension in their relationship and arguably to her death.

Hazel Jones claims that in all of Austen's stories, the theme of marrying for love versus marrying for economic or social advances play a critical role. Additionally, most, if not all, of Austen's heroines face the choice between beginning a loveless marriage or possibly not getting married at all and thus must find a happy balance between true affection and a good income in the relationship (139). Therefore, we can conclude from both Austen and her contemporaries that the ideal marriage during the time included a combination of love/affection, wealth, social status, religious values, and moral character. The most satisfactory relationships in Austen's novels adhere to all these aspects of the relationship.

#### Elinor and Edward

With a clearer understanding of the companionate marriage model, we can now examine the main marriages in *Sense and Sensibility* and *Emma* that traditionally fall under this category, starting first with Elinor Dashwood and Edward Ferrars' relationship. This relationship receives mixed reactions from scholars. Some praise Edward's honor in keeping his engagement to Lucy Steele, like Joyce Kerr Tarpley, who states that Edward "possesses one of the most important qualities for a kind of heroism that Austen approves" (105). Others scorn him for his idleness, immaturity, and dishonesty, including Edward Neill, who claims that Edward is as dishonest towards Lucy as Willoughby is towards Marianne.<sup>11</sup> One popular opinion of the relationship is

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<sup>11</sup> See Edward Neill's "'What Edward Promises He Will Perform': 'How to Do Things with Words' in *Sense and Sensibility*."

seen clearly in Emma Thompson's 1995 film adaptation of the novel, where Edward's deceit of Elinor is downplayed. While still at Norland, Edward begins to confess his past to Elinor but is interrupted by Fanny and sent urgently to London. At the end of the movie, after his engagement to Lucy becomes public, Elinor explains that Edward tried to tell her about his engagement at Norland. However, we know from Austen's novel that no "almost-confession" occurred. The first time readers even think of Edward being engaged to another woman is when Lucy confides in Elinor about their secret engagement. They get no such assurance of Edward's honest intentions, unlike in the movie portrayal.

The Emma Thompson adaptation makes Elinor and Edward's relationship seem like the perfect companionate marriage. However, it is not. If, as Peter Earle writes, the ideal companionate marriage is comprised of an "equality of fortune, rank and religion, together with mutual affection" (189), this marriage lacks at least one crucial ingredient. Elinor and Edward may love each other, but they face a dramatic inequality of fortune. Elinor is set to receive only £1000 upon her marriage. Edward, however, is in line to inherit his mother's fortune; moreover, his mother goes so far as to offer him £1200 *a year* if he consents to marry Miss Morton. She expects him to marry someone equal in value (though Miss Morton is twice his value at £2500 a year). This is seen explicitly when Fanny and Mrs. Ferrars degrade Elinor's painting in favor of Miss Morton's many attributes. Fanny states, "Do you not think they are something in Miss Morton's style of painting, ma'am?—*She does* paint most delightfully!—How beautifully her last landscape is done!" Mrs. Ferrars responds, "Beautifully indeed! But *she* does every thing well" (177). They purposefully cut Elinor to try to persuade her to abandon any hope of forming an attachment with Edward because they do not feel she is worthy of a man of such wealth and refinement. Julie Shaffer notes how, according to Mrs. Ferrars' view, moral superiority is not

nearly as important as fortune and rank. As a result, Elinor is not appropriate for her son because of her poverty and lower social connections (136). To illustrate this point further, Mrs. Ferrars and Fanny go so far as to praise Lucy over Elinor because they do not realize Lucy is a threat. It is not until Edward's engagement to Lucy becomes public that Fanny changes her tune and exclaims, "I wish with all my heart . . . that we had asked your [her husband's] sisters instead of them [the Steele sisters]" (200). This is not because she particularly likes the two elder Dashwood sisters. Rather, she sees them as the lesser of the two evils because they have more of a fortune than Lucy *and* better connections. They come from the same respectable family that her husband came from.

Despite the fact that Elinor and Edward do not have similar fortunes, that feature is more likely to be overlooked when compared with another important component of a companionate marriage: good character. On the surface, Edward may appear to exhibit good character, but looking more closely at the decisions he makes, readers are given a cause for concern over Elinor's acceptance of his faults. One of the biggest red flags is Edward's wish-washy behavior towards Elinor, showing interest one moment and being cold towards her the next. In a discussion with Marianne about her affection towards Edward, Elinor reflects that "she felt that Edward stood very high in her opinion. She believed the regard to be mutual; but she required greater certainty of it to make Marianne's conviction of their attachment agreeable to her" (16). She questions the legitimacy of the attachment while at Norland, believing something to be there but remaining unsure. Then, when Edward shows up to Barton Cottage, we learn that "his coldness and reserve mortified [Elinor] severely" (68). She thought they had some kind of attachment, and his behavior towards her shocks her. Later in his visit, Elinor is further confused by his demeanor: She "wished it were equally evident that he still distinguished her by the same



affection which once she had felt no doubt of inspiring; . . . and the reservedness of his manner towards her contradicted one moment what a more animated look had intimated the preceding one” (72).

While visiting Barton Cottage, Edward still shows glimpses of his interest in Elinor, but his behavior is inconsistent and causes further uncertainty in Elinor. In a letter to his son in 1752, a statement made by Britain’s premier authority on proper gentlemanly behavior during the mid-eighteenth century, Lord Chesterfield, appears to support Edward’s conflicting behavior. Chesterfield claims, “Truth, but not the whole truth, must be the invariable principle of every man (2:239).” He states in another letter (dated 1750), “concealing the truth, upon proper occasions, is as prudent and as innocent” (1:536). However, he goes on to say in the first letter that “lies and perfidy are the refuge of fools and cowards” (2:240). Edward isn’t outwardly lying in his behavior towards Elinor, but he also isn’t being honest with her. The whole truth he’s keeping from her is more damaging than good. If he cares for Elinor, he should have enough respect to either tell her about his engagement or treat her consistently. The back-and-forth behavior does not exhibit much strength of character on his part, thus calling into question the companionate nature of the relationship.

What might be even more troubling to some about Edward’s behavior towards Elinor is that he secures an engagement with her without providing sufficient explanation of his affection for her. One could make the argument that he doesn’t truly love her. He could just be, as Edward Neill implies (with regards to Edward’s behavior towards Lucy), pursuing Elinor as a form of rebellion against his family to show that he takes orders from no one (118). It could even be argued that Elinor is Edward’s rebound, the woman he falls back to after his first engagement does not work out, for the question remains: If he truly cared about Elinor, would it have truly

been honorable to proceed in a marriage with no affection on his side? He wasn't being fair and faithful to Lucy by lying about his feelings towards her, and once he becomes a "free man," he isn't exactly upfront with Elinor about his feelings either. We get no explanation about how much he cares for Elinor; we simply see his happiness in her acceptance of his proposal:

he had more than the ordinary triumph of accepted love to swell his heart, and raise his spirits. He was released without any reproach to himself from an entanglement which had long formed his misery, from a woman whom he had long ceased to love;—and elevated at once to that security with another, which he must have thought of almost with despair, as soon as he had learnt to consider it with desire. (274)

We see that Elinor lovingly accepts Edward, which makes him happy, but we do not see that it makes him happy because he *loves* her. Granted, the descriptions "swell his heart" and "raise his spirits" tend to describe a man who is in love, but they still leave room for speculation on his part. While he probably in reality does love Elinor, or at least have some sort of genuine affection for her, he does not do a good job of portraying that emotion in the novel's conclusion, which calls into question the affectionate base necessary for the companionate ideal.

If we could be assured of Edward's affection for Elinor, there are other attributes of his character that give us further cause for concern. First, as briefly mentioned, Edward is passive or idle in his relationships. In critiquing his son's behavior, Lord Chesterfield stated in 1749 that "Idleness is only the refuge of weak minds, and the holyday of fools" (1:432-33). Austen explores this idea through some of her characters, including Sir John Middleton (*Sense and Sensibility*) and Charles Musgrove (*Persuasion*). Julie Shaffer also describes the problematic nature of this idle, passive behavior: "Rather than being able to find a way of acting that befits a

passionate hero of a novel of sensibility, Edward remains in the feminized passive position of having to wait and hope that circumstance turn out well—a position as unappealing for men as for women” (141). Instead of taking charge of his life, he lets events control his behavior. Admittedly, every person is bound to enter a marriage with flaws; but Edward shows no recognition of or attempt to reform this flaw. He remains idle (and quite content with it) throughout the entire novel. Shaffer goes on to explain that “because the resolution comes about in a way that has very little to do with Edward’s heroic qualities or Elinor’s worth, their story comes across . . . as . . . a story accidentally ending in marriage for reasons that have little to do with either of its ostensible protagonists. . . . Their experience suggests, in fact, that relationships can depend as much on chance as on love” (142). Shaffer concludes that because of this idleness—a marriage that is formed not on merits, but on mere luck—Elinor and Edward’s marriage is dissatisfying (146). Because Edward does not exhibit strong character through masculine reactions, not only is the marriage dissatisfying, but it falls short of the companionate ideal. Edward needs to convey more masculinity in order to adhere to societal expectations of men during his time.

Not only does Edward lack a strong active role in his romantic relationships, but he also places blame on others for his poor choices. He tries to make himself appear the victim in every circumstance. This is shown through his apology to Elinor after he proposes to her. Note that his apology to Elinor occurs only *after* he proposes. Upon Elinor’s acceptance of his proposal, Edward’s first order of business is to blame his mother. Joyce Kerr Tarpley states that Elinor blames Edward’s mother for his dependence on her (105), but it is actually Edward himself that does the blaming: “Had my mother given me some active profession when I was removed at eighteen . . . I am sure, it would have never happened” (274). Upon giving further instruction to

his son, Lord Chesterfield observes in 1748 how “our own self-love draws a thick veil between us and our faults” (1:301) and in 1751 describes “happy [are] those who have no faults to disguise, nor weaknesses to conceal!...But unhappy [are] those, who know so little of the world as to judge by outward appearances” (2:159). Edward mostly fails to recognize his own faults and instead places the blame on other people and outward appearances. Granted, Edward *does* admit “a foolish, idle inclination on my side” (274), and he does state in his first visit to Barton Cottage that “unfortunately my own nicety [fastidiousness], and the nicety of my friends, have made me what I am, an idle, helpless being” (77); but these are the only accounts of responsibility he seems to accept, and it appears they come only as a result of environmental factors outside his control.

Perhaps the most disconcerting aspect of their interaction after the proposal is Elinor excusing Edward’s poor behavior with the simple scold, “Your behavior was certainly very wrong because—to say nothing of my own convictions, our relations were all led away by it to fancy and expect *what* as you were *then* situated, could never be” (279). This scolding is then promptly followed by Elinor forgiving Edward of any misbehavior he enacted towards her. Patricia Menon explains how when “Elinor criticizes the way [Edward] had behaved at Norland, the scolding is cast as love-talk” (50) and Charles Hinnant adds that “Elinor is no more able to resist Edward’s flattering attentions. . . . [Her] partiality for Edward remains genuine even when it is shown to be deluded” (299).<sup>12</sup> In this instance, we see Elinor forgetting some important aspects of the companionate marriage (mainly, strong moral character), which leads her to make a questionable decision. As a result, we can see that there are many components of their relationship that do not fit into the companionate marriage mold. Elinor and Edward are not of

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<sup>12</sup> David Kauffman believes Elinor “extols a self-destruction masochism” (399) after initially receiving knowledge of Edward and Lucy’s engagement, which I believe bleeds into her later marital relationship with Edward.

equal financial status, Edward's behavior and affection towards Elinor are questionable, and Edward lacks the strong character every proponent of the companionate marriage stressed to be important. Additionally, one could argue that Elinor shows a slight weakness in character by succumbing to Edward's advances without much retribution or disapproval. She lets love, or sensibility, overcome her senses and thus her judgment. As a result, she is led awry in making the most appropriate companionate choice.

#### Frank and Jane

Turning to Frank Churchill and Jane Fairfax in *Emma*, we see similarities between their relationship and Elinor and Edward's in not living up to the companionate marriage ideal. First off, Frank and Jane belong to different financial and social ranks. Frank is an heir to his aunt and uncle's fortune, whereas Jane is an orphan—raised by a respectable family, but responsible for providing for her own living. If it weren't for her presumed engagement to Frank, she would have to find work as a governess, which she equates with the slave trade (235), in order to sustain her living. When Jane believes their relationship is over, she accepts a governess position from Mrs. Elton's friend because she sees it as the only viable option she has. Without the promise of Frank's fortune, Jane does not have much chance for a better life. It is for these two reasons—Jane's lack of fortune and her lower status—that the couple must keep their engagement secret from everyone, forcing Jane to remain silent and passive while watching her fiancé flirt with another woman (Tobin 481). If Frank's aunt found out about his courtship to Jane, she most likely would have disinherited Frank, leaving him as penniless as Jane.

Like Elinor and Edward, Frank and Jane are able to transcend their differing financial and social ranks and appear relatively happy as a result. However, also like Edward, Frank does not exhibit the best character, and it's a wonder Jane stays engaged and marries him after his

inappropriate and disrespectful behavior towards her. Frank spends his entire existence in Highbury flirting and leading Emma on. He deceives Emma and the rest of the village into believing he has serious intentions in pursuing a marriage with Emma. As Julia Prewitt Brown puts it, “Frank . . . has no notion at all of what a relationship is, of reciprocal endeavor and trust. Unlike Jane’s unwavering attachment to him, his love does not include loyalty—he not only flirts with Emma but does so to torment his fiancée” (90). To further explain the problematic nature of Frank’s flirtation with Emma, David M. Shapard states:

In this society people were quick to assume an engagement existed if a young man and woman who were both unmarried spent time together and exhibited a mutual liking. . . . Often the most that people interested in each other could do was to exhibit extra friendliness in the midst of general social events, to dance or engage in other activities more frequently with each other, and perhaps, to separate on occasion from the larger group for brief tête-à-têtes. Thus, when a couple did those things, it was generally assumed that they had serious intentions toward one another. (463 n. 86)<sup>13</sup>

Frank and Emma certainly engage in all of the activities Shapard listed, from having the first two dances reserved for each other at every dance to secretly discussing Jane Fairfax’s supposed affair. However, Emma can’t completely be blamed, for as Henry Tilney says in Austen’s *Northanger Abbey*, “Man has the advantage of choice, woman only the power of refusal” (54). Frank initiates everything that occurs between him and Emma. Emma has the power to reject him, but she also has sincere intentions towards him during his first visit to Highbury. It is not until Frank returns for a second time that Emma realizes she doesn’t have romantic feelings for

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<sup>13</sup> For additional information on flirting during Austen’s time, look at Hazel Jones’s *Jane Austen and Marriage* pg. 32-33.

him. Shapard additionally notes that if men during Austen's time "were too explicit in expressing interest in a woman, they could find themselves committed to her in the eyes of others and obligated, by social pressure or even legal action, to marry her" (405 n.11). Therefore, Frank's actions toward Emma arguably hold him socially bound to marry Emma if she chooses to pursue it, similar to a situation *Persuasion's* hero Frederick Wentworth finds himself in when he realizes he unintentionally led Louisa Musgrove into believing he was interested in marrying her through his flirtations. However, unlike Frank, Wentworth chose to accept the consequences and would have honored the unspoken and undesired marital agreement if Louisa wanted it.

Frank does try to remove the stains on his character in a letter to Mrs. Weston,<sup>14</sup> saying, "I cannot deny that Miss Woodhouse was my ostensible object—but I am sure you will believe the declaration, that had I not been convinced of her indifference, I would not have been induced by any selfish views to go on" (344). In spite of his assurance of Emma's indifference, he does not account for how his actions affected their society or even Emma's reputation. His behavior went against societal norms, and, as a result, he showed Highbury society poor judgment and a lack of character that cannot be easily forgotten or forgiven. Additionally, Emma did *not* show clear evidence of indifference towards Frank. Mary Waldron notes how it never occurs to Emma to "disabuse anyone about her feelings [or lack thereof] for Frank" (152)—including Frank himself. Frank realistically could not be certain of Emma's indifference without her indicating that indifference. If anything, Emma encourages Frank until she realizes she wants Harriet to marry him, and even after that point she is very friendly and welcoming to him. It is not until

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<sup>14</sup> Frank could not write a letter directly to Emma, because written communication between a male and female who were not engaged to each other was considered unacceptable by Austen's society (H. Jones 31). It's interesting that Frank would adhere to that societal convention but have no scruples about flirting with a single woman when he was already engaged to another.

Frank returns to Highbury for the second time that Emma might begin to appear indifferent, and by that point they don't see each other much apart from Box Hill.

Given our understanding of societal norms during Austen's time, if Frank had a higher regard for Jane, he would not have flirted with Emma as he did. Henry Tilney observes in *Northanger Abbey* that it is the engaged couple's duty "to endeavor to give the other no cause for wishing that he or she had bestowed themselves elsewhere" (54). Jane stays true to Frank and gives him no cause to worry. She is so concerned for his welfare that she does everything in her power to keep their engagement a secret from everyone, and when she refuses Frank's request to walk her home to keep suspicion of their engagement at bay—when she refuses the man who has been coquetting with another—Frank doubts *her* affections. Frank refuses to imagine any of the emotions Jane might be experiencing at seeing him woo another woman when she knows he is rightfully engaged to her. He may have ardent feelings toward Jane, but he doesn't seem to *respect* her. Hazel Jones explains that most conduct literature written during Austen's time "agreed that happiness in marriage depended on a union of minds, strong affection and mutual respect" (120). To further expound on this idea, Wendy Jones cites contemporary women's rights advocate Mary Wollstonecraft's belief that "relationships lacking in mutual respect and companionship [could not] be the basis for a fulfilling marriage" (56). Frank shows little regard and respect for Jane. His failure to do so, in addition to their differing social and financial statuses, helps us conclude that Frank and Jane's relationship does not fit the mold of a companionate marriage. Like Elinor and Edward, they may have affection for each other, but the kind of companionate marriage Austen's contemporaries condoned encompasses so much more. And like Elinor, Jane's senses and judgment are deluded, resulting in her marrying a man who is morally her inferior (Brown 97).



### The Pedagogic Marriage

Now that we have a better understanding of the marriages classified as companionate by many scholars, we must explore the pedagogic marriages. Many scholars attribute the pedagogic mode of writing prevalent during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries to Jean-Jacques Rousseau's influential educational treatise *Émile*. This novel discusses the education of a male pupil, Émile, who is taught to become the ideal citizen in a corrupt world. Book V, however, discusses the education of his female counterpart, Sophie, who is trained to become the perfect wife for Émile. Rousseau believed that men and women were equal in being, but he also asserted that women's main role was to please men and that girls should be trained from infancy to fulfill that subservient role (Moore 48). Rousseau's views of women and education, as portrayed through Sophie, were vital in shaping many conversations on women's education (most notably Mary Wollstonecraft's *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters*) and credited with introducing into eighteenth-century Britain the idea of a man educating a woman to be a perfect wife (Cafarelli 135-42).

Perhaps not as widely recognized for shaping the pedagogic marriage model was John Locke and his views on education. According to Locke, upon marriage a wife becomes the property of her husband and is, subsequently, subject to him. Locke describes how husbands have conjugal power over their wives, granting them the authority to order their wives in regards to their private familial affairs (Thompson 4-5). Rousseau was aware of Locke's views on education and even rejected Locke's blank slate theory (Moore 37). However, Rousseau's writings appear to be influenced by Locke, and it's clear that both Locke and Rousseau played a role in shaping the belief of training a woman to be a sound companion for her husband in eighteenth-century Britain.

The idea of training a woman to be a perfect wife was not limited to novels and conduct books. Thomas Day famously attempted to put this idea into practice. Day was introduced to Rousseau's ideas by Richard Lovell Edgeworth (Maria Edgeworth's father), who invited Day to help him experiment with Rousseau's teachings in rearing his firstborn son, Dick (Moore 41). During that time, Day plotted to turn Margaret Edgeworth, Richard's sister, into his perfect wife. They became engaged, but Margaret soon broke off the engagement (47-52). Day then decided to approach the training of his wife a different way, and he adopted a twelve-year-old girl from an orphanage in London (53-58). However, shortly after her adoption, Day worried that she might not become the perfect pupil, so he adopted an eleven-year-old girl, vastly different in looks and personality, from the same orphanage a few weeks later (75-77). After about two years of educating both girls, Day became unsatisfied with their progress and gave up hope of marrying either of them, sending them both away (101, 133-34). This failed experiment is attributed to inspiring the mentor-pupil marital subplot in Maria Edgeworth's *Belinda* (Cafarelli 136), a book well known and influential to Austen and her works.

The eighteenth-century novel, according to Beth Kowaleski-Wallace, is "characterized by . . . the belief that, in the best of all possible situations, a strong, generous father figure—selfless, wise, and competent—provides a coherent world view" (275). Julie Shaffer adds light to this characterization by discussing two main ways the pedagogic relationship is manifested. In the first way, as discussed earlier, a woman is taught by an older man who helps her reach maturity and then later marries her (54). In the second way, the woman isn't necessarily educated by the man, but she "recognize[s] that his values and approach to the social world constitute those which she must accept to be considered mature and marriageable" (54). Looking at how Austen employs this pedagogic marriage model in *Sense and Sensibility* with Marianne Dashwood and

Colonel Brandon and in *Emma* with Emma Woodhouse and George Knightley, most scholars would say that Emma and Knightley would fall under the first category, while Marianne and Brandon would fall under the second.

Many people may believe that these pedagogic relationships aren't as satisfactory or valued as the companionate marriages because they are not focused on romantic love or affection. However, many scholars find great value in the pedagogic marriages, and some even believe they are more important and significant than the companionate marriages. Lionel Trilling argues that "the deepest and truest relationship that can exist between human beings is pedagogic" (82), and Juliet McMaster insists, "the pedagogic relationship is not parasitic but symbiotic, a relationship that is mutual and joyful: it blesseth him that gives, and him that takes" (45). While the two marriages discussed may employ some of the characteristics of the pedagogic marriage and exhibit what Trilling and McMaster profess, they are not as clear-cut as the definitions of the pedagogic marriage would have us suppose. Therefore, we must look deeper into each relationship to see how they do or do not exhibit the characteristics of a pedagogic marriage. By doing so, we can have a clearer historical understanding of these marriages and their significance to Austen's works.

#### Marianne and Brandon

Marianne and Brandon's relationship is one of Austen's most difficult relationships to understand, simply because readers do not have enough information to form fully-developed opinions about it. There is so little written about their relationship that readers and scholars alike must speculate on the components of the relationship to fill in certain gaps, which may be apparent throughout this portion of the essay.

Marianne and Brandon's relationship does not start off on the wrong foot, despite the lack of interest on Marianne's part. During their first meeting at the Middletons' house for an evening of entertaining, Brandon appears very grave, but "[Marianne] felt a respect for him on the occasion, which the others had reasonably forfeited by their shameless want of taste" (27). Brandon pays particular attention while she performs, and although his personality does not grab her attention, she notices that he has the taste she sees lacking in Edward (14). It is not until Willoughby appears on the scene that Marianne completely discounts Brandon, not because he lacks some of the qualities she values in a mate, but because he does not seem exciting or young compared to Willoughby.

Unfortunately, Brandon hastily leaves the Middletons before the Dashwoods can get to know him well, and they do not see him for many months. His infatuation with Marianne gets lost in the exciting budding relationship of Marianne and Willoughby, and readers forget to pity Brandon until he shows up again almost seventy pages later when Elinor and Marianne go to London with Mrs. Jennings. While in London, Brandon pays the sisters several visits, but because Marianne is so infatuated with Willoughby and only wishes to see her lover, she immediately leaves whenever Brandon visits, thus refusing to engage in conversation with him (120, 128). So, while Marianne's first impression of Brandon is respectful, she refuses to put any effort into getting to know him better and trying to understand the kind of person he is. There is no real interaction between the two during the first 150 pages that could even begin to set the stage for a pedagogic relationship. Less than half of the book remains before Marianne and Brandon begin to have more interactions (though not by much) with each other.

Once Marianne finds out about Willoughby impregnating Brandon's charge, she slowly accepts being around and communicating with Brandon more. When he comes over for visits,

she no longer avoids him and even voluntarily speaks to him “with a kind of compassionate respect” (159). Brandon notes that

his chief reward for the painful exertion of disclosing past sorrows and present humiliations, was given in the pitying eye with which Marianne sometimes observed him, and the gentleness of her voice whenever (though it did not often happen) she was obliged, or could oblige herself to speak to him. *These* assured him that his exertion had produced an increase of good-will towards himself.  
(162)

Despite these interactions, Marianne and Brandon still do not show any obvious progression toward a marital relationship of any kind—pedagogic, companionate, or otherwise. Though Brandon loves Marianne throughout the entire novel, Marianne, even after Willoughby’s betrayal, seems vaguely aware that Brandon exists. She talks to him, but nothing is given to show that she is invested in even a friendship with him. Therefore, the ending of the novel with Marianne and Brandon joining together in matrimony comes as quite a shock—and an unsatisfactory one at that—to most readers. David Kaufmann notes how “most critics have complained about the book’s ending,” especially Austen’s treatment of Marianne (401), and William Galperin states that “readers have long lamented” Marianne’s marriage to Brandon (120). Julie Shaffer claims that Marianne and Brandon’s “marriage seems more like punishment when compared to the kinds of marriages Austen’s heroines typically enter” because “no other Austen heroine is asked to give up love as a prime reason for marrying” (145). Finally, Emily Auerbach wonders why Austen did not pair *Elinor Dashwood* with Colonel Brandon (113, my emphasis added).

Because many critics and readers alike are so dissatisfied with the ending of the novel, it merits taking a closer look at how Austen ties everything up. After Elinor and Edward marry and move to the parish next to Brandon's estate, we learn that "they each felt [Brandon's] sorrows . . . and Marianne, by general consent, was to be the reward of all" (287). Immediately following, we learn that "with such a confederacy against her—with a knowledge so intimate of his goodness—with a conviction of his fond attachment to herself, which at last, though long after it was observable to everybody else—burst upon her—what could she do?" (287-88). Up to this point, we know Marianne has respect and compassion for Brandon, and the previous passage tells us that she has an intimate knowledge of his goodness. But the question remains: does Marianne and Brandon's relationship truly embody the components of the pedagogic marriage model? It would seem critics have applied that model only because of the characters' discrepancy in age.

Laura Mooneyham White notes how Brandon does not teach Marianne, nor does she educate him, on anything. "How can they," she asks, "when they do not even have one instance of reported dialogue in all of the novel?" (78). But, as discussed earlier, an older man educating a woman to maturity does not necessarily constitute the only sort of pedagogic relationship. The pedagogic relationship can also encompass a woman choosing to adopt the values and social attitudes of a man in order to become more marriageable. So does Marianne recognize Brandon's values and adapt her behavior to those values in order to be more mature and marriageable? I would posit that Marianne already begins the path to maturity before ever being influenced by Brandon. After learning of Willoughby's betrayal, she becomes very subdued in a process of reflection on her behavior. She recognizes her faults and misbehaviors without Brandon's help. In fact, Brandon would not be brash enough to point out Marianne's faults. Therefore,

Marianne's advancement from sensibility to a more mature presence has little or nothing to do with Brandon. Shawn Lisa Maurer makes a compelling point claiming that Marianne's relationship with Willoughby is nonsensical because she is an adolescent (only seventeen), but by the time she marries Brandon, she has become an adult (nineteen), and therefore marries him with an adult mindset; she no longer adheres to her immature and naive notions.

Although Marianne does not appear to mature as a result of Brandon's guidance, there is evidence that she does adapt her behavior to fit more in line with society's (and arguably Brandon's) expectations of her as the leading lady of the village: "Instead of falling a sacrifice to an irresistible passion, as once she had fondly flattered herself with expecting, . . . she found herself at nineteen, submitting to new attachments, entering on new duties, placed in a new home, a wife, the mistress of a family, and the patroness of a village" (288). Marianne forgoes the sensibility she is known to portray throughout the majority of the novel and accepts the responsibility of a respectable and dignified matron to both family and village. She forsakes her passions in order to portray the role society expects of a woman in her position. This change, however, is more a result of her budding maturity than a result of her interactions with Brandon. Brandon would have married Marianne in her immaturity; he loved her deeply enough and never appeared to correct her behavior. The fact that Marianne evolves into a more acceptable person in society is the result of a change in her own values and desires, perhaps from a recognition that it is what society expects of her. Kaufmann notes that a reform in Marianne occurs as a result of a chastened heart. She changes because she sees the need to change herself and recognizes that the "fault lies within [her own heart]" (401). Austen's text provides no evidence that Brandon ever educated Marianne or awakened in her a desire to change her behavior to match his. Therefore, assigning the pedagogic marriage model to this relationship appears to be a

misreading of what the pedagogic marriage truly encompasses. If anything, it could be argued that Marianne and Brandon fit more into a companionate marriage model because Marianne's "whole heart became, in time, as much devoted to her husband, as it had once been to Willoughby" (288). Shaffer argues against this companionate marriage idea, claiming that "Marianne and Brandon's relationship is portrayed as lacking in the interchange of ideas and of complementary personalities that comprise the appealing marriages in Austen's other novels" (145). While this is largely true, readers also receive no evidence that Marianne and Brandon do not exchange ideas and do not have complementary personalities. Austen leaves much to be questioned in Marianne and Brandon's relationship for reasons unknown that will continue to puzzle readers. We know they come to love each other, but the nature of their relationship remains vague. However, whether or not Marianne and Brandon grew to have a companionate relationship remains irrelevant. The point is that Marianne and Brandon's relationship does not truly portray any of the elements of the pedagogic model and therefore should not be defined as such.

#### Emma and Knightley

Emma and Mr. Knightley's relationship more clearly seems to adhere to pedagogic conventions. Mr. Knightley, sixteen years older than Emma, challenges Emma's beliefs and tries to train her to behave how he thinks she needs to behave in order to be marriageable. A prime example of this is the Box Hill scene, where Knightley rebukes Emma in her behavior towards Miss Bates: "How could you be so unfeeling to Miss Bates? How could you be so insolent in your wit to a woman of her character, age, and situation?—Emma, I had not thought it possible. . . . Were she your equal in situation—but, Emma, consider how far this is from being the case. . . . Her situation should secure your compassion. It was badly done, indeed!" (294-5). Readers may



be troubled by the idea of this teacher/student hierarchy, believing Mr. Knightley does not sincerely love Emma and is only training her to be a proper wife for him. But readers aren't the only ones troubled. At the end of the novel, Mr. Knightley himself is plagued by his mentorship, for he tells Emma, "My interference was quite as likely to do harm as good....I do not believe I did you any good. The good was all to myself, by making you an object of the tenderest affection to me" (363). Knightley recognizes the problematic nature of his selfish mentorship and is grateful not to have done irreparable damage. He realizes that in trying to shape Emma a specific way, he may have ruined some of her admirable characteristics.

Readers may also be troubled by the idea that Emma and Knightley's relationship is not clearly based on love or affection. Many critics have justifiably argued that Emma does not love Mr. Knightley. Scholarship from the 1950s up through the mid-1970s argued that something was pathologically wrong with Emma due to her inability to love Frank Churchill and her inexcitability over Mr. Knightley's love and marriage proposal (Johnson 444). Some critics even went so far as to posit that Emma was a lesbian because she seemed to show a preference for women over men (Johnson 445). Although Emma's inability to express *eros* is disconcerting, it is important to recognize that there are different kinds of love,<sup>15</sup> which Emma does manifest to Knightley.

At the point of engagement, Emma doesn't appear to have much *eros* for Knightley, and the interactions between Emma and Mr. Knightley certainly aren't "among the most erotically satisfying in all of English fiction," like Terry Castle would have us believe (53). However, Emma does have a strong *philia* love for Mr. Knightley, which has the potential to grow into a

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<sup>15</sup> In his book *The Four Loves*, C.S. Lewis identifies four different words Greeks used to define the word "love." Two are mentioned in this essay: *philia* and *eros*. *Philia* means friendship or a strong bond between people who have common interests (58). *Eros* means a romantic, sexual, or erotic love (91-92). This is the kind of love scholars see lacking in Emma.

greater *eros* love. We see this in two different places after Mr. Knightley confesses his love to Emma. The narrator observes that “Mr. Knightley could not impute to Emma a more relenting heart than she possessed, or a heart more disposed to accept of his” (339). A few pages earlier, Emma thinks that she will never accept a marriage proposal, even from Mr. Knightley, because of her father (327). However, after hearing Mr. Knightley’s enduring love for her, she realizes she can’t give him up. There is something about their relationship, be it friendship or deeper affection, which she realizes she can’t abandon. Her affection for him is deeper than she imagined, and she readily gives her heart to him. The narrator then notes that both Emma and Mr. Knightley receive “the same precious certainty of being beloved” (339). Unlike Edward’s reaction upon receiving Elinor’s acceptance of his proposal, readers get a clear sense from this passage that Knightley and Emma have a shared love with each other. Emma may not have a strong *eros* love for him yet, but they both receive the assurance they need in the other person’s reactions and words. Finally, at the beginning of the next chapter when Emma goes back into her house, she is described as being “in an exquisite flutter of happiness” (340). The use of *flutter* suggests that her heart is agitated and excited, “all in a flutter.” It’s beating fast at the excitement of attaching the man she wishes to belong to. Emma isn’t completely incapable of feeling *eros* for Mr. Knightley; she just hasn’t reached the level most people expect newly engaged couples to be at. Even though Marilyn Butler posits that any erotic pleasures readers might receive by the end of the novel are cut short (599), these premonitions of a deeper and more erotic love give hope and excitement to readers for something greater to materialize. They may not see Emma’s love for Mr. Knightley fully develop erotically before the novel ends, but they are given the ability to imagine Emma growing into that kind of love due to the strong friendship she and Mr. Knightley already have established with each other.

In further defense of Emma's apparent lack of *eros*, when looking at Austen's contemporaries' view of love in a successful marriage, it is important to note that love did not necessarily mean a sexual desire. Wendy Jones explains that the love Austen's contemporaries described was actually almost always friendship (65) and that "when men and women married for the right reasons, mutual regard was always assumed to be an important component of their feelings, [and] such regard was believed to depend on having interests and views in common" (53). Marrying for the right reasons, balancing all aspects of a relationship together instead of just marrying solely for love or money, would help partners see similar views and interests in the other person. They were more likely to have common goals and would want to work together to achieve those goals. In order to identify similarities in another person and want to work together with that person, one usually would need to have some kind of respect and regard for that person. This is seen with Emma and Mr. Knightley's relationship. Although they tend to disagree often throughout the novel, they still maintain respect and regard for the other person's opinion and end up valuing the same things and having the same goals.

So, how should readers read Emma and Knightley's relationship? As a pedagogic model in which Knightley educates Emma on proper behavior and then marries her when he deems her ready? Or as a companionate model because Emma and Knightley are of similar rank and fortune and have an affection for each other? Clearly the relationship is not as clear-cut as these categories would like to make it. Therefore, it's important to view the relationship as a combination of the two models. The relationship starts out strongly as a mentor/student relationship, but it gradually evolves into a relationship based on mutual respect, trust, equality, and affection. Patricia Menon notes how many scholars believe that "mentorship is the best underpinning for love" (16), and Patrick Fessenbecker states that "mutual recognition becomes

necessary not because it makes the relationship more erotic, but because, in some sense, it enables love” (760). Menon goes on to explain that she believes the best kind of marriage is based on an establishment of moral equality and mutual love, which is exhibited clearly in *Northanger Abbey*, *Pride and Prejudice* and *Emma* (45, 77).

In a discussion about *Pride and Prejudice*, Julie Shaffer explains how men and women need each other in order to remain socially and morally responsible (65) and states that the best kinds of relationships are when the husband and wife are willing to improve each other as well as be improved by each other (66). This belief can be applied to Emma and Knightley’s relationship. Mr. Knightley not only helps Emma become a better person, but Emma teaches him in return. Their relationship is successful because they are able to teach each other important views, including how to love. Mr. Knightley teaches Emma proper social etiquette, and Emma teaches Mr. Knightley how to forgive. (Emma is immediately forgiving of Frank’s behavior, whereas Mr. Knightley has to look to Emma for a higher example.) Terry Castle observes that Emma and Mr. Knightley “ultimately bring out the best in each other...[and they] will both be improved by their relationship” (46). When looking at Emma and Mr. Knightley’s pedagogic relationship as symbiotic, we can see that respect and regard for the other person exists, which puts it more in the category of a companionate marriage. They go from having a mentor/student relationship to being respected lovers on equal ground.

### Conclusion

By looking historically at the companionate and pedagogic marriage models, we can come to a more nuanced understanding of the marriages Austen wrote. Any given relationship cannot be tightly classified into one category or the other. Both Elinor and Edward’s and Frank and Jane’s relationships do not fully encompass the companionate marriage model. Apart from

the difference of fortune between the men and the women, Edward and Frank appear to be lacking in some key character traits contemporaries of the time would value and believe necessary for a successful relationship based on affection. Additionally, Marianne and Brandon's and Emma and Knightley's relationships do not fit nicely into the pedagogic marriage model. Brandon is significantly older than Marianne, but he does not appear to train her to be his wife. Marianne does mature and adopt some of the characteristics necessary to be more respectable and of marriage material. However, her change, as far as readers can tell, has nothing to do with Brandon's influence. If anything, it has to do with Marianne's painful experience and subsequent self-reflection. Emma and Knightley, on the other hand, do start out with a pedagogic relationship. Knightley constantly instructs Emma on appropriate behaviors and attitudes to more closely coincide with his personal beliefs. However, as they evolve and recognize their affection for each other, their relationship evolves as well and they grow to be equals, each recognizing that the other person brings different, but important, strengths to the relationship.

In comparing these two novels, we can see that Austen's depictions of the companionate and pedagogic relationships remain consistently complicated. The questions of legitimacy raised surrounding these two marriage models in *Sense and Sensibility* also come to light in *Emma*. Perhaps the biggest difference between the two novels is Austen's deeper exploration of the pedagogic relationship in *Emma*; Austen examines the notion that the best and most fulfilling marital relationship consists of a combination between the companionate and pedagogic models. There is "perfect happiness in the union" because Emma and Knightley's relationship consists of an equality of wealth, rank, moral values, affection, and the ability to educate and inspire each other. Apart from Elizabeth and Darcy in *Pride and Prejudice*, they arguably are the only couple

who successfully employs the components of both the companionate and pedagogic models and thus achieves “perfect happiness” (so far as the novel can tell us) in their marriage.

In the end, by more clearly understanding these relationships, we can see that perhaps more attention and care should be taken when looking at and analyzing the marriages Austen wrote. There is no one easy category to place any of the marriages in, no matter how similar they all may be to each other. Each relationship has its differences, so instead of emphasizing the similarities, scholars should emphasize the differences. That is how we can truly come to a better understanding of the marriages and what they may have meant to Austen and her contemporaries. By closely looking at each of these marriages through a deeply historical lens, we can see that these relationships are not stock relationships. They cannot be clearly defined into simple categories, because that isn't realistic. Austen realistically portrays complex relationships, relationships that may make modern scholars uncomfortable and dismissive, but relationships that more than likely existed during Austen's life. Through recognizing and accounting for these complexities, more can be learned about Austen's intentions in writing what she did, and as a result, perhaps more people will realize that Austen's works are more than a chick-lit, wish-fulfillment phenomenon.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> For views of Austen as the “Mother of Chick-Lit,” see Holly Kinsella's “Proud & Prejudiced: Jane Austen, The Mother of All Chick-Lit Novelists” and Jennifer Frey's “Jane Austen: A Love Story.”

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