



Marriage, Love and Money in Themes of Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* and *Emma*

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Abstract: It is right that the three words at the head of this article come in the order that they do, because in Jane Austen's novels the manoeuvring by which a man presents himself to a woman (and her parents) as a possible husband often comes before any signs of love. Charlotte Lucas in *Pride and Prejudice* offers the most tough-minded and unsentimental analysis, counselling that Jane Bennet should secure her rich husband first and think about love only after they are married. 'Happiness in marriage is entirely a matter of chance' (ch. 6). She is not the only articulate cynic. Mary Crawford in *Mansfield Park*, possessed of a good fortune and on the lookout for a husband, calls marriage 'a manoeuvring business' (ch. 5). Conduct books of the period tend to represent marriage as a solemn religious duty but in Austen's novels the harsh economic reality of a young woman's value in the marriage market is what preoccupies most of the characters.

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Introduction:

Jane Austen was born in 1775 in Steventon. She was the seventh of eight children, six boys and two girls. James, the eldest took order Austen was very close to her two years older than her sister Cassandra. The sisters were devoted to one another, when apart, wrote to each other than some of their family thought necessary. They were lively, affectionate, intelligent clan very fond and proud of one another. By modern standard, Jane Austen led a narrow and limited life. She never went abroad. She knew the little of the north of England. Hampshire and Kent were her territory with visits to Teignmouth and Sid mouth, a week or so with Henry, her brother, in London now and then; some years at Both and some in Southampton. She never had a bedroom for herself. She never seems to have framed any close relationship outside the family circle. *Emma* is the novel in which Austen regained the vigour and charm of *Pride and Prejudice* without sacrificing the moral imperatives of *Mansfield Park*. The antagonism between art and morality which weakens her few earlier novels- an antagonism reminiscent of eighteenth-century attacks on the irresponsibility of fiction- has been replaced in *Emma* by a renewed faith in the power of art by dealing skillfully with the concept of love, marriage and money, a serene belief that the novel can both recreate and criticize the illusions of life. We can say that it is a sing of difference between *Pride and Prejudice* and *Emma*

that the problem of self-recognition occupies the entire course of *Emma*, while after Elizabeth's self-understanding the interest in *Pride and Prejudice* shifts from personal problems of judgment to the social activities like, money and marriage. So *Emma* is presented as constant process of emotional miscalculation and rational correction.

Jane Austen's greatness as a writer is indisputable, although as Virginia Woolf has confessed, of all the great writers she is "the most difficult to catch in the act of greatness".¹ The tribute of one great woman novelist to another- in itself for common expressive of the significance of the Jane Austen's achievement as a novelist which with the passage of time has been acknowledged and defined in terms which reflect the different concerns of various school of critical theory and thought. It is amazing that her appeal remained unaffected by such shifts as have occurred in literary taste and critical speculation. It is undesirable that Jane Austen's novels are as immensely readably today as they must have been in their own time and in the years that followed it, which points to an unmistakable felicity that marks her work. No neologism needs to be invented to define the inductable appeal that Jane Austen's work has or to exploit the strong reactions both favourable and unfavourable that she evokes in her readers. Ian Watts observes, "we call Jane Austen the first modern English novelist because she was the first writer of English fiction who synthesized the achievements of Richardson and Fielding, thus

anticipating the classic form of the 19th century novel, a flow that enables the artist to record both the flow of external events and the complexities of personal impression.

Marriage seems to be particularly devastating for Austen's female characters, even those who married "well." **Mrs. Grant**, for example, is made miserable by her husband's demanding expectations of her role as a housekeeper. Even **Lady Bertram**, whose marriage to Sir Thomas is not explicitly described as negative, suffers from such a profound sense of apathy in her marriage that she, devoid of any personality or passion, rarely leaves her couch.

Austen's cynicism towards marriage, palpable in her depiction of marriage as a financial transaction, paired with her many portraits of unhappy marriages and their negative effects on women, ultimately renders the book's "happy ending" somewhat sour. Even the marriages that are purportedly love-matches end poorly, like **Mrs. Price's** marriage to **Mr. Price**, which produces a domestic life that is hectic, financially strained, and haunted by Mr. Price's alcoholism. Even Edmund and Fanny's marriage, supposedly a perfect match, and seemingly the desired ending to the book, is somewhat tainted. Edmund's quick change of affection from Mary Crawford towards Fanny comes across as sudden and, as a result, unfulfilling and unconvincing. Likewise, though the narrator tells the reader that their marriage is happy, the book ends without showing any evidence of marital bliss. Both Fanny and the reader get what they are looking for, but Fanny's nuptial success seems like far less of a triumph when put in context of dark view of marriage portrayed in the rest of the book. By making Fanny victorious in winning Edmund's hand in marriage, but also showing how that accomplishment might not actually be such a happy one, Austen sardonically implies that the marriage plot, when carried out to its inevitable conclusion, is fundamentally unsatisfying because the institution of marriage itself is toxic.

Life History: Jane Austen was born in 1775 in Steventon. She was the seventh of eight children, six boys and two girls. James, the eldest took order Austen was very close to her two years older than her sister Cassandra. The sisters were devoted to one another, when apart, wrote to each other than some of their family thought necessary. They were lively, affectionate, intelligent clan very fond and proud of one another. By modern standard, Jane Austen led a narrow and limited life. She never went abroad. She knew the little of the north of England. Hampshire and Kent were her territory with visits to Teignmouth and Sid mouth, a week or so with Henry, her brother, in London now and then; some years at Both and some in Southampton. She never had a bedroom for herself.

She never seems to have framed any close relationship outside the family circle. But, by the standard of those days, she had a good deal of amusement, freedom and more fun than many girls had. The proportion of boys to girls in the family was an advantage. The two sisters had more consideration, probably than they would have had if there had been six females and two males.¹

It is impossible to believe that the girl who, at twenty-one, danced and flirted with such energy could have ever expected such fate or have chosen it without a sigh. But Jane and Cassandra Austen had their sisterly alliance which must have gone far to mitigate the loneliness of a single life. They had intellectual resources beyond the average, brothers who valued them and more liberty than most of their contemporaries. For Cassandra, at least, there was an elevating principle; she had loved, she had known the best, and she would never compromise for a lesser good.²

At the time when Jane Austen first began to examine the literary fashion of her society, in the early 1790's, criticism of the English novel had not advanced beyond that found in the age of Richardson and Fielding. Few writers had followed the example set by them. Jane Austen has been one of those set of novelists who followed them. She wrote in the perfect form of art. F.R. Leavis sees in the connection between Jane Austen's reading and her art a perfect example of the "relation of the individual talent to tradition,"

If the influences bearing on her had not compromised something fairly to be called tradition she couldn't have found herself and her true direction; but her relation to tradition is creative one. She not only makes tradition for those coming after, but... creates the tradition we see leading down to her. Her work, like the work of all great creative writers, gives a meaning to the past³.

Moreover, the tracing of the influence of her predecessors on her work may be helpful to the identification of the points of departure which certain feature of her writings manifest. Marvin Murdoch says that "Jane Austen's early work cut off the bourgeois escape disposing of all the feverish day dreams ... in which the middle class, especially its unoccupied women – tries guiltily to deny itself."⁴

When the young Jane Austen looked about her in the fiction of the time she found a rich field in which to exercise her natural gift for critical irony. Hough understandably views the history of Jane Austen's day as revolutionary history. He writes, "The world of which her novels present a corner was a world in convulsion, filled with wars, revolutions, and the

struggle for political liberty, black repression, miserable poverty and savage penal laws.”⁵

Jane Austen’s views of love, marriage and money can be better understood if we keep in mind the contemporary society and the law expectations of women with regard to marriage in the eighteenth century England. While all women were, of course, expected to marry and were taught the duties of a wife from their childhood, they were also warned not to have too rosy a picture of married life in their minds. Jane Austen herself is concerned of the pitfalls in the way of happy married life. Her correspondence, as also her fiction, gives us the impression that she is the perhaps almost afraid of marriage. Patricia Beer believes that “Jane Austen could not bear to hear about married bliss” and mentions her “fear, amounting to an obsession towards the end of life, about childbearing.”⁶

Jane Austen’s career spans a very brief time. Her six novels were published within seven years, although she had been writing some years before her first publication, *Sense and Sensibility* which is a simplest novel. The story of the novel deals with two sisters, Elinor – the heroine represents a woman of sensibility. A. Walton Litz observes: In sense and sensibility we witness that struggle between an inherited form and fresh experience which so often marks the transitional works of a great artist”.⁷ From one point of view the novel can be said to an exploration of double theme of sense and sensibility.

Her next novel, *Pride and Prejudice*, was written in 1797 with the title *First Impression* but was published only in 1813. One of Austen’s most popular novels *Pride and Prejudice* is concerned with the theme of marriage and love. There are several marriages in the novels and all of them intended to reveal the requirements of a good and bad marriage. Marriage and courtship is the central theme of the novel. *Pride and Prejudice* was a great success when her contemporary. Dr. Walter Scott had words of praise for her. “Also read again and for the third time at least Miss Austen’s very much finely written novel of *Pride and Prejudice*... The Big Bow-wow strain I can do myself like any now going, but the exquisite touch which renders ordinary common place things and characters interesting ... is denied to me”⁸

Mansfield Park published in 1814, centres on the development of its heroine Fanny price from a timid, passive girl to a mature and self-knowing woman. The various aspects of love, marriage, and material, intellectual and emotional capabilities are dealt with skillfully. The emphasis is on marriage as necessary duty for women- especially to marry within one’s own class and preferably above one’s position. Raymond Williams says: “Austen’s novels all express an unattainable quality of life, in money and property

acquired, moral discriminations made, the right choices put in place, the correct improvements’ implemented, the finely nuanced language affirmed and classified. Yet Williams continues: What [Cobbett] names, riding past on the road are classes. Jane Austen, from inside the houses, can never see that, for all the intimacy of her social description. All her discrimination is understandably, internal and exclusive. She is concerned with the conduct of people who, in the complications of improvement, are repeatedly trying to make themselves into a class. But where only one class is seen, no classes are seen”⁹. As is seen the material and the social aspects are the major considerations of marriage.

Mansfield Park was followed by *Emma*, which was published in 1815. There are two plots – the inward and outward, closely linked. Gloria Sybil has thoughtfully pointed out the story of *Emma* is one of self-evasion, of suppressed desire, of a young woman, who, for a variety of social and familiar reasons, represses “the erotic side of her personality and adopts “Harriet as a kind of surrogate who can freely indulge prurient interests.”¹⁰ The novel further presents the case of young Emma exploring relationships with potential marriage partners. Her manipulation of the other characters around her demonstrates her state of mind: her fancy or imaginary perception of what a situation is or might be, leads her and them into many false positions. Austen has built the novel around three sexual stories which run concurrently through the course of years. This story, deeply embedded into the framework of the text, is the paradigm love relationship. It is the accomplished, companionate marriage with a sexuality that is at once satisfying and fruitful. It is the relationship against which the other marriages of the novel will be measured, an especially interesting situation in view of the fact that Mr. Weston’s first marriage was unsuccessful. In the novel, Austen has denied sentimental convention not only by allowing the partners to the illicit act to make amends, but by suggesting that their life together has all the promises of success. There is the restatement of the theme of the love in Weston marriage: sex which is accompanied by love and goodwill is vital part of the relationship between is woman and a man. This must be placed in the context of marriage.

Austen’s another major novel *Northanger Abbey* has duel theme in it. It was written in 1797-98 but was published in 1818¹¹. It opens with the famous description of Catherine, the anti-heroine in which we learn that, oddly enough, Goth of her parents are still living. The comic climax of double theme is the disabusement of Catherine’s romantic fantasies. In *Northanger Abbey* Jane Austen burlesques the misadventure and terrifying mishaps of the Gothic

heroine through the character of Catherine and makes her stand on realism and good sense. However, her novel retains the conventional romantic ending of the hero and heroine coming together in wedded bliss. Julia and Louisa both display many of the accomplishments that were standard for heroines of late eighteenth century novels.

Persuasion in spite of its comedy and irony came in 1818 with essentially a serious message. The central theme of the novel is constant love. This is a novel constructed around what was, for its time, a radically unusual narrative premise the love affair that showed have culminated in a marriage to end a conventional romance novel has gone bad and the heroine of the piece must begin again, eight and a half year later, on her quest for narrative closure. It is a story of lost love regained, of oppositions reconciled. Judith Van Sickle Johnson says, "The heroine's emotional experience in the central subject of *Persuasion*; Anne's physical desire frustration and finally gratified – is the mother that derives the narrative's movement to its happy ending closure in her sexual union with Wentworth." He further claims, "Although the sexindling of romantic sensibilities causes Anne a good deal of discomfort and agitation, she is nonetheless comfortable with discomfort; she delights in the sharp physical sensations of her own passionate nature."¹¹

It is true that the society Jane Austen depicts in *MansfieldPark* and *Emma* is cruel one and it is particularly hostile to women characters with small fortune. All Austen's heroines, except Emma, have only small fortune and they have to face in a way or other cruelties inherent in a mercenary social system. The basic flaw lies in their economic situation. At a time when no honorarable professions were available to middle class girls to earn their living, marriage could only provide them, money, economic and social security. Marry Astell lamented that contemporary women regarded marriage as her "only preferment" the sum total of endeavours, the completion of all her hopes."¹³

Writing about the opinion regarding marriage that time Mary Astell states the only suitable lease for marriage in friendship: "He who does not make friendship the chief instrument to his choice, and prefer it before any other consideration, does not deserve a good wife, and should not complain if he goes without one"¹⁴

In 18th Century England, most men were attracted either by a woman's money or by her beauty and these precisely are the motives for marriage. There is no great odds between (a marrying man) marrying for the love of money or for the love of beauty. The man does not act according to reason in any case, but is governed by irregular appetites. It is there

irregularities appetites which determine many of the marriages in Jane Austen's *MansfieldPark* and *Emma*. One of Austen's critics Anthea Zeman has wisely observed, "All Jane Austen's novels end with propitious, but they are not manuals on how to get married. They are, for more, a series of guide books on when, how and in what frame of mind not to get married."¹⁵ Her novels, however, signify a point of departure a cutting-off point for the English novelists, which tend to be depreciated by the sentimentalism of Richardson and the Gothic sentimentalism of Mrs. Raddcliffe. Being true to fact and delineated with precision characteristic of scientism, her characters and carefully managed episodes invests her projections of human experience with the quality of ontological realities and her novels with the character of autonomous verbal structures – a quality or virtue demanded of the novel by modern critics. Hough understandably views, "The world of which her novels present a corner was a world in convulsion, filled with wars, revolutions the struggle for political liberty, black repression, miserably poverty and savage penal laws."¹⁶

Jane Austen's novels convey an idea of everyday existence centred around the theme of love, marriage and money and family life. That Hough views everyday existence as a corner of the world reveals his inheritance of classical standards of subject matter. Yet part of the greatness of her novels, as of many modern novels, lies in their unrelenting insistence that everyday existence is not of the world. It is frequently remarked that *Mansfield Park* and *Emma* can be read and re-read with increasing delight. This quality comes from the sentence-to-sentence brilliance of these novels, which speak of the moment-to-moment brilliance the transitory meaning, of everyday life she describes. Jane Austen may have been influenced in her outlook by contemporary events. After somewhat tumultuous response to the French Revolution in the early years England was in a largely anti-revolutionary mood when Jane Austen came on the scene. On the top of everything else, there was war against France and even fear of a French invasion. All this encouraged conservative thinking and it is no accident that quite a few anti-Jacobean novels were published in England during this period advocating among other things, traditional moral values of life. Jane Austen, too, is conservative writer subscribing to such moral values. That even the most revolutionary writer in the age, Marry Wollstencraft, held views about love and marriage and money which are no different from those of Jane Austen need not surprise us. After all both were rational in their outlook and believed in the power of reasoning. Hence their advice to women was not to act on impulse and in the

matter of marriage be guided by “friendship, respect, not love”¹⁷

The fact that marriages in *Mansfield Park* and *Emma* are “bad or bleakly empty...revealing different degree of failed maturity, non-reciprocation and myopic egotism or frivolous self-gratification,”¹⁸ serve as warning to her heroines. They are anxious that their own marriage should be based on affection so that in their case, there is no dearth of reciprocation, mutuality, esteem and regard to achieve such marriages; however, it is not easy in view of the situation in which Jane Austen’s heroines are placed. Anthea Zeman thus describes the situation:

These are girls who marriage chance depended entirely on their personal attractions. They have no money; everyone knows they have no money. They are in the same ballrooms and assemblies as most fortunate girls, acknowledged heiresses, which puts them in a singularly exposed position. Apart from the obvious fact that they will have fewer, and generally proper, suitors to choose from, they are seen by the world as in need of a husband, as Mantraps prepared to do almost everything to secure a future and a fortune for themselves.¹⁹

The heroines in *Mansfield Park* and *Emma* want high and tender friendship to be the basis of their marriage. But they invariably marry men who are rich or, at any rate, prosperous enough to maintain their family in the middle class style. If they get marry, like Fanny Price’s mother, they will have to endure the poverty and degradation. None of them, including Fanny Price herself, would like to accept such a situation. Jane Austen’s position is often summed up by critic in Lord David Cecil words: “It was wrong to marry for money, but it was silly to marry without it.”²⁰ Perhaps it is somewhat cynical way of stating the exact position. It is not that Jane Austen’s keep both love and man’s financial standing in mind while accepting him. But they belong to certain social circle and they usually marry within that circle or slightly above it. The only important point is that they must not become the victim of penniless adventures under the influence of sheer romantic passion but keep their feet on the ground. Of course they would prefer “a marriage of true minds and important social status and responsibility...as wife of a landed gentleman or dedicated professional man”²¹ but such marriage cannot be made to order. Schreiner describes the ideal of love that Jane Austen’s heroines embody in *Mansfield Park* and *Emma*:

The one and only ideal is the perfect mental and physical life-long union of one man with one woman. That is the only thing which for highly developed intellectual natures can consolidated marriage. All short of this is more or less a failure, and on legal marriage can make a relationship other than impure in which there is not this union.²²

In the subsequent two chapters we will see that Austen does not separate love and money absolutely, and she shows how frequently the latter decides the relationships of individuals. But Austen shows that her heroines will not marry except for love. She reduces or neutralizes the far more important requirements of self-knowledge sympathetic regard for others. Thus Austen rejects a marriage based solely or primarily on either the sensual or the practical. Marilyn Butler writes, “Jane Austen is by common consent an author remarkably sure of her values.”²³ And yet how difficult it is to neatly categorise Jane Austen. Protofeminist, anti-Jacobean, Tory Conservative, Rationalist- all these labels, these attempts to fix her, have somehow failed. Here was a woman who wrote to her favourite niece:

Oh! What a loss it will be when you are married. You are too agreeable in your single state... I shall hate you when your delicious play of mind is all settled down into conjugal and maternal affection.²⁴

Yet her novels culminate with marriages seen by many as reflecting the view that a woman’s development culminates in marriage. But at another level *Mansfield Park* and *Emma* are an ironic look at the entire institution and though the heroines marry the man at the top of hierarchy of classes and ostensibly the social fabric remains undisturbed.

Mansfield Park: Nother novel of Jane Austen’s has stimulated such diverse interpretations as *Mansfield Park* and no other heroine such divergent responses as Fanny Price. In all of Austen’s novels, the society is patriarchal in nature. Women are regarded as inferior and dependent, and their activities are devalued. This standing is imposed upon them by education and social training. From infancy a girl is taught to revere the male; in adolescence she discovers the economic and social foundations of male supremacy. Playing with feminine role she moves in a vicious circle: the less she exercises her freedom to understand, the fewer resources she discovers in herself and the less she dares to affirm herself as subject. Her situation invites collusion with her masters, a circumstance that in turn feeds their arrogance and prompts their blindness.

Marriage is her chief means of support and chief justification of her existence. But since patriarchal values prevail, her position in marriage in all probability remains subservient and supportive. In *Pride and Prejudice*, Austen focuses on the suitable marriage only but in *Mansfield Park* she takes up the broader issue of marriage and money.

At the core of society is a family unit dedicated to accumulating property and transmitting it to its biological descendants. Mansfield Park, home of the Bertram family, is a model of the patriarchal order. The female at the Park are subordinate figures whose fates are decided by the marriages they make.

About thirty years ago, Miss Maria Ward of Huntingdon, with only seven thousand pounds, had the good luck to captivate Sir Thomas Bertram, of Mansfield Park, in the country of Northampton, and to be thereby raised to the rank of a baronet's lady, with all the comforts and *consequences* of a handsome house and large income.ⁱⁱ

So less resonant than the opening sentence of *Pride and Prejudice*, the one incorporates a substantial, repeated, and neglected concern of the novel.ⁱⁱⁱ The theme of love, marriage and money recur as both word and consideration at crucial points throughout the book and each occurrence give rise to social, artistic, and personal concerns that have not been looked into.^{iv} No other theme seems quite so successfully to focus essential elements in *Mansfield Park* and no other work examines quite so subtly all of the implications of the term.

Even in Austen's first sentence we can sense intricate and significant connections among consequence landed wealth, sexual rank, and marriage. The Ward money has gone from Huntingdon to Northampton in search of the Bertram acres. These acres converge in a substantial house that places those who inhabit it well up on the sexual social scale. And within a very few pages we began to understand some of the ironies attendant upon the application of the word consequence to Lady Bertram. In exchange for the comforts of this establishment, Maria Ward will be expected to deploy some of its consequence, but the failure of Lady Bertram to derive and deploy and of her husband's considerable consequence becomes one of the another major themes of the novel.

Emma: *Emma*, fourth novel by Jane Austen, published in three volumes in 1815. Set in Highbury, England, in the early 19th century, the novel centres on Emma Woodhouse, a precocious young woman whose misplaced confidence in her matchmaking abilities occasions several romantic misadventures.

Emma is the novel in which Austen regained the vigour and charm of *Pride and Prejudice* without sacrificing the moral imperatives of *Mansfield Park*. The antagonism between art and morality which weakens her few earlier novels- an antagonism reminiscent of eighteenth-century attacks on the irresponsibility of fiction-has been replaced in *Emma* by a renewed faith in the power of art by dealing skillfully with the concept of love, marriage and money, a serene belief that the novel can both recreate and criticize the illusions of life. We can say that it is a sign of difference between *Pride and Prejudice* and *Emma* that the problem of self-recognition occupies the entire course of *Emma*, while after Elizabeth's self-understanding the interest in *Pride and Prejudice* shifts from personal problems of judgment to the social activities like, money and marriage. So *Emma* is presented as constant process of emotional miscalculation and rational correction.

The force of the verb *seemed* is pointed. Emma is indeed beautiful, wealthy, and smart. However, she is also spoiled, meddling, and self-deluded. Although she is convinced she will never marry, Emma believes she is an excellent matchmaker. As she tells her father and her dear friend Mr. Knightley, she practically arranged the recent marriage between her former governess, Miss Taylor, and the widower Mr. Weston. (She did, after all, introduce them.) After such a clear "success," Emma is determined to make another match. This time, she has set her sights on the village vicar, Mr. Elton. Both Emma's father and Mr. Knightley caution her against interfering, but they ultimately fail to dissuade her.

Shortly thereafter, Emma befriends Harriet Smith, a 17-year-old student at a local boarding school. Harriet's parentage is unknown; she is "the natural daughter of somebody" who many years ago placed her in the care of the school's headmistress, Mrs. Goddard. Despite the obscurity of her birth and her perceived inferior social status, Emma decides that Harriet is a perfect match for Mr. Elton. Emma sets about improving her friend, first, by discouraging her interest in Robert Martin, a young farmer whose family is renting land from Mr. Knightley. Harriet clearly has feelings for Robert (and Robert for her). Emma convinces her otherwise; she tells Harriet that Robert is beneath her. When Robert writes a letter asking for her hand in marriage, Harriet, with Emma's counsel, refuses him.

Conclusion: Marriage and social status are the two foci of *Emma*. Most of the drama in Austen's novel revolves around who loves whom and what that means, given their social station. Social status in 19th-century England was determined by a confluence of factors, including, but not limited to, family name, sex, birthright, reputation, and wealth, and it dictated much

about the course of a person's life. Members of the higher social classes were not expected to intermarry, let alone interact, with members of a lower class. In fact, in some cases, such marriages were considered inappropriate.

Through Emma, Austen subtly satirizes her society's obsession with social distinctions. At the beginning of the novel, Austen's heroine is confident she knows who "the chosen and the best" are in Highbury and who constitutes the "second set." Keeping with her social code, Emma discourages Harriet from pursuing a relationship with Robert. As Emma explains, Robert is not a "gentleman." He is therefore destined to become "a completely gross, vulgar farmer, totally inattentive to appearances, and thinking of nothing but profit and loss." Emma is similarly appalled when Mrs. Elton presumes to call Mr. Elton and Mr. Knightley "Mr. E" and "Knightley."

Mr. Knightley challenges Emma's notions of class distinction, pushing her to contemplate whether such distinctions truly matter. When Emma criticizes Robert for his ungentlemanly demeanour, Mr. Knightley impassionedly defends Robert, claiming that he "has more true gentility than Harriet Smith could ever understand." After all her attempts to make suitable matches fail, Emma finally begins to realize that social distinction does not equate to a constitutional difference in character. By the end of the novel, Emma has learned her lesson, and she decides that "[i]t would be a great pleasure to know Robert Martin."

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