

Jane Austen's Femininity as Reflected in *Emma*

Eko Budi Setiawan

Program Studi Sastra Inggris – Fakultas Sastra
Universitas Katolik Widya Mandala Madiun

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini membahas novel berjudul *Emma* ditulis oleh Jane Austen. Peneliti menggambarkan keperempuanan Jane Austen seperti yang tersirat dalam novel *Emma*. *Emma* telah merepresentasikan kebangkitan perempuan dengan belajar hidup dalam masyarakat tanpa mengorbankan diri sendiri. Dia telah berkembang dari karakter yang sensitif dan memiliki cinta kasih. *Emma* telah menikah dengan pria intelektual yang menghormati perempuan. Dia menikah karena cinta, dan tetap mengendalikan rumah tangganya.

Austen juga menggambarkan perspektif laki-laki yang tidak konvensional. Hal ini menjadi pengalaman George Knightley mengkritik *Emma* ketika *Emma* tersandung. *Emma* telah berkorban, tetapi mendapatkan banyak dari yang telah dia korbankan. *Emma* belajar dari kesalahannya dan berusaha berkembang. *Emma* telah memiliki pengalaman hidup, moral, seperti seorang pria yang memiliki kehidupan moral.

Austen menggambarkan *Emma* dengan karakter realistis, menyatakan bahwa perempuan dapat berpikir, memiliki alasan rasional, belajar dan berkembang. Dengan demikian, Austen telah memberikan kontribusi dalam membebaskan perspektif negatif terhadap perempuan.

Kata kunci: keperempuanan, perspektif, konvensional, realistis

A. Background of the Study

Literary works are not mysteriously inspired, or explicable simply in terms of their authors' psychology. They are forms of perception of seeing the world. Rogers notes that "Austen presented the familiar theme of women's economic plight with brilliant ruthless realism, as she demonstrated that women were practically forced to marry and yet were hobbled in their opportunities to get a husband" (1989: 226).

Emma (1816), as the opening words of the novel indicate, is the tale of a rich, beautiful young woman: "Emma Woodhouse, handsome, clever, and rich, with a comfortable home and happy disposition, seemed to unite some of the best blessings of existence, and had lived nearly twenty-one years in the world with very little to distress or vex her" (27).

Austen, through *Emma*, has rejected many of the skewed masculine values unfavorable to women during her time; and she has done so quietly, not braced for war, but, rather armed with paper and pen and ready for mediation. Her innovative narrative techniques allow *Emma* to evolve characters who serve to magnify her

departure from the norm in her awareness of the world around her and the importance of her personal place in it (1963: 151).

The traditional view of *Emma* as a novel is the maturation of its protagonist. Emma, according to this view, represents all people, and must relinquish her selfish and childish individual desires in order to take her place as an adult who conforms to social expectations and community demands. Emma describes a drama fundamental to human nature and social integration that is conservative in nature for it accepts *prima facie* the role of woman as subordinate to the patriarchal order (1963: 145).

Emma actually not only offers the social issues but also shows how a feminine writer tries to show her identity through her literary works. These are portrayed through the characters' experiences in the novel. Lewes (1972: 370) observes some special qualities in Austen's work, but their culturally determined gazes see only a simple romantic story told with a feminine voice.

Thus the writer of this research is inspired that a great deal of Austen's appeal is due to the importance and value of femininity. Women today are expected to have successful careers as well as successful families, and much of feminine grace seems to be lost in the process. The women of Jane Austen, though they did not have as many legal rights as women today, were expert in the art of femininity.

B. Problem Limitation

This research focuses on Jane Austen's *Emma*. The analysis is concentrated on Jane Austen's femininity as reflected on Emma. In order to make this writing focus on the main problems, the lives of Jane Austen are analyzed. Secondly, the writer also interprets the relationship between Emma and other characters through their dialogues or conversations and all statements stated by the narrators in *Emma*. Consequently, the reflection of femininity through Emma arises. Those aspects are analyzed in this research. Although the dialogues and conversations in the novel indicate colloquialism and their local color, all of these linguistic features are not analyzed as an independent aspect.

C. Problem Formulation

After the research has considered the problem limitation of it, some questions are raised. There are two questions, and both are based on the main character, Emma. Then, those questions are answered in the analysis of the research. Those questions can be stated as follows:

1. What is Jane Austen's femininity as reflected on Emma?
2. How does Jane Austen present the femininity as reflected on Emma?

D. Research Goals

This research tries to explain Jane Austen's femininity through *Emma*. Those main objectives are formulated in the following statements.

1. To depict Jane Austen's femininity through the main character, *Emma*.
2. To describe the way of Jane Austen in telling femininity through *Emma*.

E. Theoretical Review

This chapter describes the theories which are used in answering the statements of the problem. These theories are femininity, feminism, and Jane Austen's life.

1. Femininity

Amstrong (1993: 902) states that femininity, in essence is a romantic sentiment, a nostalgic tradition of imposed limitations. Even as it hurried forward in the 1980s, putting on lipstick and high heels to appear well dressed, it trips on the ruffled petticoats and hoopskirts of an era gone by. Amstrong (1993: 905) also clarifies that femininity is something that women had more of in the past, not only in the historic past of prior generations, but in each woman's personal past as well in the virginal innocent that is replaced by knowledge, in the dewy cheek that is coarsened by age, in the inherent nature that a woman seems to misplace so forgetfully whenever she steps out of bounds.

Furthermore, Amstrong (1993: 906) adds that femininity always demands more. It must constantly reassure its audience by a willing demonstration of difference, even when one does not exist in nature, or it must seize and embrace a natural variation and compose a rhapsodic symphony upon the notes. To be insufficiently feminine is viewed as a failure in core sexual identity, or as a failure to care sufficiently about oneself, for a woman found wanting will be appraised (and will appraise herself) as mannish or neutered or simply unattractive, as men have defined these terms.

2. Feminism

A feminism is a study which sees the gender systems currently in operation as structured by basic binary opposition, masculine and feminine, in which one term, masculine is always privileged over the other term, and that this privileging has had the direct effect of enabling man to occupy positions of social power more often than woman. Not all men eligible to occupy these positions of power, other binary oppositions are always also at work, such as old/young, or rich/poor, which will mitigate the effect of gender alone; hence a rich old woman might have more forms of social power than a poor young man.

According to Bressler (1980: 180) in his book *Feminist Criticism*, the roots of prejudice against woman have long been embedded in Western Culture. Such gender discrimination may begin with the biblical narrative that places the blame for the fall of humanity on Eve not Adam. In similar fashion the ancient Greeks labeled such

gender discrimination on the assumption that the male is by nature superior and the female inferior; and the one rules and the other is ruled.

Bressler (1980: 182) also states in his book *Literary Criticism* that woman is not a man, she has become the other, not male. Man is the subject, the one who defines meaning; woman is the object, having her existence defined and determined by the male. The man is therefore the significant figure in the male/female relationship and the woman is subordinate.

Accordingly it can be said that feminist goal is to change the degrading view of woman so that women will realize that they are not a non-significant other, but that each woman is a valuable person possessing the same rights as every man. Women must define themselves and assert their own voices in the area of politics, society, education, and also the arts. It can be done by committing themselves to change, to create a society where the male and female voices are equally valued.

3. Austen's Life

Although Austen has traditionally been portrayed as having remained part of a small world, reviews of her life paint a somewhat different picture. She was well read, and, although she was not a world traveler, she managed to visit London and Bath and a multitude of relatives in different locales, meeting and making acquaintances with a large number of people. She was born in Steventon, Hampshire, England, in 1775, the daughter of a clergyman. For a short time, Jane and her sister Cassandra, to whom she remained close all of her life, were placed at the Abbey School in Reading under Madame Latourelle, a place where *British Authors of the 19th Century* tells us "girls might be sent to be out of the way, and scramble themselves into a little education without any danger of coming back prodigies" (40). After a very brief period of formal education, both Jane and Cassandra, like many other females of their time, were further educated at home. This was in direct contrast to the education of most males of Austen's class, who would often have been sent away to boarding school for long periods of time. Austen's later education, probably supervised by her scholarly father, included much reading on varied subject matters by a broad variety of authors.

Halperin (1984), in *The Life of Jane Austen*, tells us that Austen read Shakespeare, Milton, Pope, Thomson, Gray, Hume, Sherlock, Sheridan, Baretti, Price, Blair, Gilpin, Payne Knight, and the *Spectator*. As well, she read contemporary writers, such as Johnson, Cowper, Crabbe, and Goldsmith. In addition to these, she is said to have read eighteenth-century fiction by Fielding, Richardson, Sterne, Charlotte Smith, Charlotte Lennox, Ann Radcliffe, Fanny Burney, Maria Edgeworth, and other contemporaries. She learned French and Italian, studied history, played the pianoforte, and was taught to draw, sew, and embroider. Halperin (1984) further tells us that Austen was brought up in a non-restrictive environment as far as reading or topics of conversation were concerned, allowing her to question, rather than to blindly accept blanket statements (26-27). Tomalin (1999: 6), in *Jane Austen: A Life*, explains that Austen's life, while not fraught with infamous occurrences to report,

was far from being "not by any means a life of event," as Henry was said to have penned in a biographical note after her death.

Nokes (1997: 7) provides a somewhat different angle to Jane Austen's life in his intimate view of Austen in *Jane Austen: A Life*. He challenges the familiar image of her as a literary maiden aunt. "This is not because I wish to offer any slight to her genius. It is because I prefer to present her not in the modest pose which her family determined for her, but rather, as she most frequently presented herself, as rebellious, satirical and wild".

This statement expresses the frustration many modern biographers have felt when attempting to research Austen's life. Austen's family destroyed many of her personal letters that might have tended to show her in an unbecoming light. Nokes (1977: 258) reveals that the guiltiest party in the destruction was her sister, Cassandra, who obliterated many of Jane's letters that Cassandra thought were particularly unflattering. Nokes also includes a telling declaration from Austen's niece, Caroline Austen, written after the engagement debacle, which indicates both Caroline's admiration for her aunt and Austen's courage.

Rogers, in *Feminism in Eighteenth-Century England* (1982: 225) discusses the progress women writers, like Austen, made in the eighteenth century, and attributes such progress to the benefit they received from "feminine awareness developed by earlier women writers. Like them, she [Austen] focused on an intelligent young woman, through whose eyes she presented women, men, and the world". She speaks to Austen's awareness, and satirical treatment, of the traditional role she and her female contemporaries had to fulfill.

F. ANALYSIS

1. Jane Austen's Feminity as Reflected in *Emma*

Emma (1816), as the opening words of the novel indicate, is the tale of a rich, beautiful young woman: "Emma Woodhouse, handsome, clever, and rich, with a comfortable home and happy disposition, seemed to unite some of the best blessings of existence, and had lived nearly twenty-one years in the world with very little to distress or vex her" (27). Emma is the daughter of Mr. Woodhouse.

In analyzing Austen's portrayal of awakening female character, perhaps the best place to start is on the outside, the exterior circumstances. The reader might move first from the outside to the inside before beginning the trip into Austen's, and her characters' minds. An initial observation to be made is how Austen initiates her presentation of Emma, from her authorial view, as an unfinished character, in the stages of evolution, beginning to awaken to an increasing awareness of the world around her and to her role in that world. To demonstrate Emma's incompleteness and evolving nature, Austen initially presents Emma as one who is constantly leaving things unfinished. During his discussion of her with Mrs. Weston, Mr. Knightley ironically, though affectionately, points out this particular flaw in Emma as it relates to her reading plans:

Emma has been meaning to read more ever since she was twelve years old. I have seen a great many lists of her drawing up at various times of books that she meant to read regularly through – and very good lists they were – very well chosen and very neatly arranged – sometimes alphabetically and sometimes by some other rule. The list she drew up when she was fourteen – I remember thinking it did her judgment so much credit that I preserved it some time; and I dare say she may have made out a very good list now. But I have done with expecting any course of steady reading from Emma. She will never submit to anything requiring industry and patience and a subjection of the fancy to the understanding (1989: 53).

In this passage, Austen, through Mr. Knightley, has cleverly pointed out that Emma, while having good taste in reading material and formulating elaborate lists in contemplation for how the reading should be carried out, does not follow through with her intentions and actually reads the books she has chosen. Austen has, through the irony in these lines, tempered Mr. Knightley's criticism of Emma by balancing her negative aspects with positive ones. Since Emma appears to hold in high regard Mr. Knightley's judgment of her behavior throughout much of the novel, the reader can also notice this sense of incompleteness in Emma's character without losing respect or affection for her. Knightley's indulgent, satiric praise of Emma's discrimination in her choices of good books for someone else to read in the list she drew up at fourteen considerably softens his criticism of her and also helps to reveal his feelings for her to the reader. After reading the passage, we have the sense that Emma starts much but finishes little; however, our sympathy for her has not really waned, because Mr. Knightley has not used harsh, biting wit to criticize, but rather subtle, tolerantly humorous irony.

Emma acts not only with reading lists, but also with almost every aspect of her life. A foremost demonstration is the fact that she has learned to play the pianoforte and sing only just enough to play passably well. However, she is able to use a sudden self-enlightenment of this characteristic in herself, which she does not realize until later in the novel, as a step in her growth to self-awareness: "She did unfeignedly and unequivocally regret the inferiority of her own playing and singing. She did most heartily grieve over the idleness of her childhood [. . .]" (1989: 209).

Emma's focus in finding a suitable mate for Harriet falls first on Mr. Elton, who is totally inappropriate for Harriet, given her uncertain parentage, lack of social prestige with which Mr. Elton is so obviously concerned, and genuine absence of grasping ambition to ascend the class ladder. Emma's next prospect for Harriet, Frank Churchill, is an equally infelicitous choice for different reasons, not even including the later realized and most obvious – he is already taken. Emma contemplates painting Harriet's portrait in order to forward her plan to pair Harriet with Mr. Elton:

Emma wished to go to work directly and therefore produced the portfolio containing her various attempts at portraits, for not one of them had ever been finished, that they might decide together on the best size for Harriet.

Her many beginnings were displayed. Miniatures, half-lengths, whole-lengths, pencil, crayon, and water-colours had been all tried in turn (58).

Austen has thus afforded the reader evidence of a positive step in the process of Emma's evolution while placing her in a sympathetic posture. Austen uses the reader's resulting inclination for compassion toward Emma throughout the novel to place her growth and self-awareness in the best possible light.

A different observation about Emma's character comes with Austen's narrative placement of Emma against characters who are mentally diametrically opposed to her throughout the story; these continually help to distinguish Emma. Austen allows the reader to sense the difference between Emma's characteristics and those of others around her through vivid descriptions and interior narrative consciousness. Early in the novel, Austen ironically provides the reader with a clear indication of the nature of Emma's father:

The evil of the actual disparity in their ages (and Mr. Woodhouse had not married early) was much increased by his constitution and habits; for having been a valetudinarian all his life, without activity of mind or body, he was a much older man in ways than in years; and though everywhere beloved for the friendliness of his heart and his amiable temper, his talents could not have recommended him at any time (29).

In this passage, Austen has informed the reader that, although Mr. Woodhouse is friendly and good-hearted, he will not be accused of being brilliant or talented. In a later passage, as Mr. Woodhouse was remembering the recent wedding of Emma's governess, Miss Taylor, to Mr. Weston, she further expands on his fastidiousness and rigid views regarding the health and diet, and particularly the unwholesomeness of wedding cake:

Mr. Perry was an intelligent, gentlemanlike man, whose frequent visits were one of the comforts of Mr. Woodhouse's life; and upon being applied to, he could not but acknowledge (though it seemed rather against the bias of inclination) that wedding-cake might certainly disagree with many – perhaps with most people – unless taken moderately. With such an opinion in confirmation of his own, Mr. Woodhouse hoped to influence every visitor of the new-married pair; but still the cake was eaten; and there was not rest for his benevolent nerves till it was all gone. There was a strange rumour in Highbury of all the little Perrys being seen with a slice of Mrs. Weston's wedding-cake in their hands; but Mr. Woodhouse would never believe it (38-39).

Emma's older sister, Isabella, is outwardly defined in rather dense, Mr. Woodhouse-fashion:

She was not a woman of strong understanding or any quickness; and with this resemblance of her father, she inherited also much of his constitution; was delicate in her own health, overcareful of that of her children, had many fears and many nerves, and was as fond of her own Mr. Wingfield in town as her father could be of Mr. Perry (98).

In a single passage Austen has described both father and daughter as being polarized from Emma. Austen further emphasizes Emma's polarity from Isabella and Mr. Woodhouse through her use of another exterior technique. This, as Hale has mentioned, is Austen's sophisticated use of irony to invoke humor in *Emma*. Austen demonstrates the difference between Emma and her sister and father with one of her father's several discussions regarding the merits of gruel:

"My poor, dear Isabella," said he, fondly taking her hand and interrupting, for a few moments, her busy labours for some one of her five children, "how long it is, how terribly long since you were here! And how tired you must be after your journey! You must go to bed early, my dear—and I recommend a little gruel to you before you go. You and I will have a nice basin of gruel together. My dear Emma, suppose we all have a little gruel." Emma could not suppose any such thing, knowing, as she did, that both the Mr. Knightleys were as unpersuadable on that article as herself; and two basins only were ordered. After a little more discourse in praise of gruel, with some wondering at its not being taken every evening by everybody, he proceeded to say with an air of grave reflection [. . .] (105).

Austen's prior description of Isabella and Mr. Woodhouse enables her to cleverly and ironically make it very easy to identify the "some" who were "wondering" at gruel "not being taken every evening by everybody" as Isabella and Mr. Woodhouse. Austen also marks the distance between Emma and Isabella when she describes Emma's inward view of Isabella's relationship with her husband, Mr. John Knightley, as well as Emma's feelings toward him:

He had all the clearness and quickness of mind which she [Isabella] wanted, and he could sometimes act an ungracious or say a severe thing. He was not a great favourite with his fair sister-in-law. Nothing wrong in him escaped her. She was quick in feeling the little injuries to Isabella which Isabella never felt herself (99).

The outward description of Isabella and movement into narrator's expression of Emma's feelings toward her brother-in-law demonstrate the contrast between Emma and Isabella. Also, because the narrator, and not Emma, has conveyed this information regarding John Knightley's attributes, the reader has no reason to doubt he possesses these negative characteristics. In these lines, Emma is not only displayed as the more intelligent and perceptive of the two siblings, but this description has also shown her in a protective, sisterly light, making her a sympathetic character. They also distinguish Emma from Isabella in another sort of role reversal; it is usually the older child that protects the younger one. This movement from the exterior to the interior of Emma's character places Emma in a kind light and reveals her better traits—it appears to be a statement made by the narrator, but the narrator would not know how hurt Emma feels when her sister is insulted by her husband. This movement also demonstrates the textual interplay Austen is able to evoke between the reader and the text.

2. Jane Austen's Techniques in Presenting Femininity as Reflected in *Emma*

Austen enables a relational development between the reader and the text in *Emma* in order to provide the reader with an expanding intimacy with a woman who continues to become more self-aware. Through various narrative techniques, Austen is able to posit Emma in a dichotomous role as a strong-willed, independently thinking woman while concomitantly making her a believable, likeable person. She also allows the reader to connect to Emma on a personal level through the knowledge the reader is able to glean from Emma herself. The knowledge the reader obtains about Emma, however, is also obtained through the narrator because much of what the reader learns is not information Emma would willingly impart to another on her own.

Inviting such a connection between reader and text would have been challenging for any writer. One must remember, however, that Austen and her contemporaries were continuing to break new ground by entering a profession traditionally dominated by males and just then beginning to attract female readers and writers. Her novels, while seemingly about everyday life were also allowing the reader a glimpse into the consciousness of her main characters, thus permitting the reader to develop a relationship with the text. Through her method of free indirect style of consciousness, a narrative technique used extensively in her later novels, Austen allows us as readers to see what Emma is seeing, to judge (or misjudge) events through her eyes, and to sense what she is feeling, especially during those times she is feeling shame or self-disapprobation. We are able to connect with her by paralleling her feelings to similar feelings of our own. The reader is able to perceive Emma's feelings even, or perhaps, especially, when Austen is transitioning from the voice of the narrator to that of Emma's.

One of the narrative techniques Austen uses to afford the reader this perspective is her shifting of consciousness. Austen, as Wood has inferred, often alternates the passages in this novel between the narrator and the voice of Emma. She quite often starts out with the voice of what seems like an objective, implied author, after which she, apparently without effort, slips into the mind of the character and into her voice. As we shift from the author's viewpoint to Emma's, we become quite intimate with Emma, and we know the pangs of self-recrimination and come to the realization, concurrently with Emma, that she has erred, allowing us to feel sympathy for and sometimes empathize with her. Austen is able to induce this effect, even when Emma has committed painful mistakes and has caused others suffering, however unintentional. An example of Emma's self-flagellation occurs after she has discovered her miscalculation about Mr. Elton's feelings for Harriet. As one might guess, Austen shifts from outside narrator to Emma's consciousness:

The hair was curled and the maid sent away and Emma sat down to think and be miserable. It was a wretched business indeed. Such an overthrow of everything she had been wishing for. Such a development of everything most unwelcome! Such a blow for Harriet! That was the worst of all. Every part of it brought pain and humiliation of some sort or other; but compared

with the evil to Harriet, all was light; and she would gladly have submitted to feel yet more mistaken, more in error, more disgraced by misjudgement than she actually was could the effects of her blunders have been confined to herself. "If I had not persuaded Harriet into liking the man, I could have borne anything. He might have doubled his presumption to me – but poor Harriet!" (131-132).

Austen's shifts from outside narrator, to Harriet speaking, to Emma's consciousness occur after Harriet has divulged to Emma that she is in love with Mr. Knightley:

She paused a few moments. Emma could not speak. "I do not wonder, Miss Woodhouse," she resumed, "that you should feel a great difference between the two, as to me or as to anybody..... "I must say that I have." Emma's eyes were instantly withdrawn; and she sat silently meditating in a fixed attitude for a few minutes. A few minutes were sufficient for making her acquainted with her own heart. A mind like hers, once opening to suspicion, made rapid progress; she touched, she admitted, she acknowledged, the whole truth. Why was it so much worse that Harriet should be in love with Mr. Knightley than with Frank Churchill? Why was the evil so dreadfully increased by Harriet's having some hope of a return? It darted through her with the speed of an arrow that Mr. Knightley must marry no one but herself! (350-351)

Austen has in these lines not only allowed Harriet to turn Emma's own words against her, she has also moved from the observant outsider to Harriet's words to Emma's interiority, from the outside to the inside. She has done so casually and believably, allowing Emma to reveal her feelings to the reader, while at the same time revealing them to herself. The readers may have previously guessed that Emma feels more for Knightley than she has let on.

A more dramatic example of Emma's awareness that she has caused someone pain is the Box Hill scene, after Emma has thoughtlessly let slip a cruel remark to Miss Bates, and has been confronted by Mr. Knightley with her unkindness:

While they talked they were advancing towards the carriage; it was ready; and before she could speak again, he had handed her in. He had misinterpreted the feelings which had kept her face averted and her tongue motionless.....She was vexed beyond what could have been expressed – almost beyond what she could conceal. Never had she felt so agitated, so mortified, grieved, at any circumstance in her life. She was most forcibly struck. The truth of his representation there was no denying. She felt it at her heart. How could she have been so brutal, so cruel, to Miss Bates! (325)

These are a few examples where the reader has felt Emma's pain. Austen further narrows the possibilities of the characters with whom the reader will gain inner knowledge. By carefully selecting these characters with whom we become more closely acquainted, she allows the reader to become more intimate with her focal characters while the ancillary ones remain static. While we sympathize with

Emma as she feels tremendous guilt for hurting Miss Bates in the Box Hill scene, our sympathy for Miss Bates, the victim of the unkind remark, is only mildly evoked.

Mr. Knightley has never implied or asserted that he does not want to marry. This is another instance when Emma takes an idea and makes everything bend to it. Emma perceives Mr. Knightley's situation in this way because it so closely parallels her perception of her own standing, apparent in her words regarding her own marriage aspirations:

I must see somebody very superior to any one I have seen yet to be tempted; and I do *not* wish to see any such person. [. . .] I cannot really change for the better. [. . .] I have none of the usual inducements of women to marry. [. . .] Fortune I do not want; employment I do not want; consequence I do not want—[. . .] I shall be very well off with the children of a sister I love so much to care about (92-93).

In Emma's rationalization about marriage, Austen has, without fanfare, directly correlated a male and a female in the same interior sphere of worldliness. Through Austen's alternations between an interior view of Emma's consciousness and the outside narrator's sympathetic perspective of this unorthodox character, the reader is able to get an outside sense of how different is Emma's role as a female in the story. Mr. Knightley aptly points out Emma's distinctiveness on one of the rare occasions when Austen allows conversation to take place without Emma's presence, when Mr. Knightley is speaking to Mrs. Weston. In this instance, however, even though Emma is not physically present during the exchange, the topic of the discussion is, naturally, Emma. During the interchange, Mr. Knightley postulates that, while Mrs. Weston was appointed as Emma's governess during her stay with the Woodhouses, it was Mrs. Weston receiving the preponderance of the education, not Emma:

But you were preparing yourself to be an excellent wife all the time you were at Hartfield. You might not give Emma such a complete education as your powers would seem to promise, but you were receiving a very good education from *her*, on the very material matrimonial point of submitting your own will and doing as you were bid (53).

With this statement by Mr. Knightley, Austen has positioned Emma, though female, on the same plane as the male subject, and has, through his masculine eyes, both affirmed that Emma has many masculine traits and identified the traits apparently prized by males in females. After the character of Emma has become sympathetic, we then do not question the fact that Emma, situated in the appropriate place in her society, continually challenges male authority in the form of Mr. George Knightley. Through the interactions between Emma and the sometimes mistaken Mr. Knightley, Austen opens the way for this male authority to be challenged. Although Mr. Knightley is often right in his assessments, as he was above, he is not *always* right. His reading of Emma's interactions with Frank Churchill is one case in point; he allows his jealousy of Frank's flirtations with Emma to cloud his judgment of Frank and also of Emma's feelings toward himself, a clearly realistic reaction. Shortly

after the neighborhood is abuzz with the news of Frank Churchill's and Jane Fairfax's secret, prolonged engagement, Mr. Knightley believes that Emma will be in need of comfort due to his misjudgment of the depth of Emma's feelings for Frank:

For a moment or two nothing was said, and she was unsuspecting of having excited any particular interest till she found her arm drawn within his and pressed against his heart, and heard him thus saying, in a tone of great sensibility, speaking low, "Time, my dearest Emma, time will heal the wound. Your own excellent sense, your exertions for your father's sake—I know you will not allow yourself—" Her arm was pressed again as he added, in a more broken and subdued accent, "The feelings of the warmest friendship—indignation—abominable scoundrel!" (365)

Mr. Knightley's error in judgment allows for Emma's justification in questioning masculine sagacity, and leaves the door open for Austen to use Emma's forthrightness to further expound on an emerging female awareness. As Claudia L. Johnson has noted, Emma proffers a feminist, pragmatic view on what is important on the outside, particularly where men are concerned. Emma displays this confident insight when speaking to Mr. Knightley on Harriet's prospects for finding a husband, and they are discussing Emma's view that Harriet's odds for finding an appropriate mate are increased because she is attractive:

Waiving that point, however, and supposing her to be, as you describe her, only pretty and good-natured, let me tell you that in the degree she possesses them, they are not trivial recommendations to the world in general, for she is, in fact, a beautiful girl, and must be thought so by ninety-nine people out of an hundred; and till it appears that men are much more philosophic on the subject of beauty than they are generally supposed, till they do fall in love with well-informed minds instead of handsome faces, a girl with such loveliness as Harriet has a certainty of being admired and sought after [. . .] (74).

In *Feminism in Eighteenth-Century England*, Rogers (1982: 226) notes that "Austen presented the familiar theme of women's economic plight with brilliant ruthless realism, as she demonstrated that women were practically forced to marry and yet were hobbled in their opportunities to get a husband".

According to Rogers, Austen's skill as a writer made her novels realistic though her plots dealt with romance and marriage:

Although Austen's view of the position of women was less advanced than those of many predecessors, her superior artistry made her fiction more convincing, in terms of asserting female worth as well as of presenting life. Her insights are incorporated into the total structure of her novels, and her plots are realistic rather than tritely romantic (1982: 228).

Roger's idea that Austen's view of the position of women is not as developed as her predecessors is apt to generate debate, particularly with this reader. Rather, another perspective might be that Austen's accurate perception of women's limitations in society provided the impetus for creating a character as liberated

(relatively speaking) as Emma—"a heroine whom no one but myself might like." While bound by certain real societal limitations, Austen created this character to be not only a female who felt, and asserted, her self-worth, but who also felt unhobbled by society's expectation that she would marry, and marry well. Instead, she felt no economic need to marry, and she had no desire to marry just for the sake of marriage and so was not forced to the altar, like so many women of her time, but went there of her own volition and on her own terms.

Certainly, one perceives when reading *Emma* that Emma is not a conventionally demure late eighteenth century lady. While Emma is often clueless in her observations and mistaken in her judgments, she is still outspoken in her beliefs, self-assured in her actions, and aggressive in attempting to influence those around her. The fact that a woman even has formulated goals that do not relate directly to herself is one step. Emma moves even further as a woman by attempting to control the course of not only her life, but to have influence on the lives of those around her.

Austen has moved from the outside to the inside view to apportion, at will, the knowledge provided to the reader, to direct the narrative toward the inevitable conclusion expected from a novel of her day – marriage. Austen has, in a sense, been able to demonstrate, through Emma's negotiation in relationship to the bigger world, a different view of how women in the eighteen hundreds can relate to the big picture. She has circumvented the normal, happily-ever-after ending with a different sort of finale. Emma gets married, yes, but she does not capitulate. She has directed her own destiny – she remains situated in her own domain, at the helm, as she has been since the beginning of the story.

G. CONCLUSION

Emma has displayed an awakening female worldly perspective, and learned to live within her society without compromising herself. She has evolved from a self-absorbed character into a compassionate, sensitive being. She has married a man who is her intellectual equal and whom she respects; she has married for love, and she has remained in control of her household. She has not had to carry all of her worldly possessions to the established home of her husband, there to acclimate herself to his atmosphere and his rule; she has moved on, but not out of Hartfield.

Austen has also gone a little further and presented an unconventional male perspective. It can be seen from George Knightley's experience that he will continue to criticize when Emma stumbles. He will be there to encourage her to rise when she falters, but she will regain her footing under her own power. However, this is not necessarily a negative criticism of a character. Emma has embraced the experience of having a moral life, "like a man has a moral life." Austen has mimicked the hero's journey, but her traveler is garbed in a dress instead of pants, and her weapons have been words, not armor. Her heroine has faced her challenges and has overcome them.

Austen has used, as Claudia L. Johnson contends, the means at her disposal – the education and attitudes available to Austen as a woman – to portray a realistic, anomalous female character. She has also used them to announce that women think, reason, learn and grow. Thus, Austen makes her contribution by using the arsenal available to her in the eighteenth hundreds to liberate the female perspective.

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