

**“We always say what we like to one another”: The Influence of Education on Women,
Sympathy and Marriage in Early Nineteenth-Century British Literature**

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Abstract

This thesis project investigates the relationship between education, sympathy, and marriage by analyzing the courtship process in three early nineteenth-century novels alongside three female educational texts. The role education plays in Austen's *Emma*, Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, and Gaskell's *North and South*, particularly in terms of female characters' marriage prospects, shows how writers at this time conceived of intellectual equality and opportunities for women, and how the terms in which they did so actively engaged with conduct book discourse. This project expands on Nancy Armstrong's foundational study of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British fiction, *Desire and Domestic Fiction*, to show the continued interplay between novels and conduct literature through the mid-nineteenth century, a relationship she sees as defunct after the eighteenth century, as well as the vital role that the sympathetic exchange plays in completing a woman's education. The thesis demonstrates how this fiction transformed possibilities for female characters' social interactions, equality, and intellectual fulfilment by reimagining the terms of their domestic and romantic relationships in a dynamic engagement with the language and precepts of key conduct texts from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

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Introduction

At the end of Elizabeth Gaskell's 1855 novel *North and South*, the intelligent, independent heroine reflects on the importance of women's self-determination and the need for sympathetic engagement. The narrator notes that there is "a most difficult problem for women" in determining how much to listen to "authority" and "how much might be set apart for freedom in working" (416). Authority can take on many meanings for women in nineteenth-century Britain, but here it refers to familial, social, and political expectations surrounding women's work and perceived duties. The narrator notes that the heroine was in "early isolation from sympathy" but possessed "quick perceptions," all of which allowed her, eventually, "to follow her own ideas of duty" (417). Gaskell's novel, as well as Jane Austen's 1815 novel *Emma* and Charlotte Brontë's 1847 novel *Jane Eyre*, allow their heroines to create their own ideas of sympathy and duty, and each novel provides a unique indictment of the traditional nineteenth-century British female education system. My project will analyze these three novels to demonstrate how their heroines receive both traditional and sympathetic educations that help them develop more autonomy within their families and communities. I read these novels in conjunction with well-known conduct books from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in order to examine the ongoing relationship between these forms of writing and their ideas about women, education, duty, autonomy, and sympathy. I argue that the interaction between these texts continuously shaped contemporary conversations about women and education, marriage and community. Reading these texts together allows us to recognize the important contribution the nineteenth-century novel makes to such conversations, and see the ways that novelists engaged with, disrupted, and redefined contemporary women's conduct discourse within the novel genre's distinctive structures.

By traditional female education, I am referring to both private education in families of means, usually conducted by a governess, and public education in female boarding schools. Women's education in this era typically consisted of learning languages, some arts and sciences, and domestic skills like sewing and embroidery. Young women were also taught how to conduct themselves in social situations, all with the intention to make them marriageable young ladies. Many writers in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, however, questioned the value of only teaching "a woman to be womanly" (Barrett Browning 443). Long before the 1860s resurgence of "The Woman Question,"¹ British authors were writing narratives that challenged the idea that a middle-class woman could only ever fall into narrow gendered roles, such as a wife and mother or governess. Many writers questioned the value of a traditional education for women alongside the value of a sympathetic education, whereby a woman learns to connect with another person in order to understand their feelings and give or receive sympathy.

Literary critics and historians have attempted to trace how the middle class rose to such a place of prominence in British society, as well as what this meant for women's power both inside and outside the domestic household. Many scholars have seen a significant shift from social station to a distinctly "middle class" set of behaviours and conduct as the foundation of power for women. Historian Dror Wahrman is one of these scholars who has analyzed the development of the British middle class, and he argues:

The expansion of the jurisdiction of 'middle class' in political language to include the private and the feminine as well as the public and the masculine; the infusion of the rising 'middle-class' progress narrative into domestic literature; and the consequent bridging of the distance between the uses of 'middle class' in these very disparate genres of writing -

¹ For more information about this movement and its leaders, see *Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon and the Langham Place Group* by Candida Ann Lacey.

these were all new beginnings of the 1830s, which represented distinct breaks with the practices of the earlier decades. (408)

Wahrman sees the convergence of political language and domestic fiction as a driving force behind the rise of middle-class power. These two types of writing held sway in both the public and the private spheres, which helped to consolidate middle-class values and practices and transform British society. This is the way, Wahrman explains, in which the middle class came to be “associated with domestic virtue, with religiosity, with an evangelical impulse, with social control; that is to say, with a morality which prescribed both public and private (or familial) behaviour” (378). These persuasive political and fictional texts completely changed the fabric of British society, and they significantly influenced how families interacted within the household and in the world of business and public affairs.

Literary critic Nancy Armstrong takes a similar view of the middle class and the domestic sphere in her renowned book *Desire and Domestic Fiction*. She argues that “literature devoted to producing the domestic woman ... appeared to ignore the political world run by men” (4) and these “narratives which seemed to be concerned solely with matters of courtship and marriage in fact seized the authority to say what was female, and ... they did so in order to contest the reigning notion of kinship relations that attached most power and privilege to certain family lines” (5). Much like Wahrman, Armstrong sees the development of female characters in domestic fiction as a way to code political moves that supported middle-class values over those of the waning aristocracy. She sees the figure of the marriageable young woman as the location where all social and political debates were centered, and by extension as the most important figure in a text.

Like Armstrong and Wahrman, other critics have noted the connection between domestic fiction and politics as a way to examine the gendered expectations of middle-class women. In their book *The Spectacle of Intimacy*, Karen Chase and Michael Levenson claim that “the construction of separate spheres carried with it two possibilities for female abasement. The first, securely achieved through both legal prohibition and moral discouragement, was the establishment of home as the proper sphere for middle-class women. The second, perpetually contested, was the relegation of women to subordinate relations within that little world” (83). This construction of women’s roles was often played out and challenged within fiction, and many novels proved that women would not be deemed the subordinate gender within the household. Armstrong notes that women had the power of “domestic surveillance” (19) in the home, and this surveillance worked in less visible ways to both empower women and restrict their roles in the home. Chase and Levenson argue that “by the mid-1840s[,] the result² is that the wife presides over a complex social domain, which in effect becomes the truly flourishing political unit, no longer to be found in the public realm” (82). While there were political units outside the home, Chase and Levenson’s analysis alludes to the frequent elision between the public and private spheres, and the ways women were able to operate in social and political units outside the home. Middle-class women were able to gain more power within the family unit, which I argue comes in the form of the sympathetic exchange. The power of this exchange also translates relatively smoothly into the public sphere as can be seen in the three novels studied here. Each heroine is able to navigate many spaces that demand her sympathetic abilities, and she is able to manage the expectations of different communities while still caring about them.

² In their analysis of Stickney Ellis’ fiction and treatises, Chase and Levenson argue that men maintain “their formal preeminence” in the world but also have “weaknesses” (82), all while women gain more responsibilities over time.

In order to understand the ongoing, complex dialogue between conduct texts and novels, it is important that we look at the origins and permutations of conduct discourse. Mary Poovey notes there is an “unevenness within the construction and deployment of mid-Victorian representations of gender, and representations of women in particular” (4), and this explains the ways novels are able to challenge the idea of women’s duties and responsibilities. The unevenness that Poovey notes is a central tenet of many novels, and it can be further seen when read together with educational conduct literature. Like Poovey, Armstrong argues that educational texts for young women play a significant role in setting the stage for how a woman, using a “middle class” set of attributes, becomes powerful. She explains that the growing amount of “pedagogical literature for women mapped out a field of knowledge that would produce a specifically female form of subjectivity” (14). From the turn of the nineteenth century, this educational literature provided a way for British society to divide roles and responsibilities based on a supposed gender difference, and then convince its female readers that their unique power of “domestic surveillance” (19) was beneficial to their family and themselves. Armstrong analyzes several novels and educational texts to demonstrate how this early form of identity politics was used to keep women as centres of domestic managerial power and remove them from any explicit political engagement. Poovey also sees this connection between conduct literature and gendered roles, and she argues that “the construction and deployment of these images³ performed critical ideological work at midcentury, that they were intimately involved in the development of England’s characteristic social institutions, the organization of its most basic economic and legal relations, and in the rationalization of its imperial ambitions” (Poovey 2). For

³ The images Poovey refers to are of “the representation of biological sexuality, the definition of sexual difference, and the social organization of sexual relations” (2). She discusses these representations as “social, not natural, phenomena” (2) to contrast to the account of nineteenth-century writer W.R. Greg.

many late twentieth-century critics, depictions of gender were central to discussions of these powerful early nineteenth-century social institutions.

Since the early 2000s, scholars have moved away from broader critiques of female education in novels and towards a more targeted approach on issues of subject formation, gender, and sociability using ideas of sympathy. Rae Greiner, for example, discusses the mechanisms of the sympathetic exchange in the nineteenth-century realist novel as a way to connect with others. She claims that “sympathetic thinking leads to fellow-feeling, an affective, social mode of understanding central to reality as the nineteenth-century novelists sought to depict it” (4). Greiner’s explanation demonstrates how the type of sympathetic exchange that occurs in the nineteenth-century novel is crucial to understanding how characters conceive of their reality and their choices. Her analysis is foundational to my project because she explains how Adam Smith’s theory of the sympathetic exchange works between characters in novels and discusses the importance of characters themselves reflecting on the implications of the sympathetic exchange. Rachel Ablow also focuses on the sympathetic exchange in her book *The Marriage of Minds* and explains that her work is “less interested in sympathy as a feeling ... than in sympathy as a mode of relating to others and of defining a self” (2). Like Greiner, Ablow looks at the mechanisms of the sympathetic exchange and their impact on individual relationships and social structures, especially for men who saw sympathy “as incompatible with [the] rational self-interest required in their professional lives” (3-4). Audrey Jaffe also examines the sympathetic exchange, but she notes that “scenes of sympathy in Victorian fiction mediate and construct middle-class identities” (9). Her work is concerned with the complex relationships between spectatorship, representation, and sympathy as constructing social identities in the Victorian period. She connects the mechanism of sympathy to the middle-class identity, which is relevant to my study of the

middle-class woman as an active participant in the sympathetic exchange. The work of these scholars is foundational to my study of the relationship between sympathy, education, and marriage, and my project will expand on their explanations of the sympathetic process to show that young middle-class women needed to develop and use their sympathetic abilities to become independent, considerate community members. Not only do novels represent them as more caring and respectful, but some texts also use the mechanism of sympathy as a foundation for friendships and romantic attachments. Each heroine learns the powers and the limits of the sympathetic exchange, and each is able to use this knowledge to help themselves and their communities when faced with challenges.

While Armstrong and Ablow, along with other critics, make significant contributions to our understanding of why and how female characters operate as they do in the nineteenth-century British novel, my project expands their arguments in regard to the connection between sympathy and women's education. Many writers throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were concerned with the structure of education for middle-class women, and even more so with its content. Debates circulated in different mediums during this period with respect to how much young women should learn about the arts and sciences versus domestic skills like drawing or embroidery. The eighteenth century saw the rise of the conduct book genre, a format in which writers outlined and explained their ideas about how women should be socialized and educated. Writers including Hannah More, Erasmus Darwin, Thomas Gisborne and Maria Edgeworth (Armstrong 65) wrote pamphlets and essays contributing to this genre, providing their opinions on, and sometimes their own curricula for, the education of young women.

The nineteenth century moved many of these debates to the popular spaces of magazines and periodicals, where a wide readership would have access to pieces written about women's

social roles. Chase and Levenson note that “the guiding assumption of the advice discourse is that the achievement of the comfortable home is available to all genteel readers willing to follow the how-to directives of the text” (12). Conduct discourse promised to provide women with a specific type of middle-class marriage and domestic household. Moreover, the question of education became tied by mid-century to the larger “Woman Question,” which moved the discussion away from manners and decorum and towards women’s rights and leadership. These broad issues were discussed by later writers such as Bessie Rayner Parkes Belloc and Josephine Butler. It is important to acknowledge this increasing diversity in format as the century unfolded because the novel genre alone allows us to see neither the relevant debates surrounding issues of women’s social roles and education nor the contemporary audience for those debates. What the novel genre does allow us to see, however, is the extent to which nineteenth-century novelists continued to engage with conduct literature and its ideas, sometimes putting its educational programs into practice in the life of a fictional female character, sometimes exploring the broader social implications of its guidance, and often critiquing what the novels represent as the limitations of its advice for women. As I will suggest, the ongoing, dynamic dialogue between novels and educational texts in the period offers us significant insight into the novel’s development and its transformation of female characterization, conceptions of marriage, and models for women’s traditional and sympathetic education. Domestic fiction, or what I will refer to as the marriage plot novel, constitutes a central site in which contemporary ideas of women’s education, autonomy, and agency were articulated and contested.

Indeed, women’s education plays a significant role in the marriage plot novel, and it often affects how female protagonists connect with other characters. Deanna Kreisel provides a summary of the marriage plot, claiming that

the narrative opens upon a situation in which someone clearly needs to wed the unbound erotic energies of the eligible bachelor(ette), and thus of the plot itself, are discharged in the end in a proper marriage that channels sexual desire and fortune in an appropriate way, ensuring dynastic continuation, gender hierarchy, and the triumph of the narrator's epistemological perspective. ("Where does ..." 3)

While the traditional marriage plot does often follow this format, many novelists were able to work within or modify this structure in ways that supported women's power and autonomy within domestic and political structures. In Jane Austen's novel *Emma*, for instance, Emma Woodhouse claims that she and Mr. Knightley "always say what we like to one another" (59). Emma's assertion is surprising when compared with the words of a conduct book writer like Erasmus Darwin, who claims, "the careless cheerfulness of [young women's] conversation, with simplicity of manner, and with the grace, ease, and vivacity natural to youth, supplies it with its principal charms" (67-68). Darwin favours a "careless cheerfulness" in conversation, which can be seen in Emma, but not the type of bold and irreverent honesty she also displays in her speech. Emma may have difficulty sympathizing with others, but much of that comes from the lack of a sympathetic education she received from her family and larger community. Having long been free to speak her mind without consideration of the consequences, Emma's challenge lies in learning how to sympathize with others and decide what roles she might best take on within her community. Many women received educations that prepared them for a specific, comparatively circumscribed position, but these novels show how women were able to expand their educations to incorporate more knowledge and training in areas that were meaningful to them.

My thesis investigates the relationship between education, sympathy and marriage by analyzing three early nineteenth-century novels alongside three female educational texts. The

role education plays in *Emma*, *Jane Eyre*, and *North and South*, particularly in terms of female characters' marriage prospects, is key to understanding how writers at this time conceived of intellectual equality and opportunities for women in ways that challenged the limits of conventional social roles. While Nancy Armstrong suggests that much conduct literature ends after the 1820s (62) and that "there is every reason to think that by this time the [feminine] ideal had passed into the domain of common sense where it provided the frame of reference for other kinds of writing, among them the novel" (63), I believe there was more continued engagement with this type of literature. Each novel in my study demonstrates an ongoing debate with educational texts for women, and each one realizes some parts of these treatises while refuting others. Armstrong lays a crucial foundation for understanding how the relationship between these genres formed, but my project will expand on this foundation to show the continued interplay between novels and conduct literature, as well as the vital role that the sympathetic exchange played in strengthening a woman's education.

Novel heroines use a woman's traditional education and a sympathetic education to connect with their chosen partners and their communities. I define a sympathy-based education as one that is gained through experience as "a form of thinking geared toward others ... thinking of me thinking of you, thinking of you thinking of me" (Greiner 1). It is the learned ability, to use Rae Greiner's definition, to imagine how you are imagining other people. This exercise allows a character to think about how others are feeling and how others see her, which can foster more equal relationships between them. Most critics study the marriage plot either as a type of sympathetic exchange or as a way of coding larger political objectives through education. I believe the narrative process of courtship and marriage in these novels contains a more complex mix of these two fields as they continually influence each other in each text. It is the novel

heroines who undertake an education that teaches them both traditional domestic skills and sympathy and communication that help them develop equal and fulfilling relationships with their husbands. These successful marriages often benefit not only the partners themselves, but also the fictional societies around them. My project studies exactly how these relationships are formed and realized, as well as the significance of these narratives to nineteenth-century British readers.

My study of three novels, each paired with a relevant conduct book or essay, illustrates how a combination of traditional women's education and a sympathetic education creates an innovative marriage plot. I want to move beyond Armstrong's reliance on identity politics and the (self-)regulation of the nineteenth-century woman to analyze how equalizing, sympathetic marriage connections are created as well as how they affect the ability of female characters to make choices about their roles within society. My three novels are written by women whose own opinions and lives inform the ways they conceived of marriage and women's autonomy. They feature heroines who defy the expectations of both their families and their social classes to marry men to whom they feel equal. *Emma* is a more traditional marriage plot, where Emma learns to love Mr. Knightley through her increasing ability to be honest with him and her increasing ability to sympathize with others. Brontë's *Jane Eyre* takes the marriage plot a step further, where Jane undergoes a process of self-knowledge that leads her to return to Mr. Rochester on a more equal footing while he learns to respect her interiority and independent desires. Finally, *North and South* features Margaret Hale and Mr. Thornton, two people who slowly fall in love with each other and create a more sympathetic set of principles to live by as they navigate political issues in their community. A dynamic style of education, founded on both traditional learning and sympathy, allows these fictional characters to feel and speak their own truths about

love. These early texts pave the way for later writers to further experiment with fiction that defied nineteenth-century expectations as to what it meant to be a woman.

I will use both feminist novel studies and affect theory to analyze my chosen texts. Mary Poovey's and Nancy Armstrong's works from the 1980s, for example, will provide excellent context for how feminist scholarship changed the way nineteenth-century novels were studied. Both scholars trace the history of the British middle class through the use of fiction, finding the female character to be a central figure in the development of the novel genre and the consciousness of class identity. While both Poovey and Armstrong are foundational figures in the development of feminist literary criticism of the novel, some of their work needs to be updated to be relevant to contemporary scholarship. For example, Armstrong provides a brief history of conduct books to argue that domestic fiction slowly replaced them in teaching young women how to act. My chapters take a different approach by reading select conduct books and essays on female education in conjunction with specific novels in order to demonstrate that the nineteenth-century novel engaged more directly and continuously with educational texts than Armstrong suggests; this allows me to look at the ways conduct literature and novels specifically dealt with analogous concepts, sustaining an ongoing dialogue in which novelists contested as much as they realized contemporary ideas about women and education.

Novels both enacted and reacted to conduct literature, providing a space in which recommendations for female education could be played out and their results would be visible. These novels demonstrated nuanced understandings of the interactions between educational literature and women's agency in the nineteenth century, and my expanded study of these nuances will help bring relevance back to the focus of early feminist novel studies. My project situates how novelists were responding directly to the writing of essayists and philosophers as

many of the female characters in my primary texts receive the type of formal private or public education that these essayists recommended. My project also looks at criticism of the conduct book and other writing for women by scholars like Caroline Austin-Bolt, Nancy Hirschmann, and Emily Regier to fully understand how this non-fictional genre developed and functioned within nineteenth-century society.

Current nineteenth-century scholars like Rachel Ablow, Lara Freeburg Kees, Audrey Jaffe, and Rae Greiner use aspects of affect theory and sympathy to study the way characters interact with each other in the nineteenth-century novel. Sympathetic exchange is a crucial process for many characters in my texts as they develop into powerful, independent women. Specifically, Greiner and Jaffe use Adam Smith's notions of sympathy as described in his *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, so I will also rely on Smith's conception of imaginative sympathetic exchange in my work. However, I will adapt aspects of Smith's theory to account for the sympathetic connections developed between marriage partners as well as friends. Greiner, for example, states that "characters inhabiting the fiction [in the period] find the mirror a pathological emblem of the need to see oneself in others; the identity of emotions is presented as a threat to, not an achievement of, sympathetic connection" (4). While she suggests that seeing emotions in other characters can pose a "threat" to sympathy, she explains, "arguing that sympathy without feeling is entirely possible, this book also testifies to the difficulty in pinpointing where feelings and thoughts begin and end" (3). Contrary to Greiner, I am interested in where thoughts and feelings overlap in characters' interactions and how a woman's education prepares her for these moments.

My primary texts' heroines often undergo a process of sympathetic identification that leads them to a particular feeling: love. Male characters, in either instigating or responding to

this process of sympathetic development in a woman, often arrive at the same feeling.

Throughout this process, however, female characters do not lose their intellectual autonomy or strength; rather, these women are able to continue to develop as powerful, thoughtful individuals even after they have fallen in love and married their partners. I believe the novel shows that both thinking and feeling, to use Greiner's terms, are necessary components and outcomes of a good sympathetic education that can lead to an equal marriage. Both of these frameworks situate my project within current debates surrounding what type of cultural work nineteenth-century novels do; I argue that my novels actively interact with and challenge the social conceptions of love, marriage, and sympathy in nineteenth-century Britain.

In Chapter One, I analyze Austen's 1815 novel *Emma* to understand how Austen was able to transform the marriage plot into a more nuanced novel subgenre. Armstrong argues that Austen's "novels bring to culmination a tradition of ladies [*sic*] fiction that concentrated on the finer points of conduct necessary to secure a good marriage - that is, on the minor indiscretions and good manners of respectable people - rather than on the will and cunning it took to preserve one's chastity" (134). Austen's fiction showed readers the many consequences that sprung from a subtle series of behaviours in the process of courtship and family life, creating a new type of marriage plot that would continue well into the nineteenth century and beyond. This chapter reads *Emma* in relationship to Thomas Gisborne's 1797 conduct book *An Enquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex*, a book Austen had read and enjoyed ("Letter from ..." 643). Gisborne's text is exemplary of the conduct genre as it outlines his opinions on the purpose of female education as well as its structure and implementation. He, like many other writers of the eighteenth century, believed "the gay vivacity and quickness of imagination, so conspicuous among the qualities in which the superiority of women is acknowledged, have a tendency to lead to unsteadiness of

mind; to fondness of novelty; to habits of frivolousness, and trifling employment” (34). By reading *Gisborne* and Austen together, I examine the ways *Emma* both realizes and challenges many key assertions of conduct literature for women. Emma exhibits many of the attributes young women were cautioned against, such as her unwillingness to read seriously or her insatiable desire to matchmake, but interestingly, she does not learn to quell these traits using traditional methods. Her governess, the figure *Gisborne* would have suggested should help fix these “unsteady” qualities, had only indulged them. It is through Emma’s development of a sympathetic imagination, encouraged by Mr. Knightley but cultivated through her own self-reflection, that she becomes a kinder, more constructive member of her society. Scholars like Armstrong have studied Emma as disciplining herself to adopt middle-class values in order to help her community, and indeed to fall in love with Knightley. I believe, however, that Emma’s development is a product of her expanding sympathetic imagination that has developed through an alternative mode of education learned from her own experiences.

The comparison of Emma to the character of Jane Fairfax is key to my analysis of Austen’s direct engagement of conduct literature. I argue that, in the contrasts between Emma and Jane, Austen takes apart the more simplistic instructions that arise from conduct books. While the “reserved” Jane (Austen 175) possesses many of the qualities that authors like *Gisborne* advocate, she becomes too secretive and enters a problematic engagement with the unsympathetic Frank Churchill. Jane accepts too many of conduct literature’s suggestions to remain modest and unobtrusive when it comes to her relationship with Churchill, and the actions taken to keep this secret create feelings of shame and betrayal in her family, her community, and herself. Emma, meanwhile, participates in scenes of developing sympathy and honesty with Knightley, and she learns that her choices have a large impact on others. To become the

intelligent woman she wants to be, Emma must fully engage in the sympathetic exchange and project herself imaginatively into the feelings and situations of others. The result is that she becomes more thoughtful of others and of the consequences of her actions in her decision-making process. Emma and Knightley's marriage brings happiness to both partners, and does so, importantly, not by means of the wife's deference to her husband or eschewal of knowledge and learning, but on the basis of a more equal, companionate footing between them. Austen's development of this novel subgenre created a way for both her and future authors to explore how the precepts put forth by traditional conduct books play out in fictional English society. Her work demonstrates the dangers of wholeheartedly accepting all conduct book precepts like Jane does, and instead suggests that developing other parts of a woman's education and making challenging choices is a more effective way to become an independent, thoughtful member of society.

In Chapter Two, I turn to Charlotte Brontë's 1847 novel *Jane Eyre*. Her heroine Jane is a governess who undergoes a process of self-discovery that leads her to an equalizing marriage with her reformed employer Mr. Rochester. This novel demonstrates the issues with female education in England, the difficulties inherent in the sympathetic exchange, and the exclusion of other women's identities to promote that of the English middle class. Read in conjunction with Mary Wollstonecraft's 1792 *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, I discuss how Jane's particular education has developed from the days of Wollstonecraft's radical work. While most writers would not acknowledge that they read or agreed with Wollstonecraft's writing because of the scandal associated with her personal life through much of the nineteenth century, the influence of her ideas can be found directly in Brontë's work. Jane's personal development almost exactly replicates Wollstonecraft's opinions on women's education and position in romantic relationships.

In Jane's early life, she gains an education from her boarding school but not love or the ability to engage sympathetically with others. She must learn through experiences with characters like Helen Burns to sympathize imaginatively with others. Wollstonecraft claims that "women, intoxicated by the adoration which men, under the influence of their senses, pay them, do not seek to obtain a durable interest in their hearts, or to become the friends of the fellow-creatures who find amusement in their society" (xxiii-xxxiii). Jane never falls for this type of adoration, instead challenging herself to grow intellectually and find the life she feels she deserves. She tells Rochester that she is "a free human being with an independent will" (Brontë 338), and she refuses to attach herself to Rochester's desire for visible splendour or St. John's all-consuming commitment to his work. She is interested in finding a partner who will sympathetically engage with her, as she so frequently does with others, but this objective is realized only at the expense of other types of women in the novel. Brontë expands on Wollstonecraft's ideas of womanhood in order to firmly cement the white middle-class English woman as the ideal wife, a reconceptualization that is defined against racialized and sexualized characters like Bertha Mason and Blanche Ingram. Jane's ultimate idyllic marriage with Rochester and recovery of her extended family is reminiscent of Wollstonecraft's belief that "the woman who strengthens her body and exercises her mind will, by managing her family and practising various virtues, become the friend, and not the humble dependent of her husband" (55). Jane becomes the independent thinker, virtuous mother, and good friend to her husband that Wollstonecraft supports, creating a fictional model for Wollstonecraft's ideal learned woman; the novel does so, however, specifically by disqualifying other women from the same model. Brontë's novel uses the sympathetic exchange and marriage plot to exclusively typify the ideal independent, middle-class English family.

Finally, I turn to Elizabeth Gaskell's 1855 novel *North and South* in Chapter Three to examine a subsequent take on cross-class love and the requirements of sympathy. Gaskell builds on the marriage plots of Austen and Brontë to craft a novel that asserts the importance of a woman's position in the family while simultaneously teaching others to sympathize with members of the community, all of whom represent a wide spectrum of difference in terms of class, politics, and gender. Margaret traverses many spaces (public, private, rural, urban) and acts as a voice to teach both her fellow characters and readers about pressing social issues. At first, Margaret appears to be a figure reminiscent of Sarah Stickney Ellis' ideal Christian woman, described in her 1842 book *The Daughters of England*. Stickney Ellis' works advocated the type of conservative womanhood that stood in opposition to the movement towards women's rights in the late nineteenth century. Ellis asks her readers rhetorically, "can it be a subject of regret to any kind and feeling woman, that her sphere of action is one adapted to the exercise of the affections, where she may love, and trust, and hope, and serve, to the utmost of her wishes?" (14). Ellis cannot believe that any woman could be dissatisfied with having love and care as their areas of work, but Gaskell's novel shows the flaws in this model.

This chapter uses the foundational work of Arlie Russell Hochschild in her book *The Managed Heart* to analyze the way emotional labour and caregiving roles are thrust on young women both inside and outside the household. Gaskell's heroine Margaret is diligent and cares for her family, but she steps outside the "sphere of action" Ellis identifies as appropriate for women so she can actively engage in local politics. Margaret is outspoken in her chastisement of mill owners like Thornton, whom she frequently disagrees with about his attitudes toward his working-class employees. She is shown as taking a sympathetic yet forceful approach to change in her social circles, but she also is the figure whom Gaskell uses to display the burden of

sympathy. Margaret is frequently described as tired or sad after she cares for any number of the people she knows in Milton, London, and Helstone. Her duty to constantly engage sympathetically with nearly every person she meets leaves her emotionally drained; she is marked, the narrator informs us, by her “gentle patient sadness – nay [her] positive present suffering” (Gaskell 271). Margaret’s only relief from these duties comes from her frequent disagreements with Thornton, where she is able to further develop her own opinions and rest from her caregiving roles. Her romantic feelings for him become clearer as the novel progresses, but she can only commit to marrying him after gaining financial and emotional independence from her demanding family. Gaskell’s novel illustrates the emotional toll that living only for others (Ellis 11) takes on women, which creates a new form of the marriage plot that takes into account the emotional burden that traditional caregiving roles constantly exert on women.

My thesis will help to refocus scholarly attention on the nineteenth-century marriage plot novel as a site of multifaceted resistance for women. These novels staged sympathetic marriages in order to demonstrate that women could find space for autonomy and agency not only as single women, but also as married women with families. These novels showed autonomy and marriage were not mutually exclusive, and they were able to enlighten readers as to the importance and the difficulties of the sympathetic process. Adaptations and discussions of these novels continue in multiple formats in our contemporary moment, demonstrating their ongoing relevance. By expanding current scholarship on these novels, particularly in revising the important work of Nancy Armstrong, my project shows how this literature transformed not only the nineteenth-century fiction market, but also the possibilities for female characters’ social engagement, equality, and intellectual fulfilment by reimagining the terms of their domestic and romantic relationships.

Chapter One

“All right, all open, all equal”: Traditional and Sympathetic Educations in *Emma*

Many critics of Jane Austen’s 1815 novel *Emma* cite Austen’s famous opinion that Emma Woodhouse was a heroine “whom no one but myself [would] much like” (Austen-Leigh 187). Emma certainly is a privileged and somewhat spoiled heroine, but there is much more to her than these characteristics. While Emma may not be as traditionally likable as heroines such as Elizabeth Bennet or the Dashwood sisters, Emma’s narrative development is unique among Austen’s novels. My analysis of *Emma* will focus on her progress through the novel as an educated sympathetic subject. Both Emma and her foil, Jane Fairfax, receive private educations for different purposes, but neither will become a traditional nineteenth-century wife. In many ways, these two female characters exemplify the qualities supported by conduct literature, and their respective stories demonstrate Austen’s thoughts on many conduct instructions. For example, writer Thomas Gisborne says in 1797 that in women we find “examples of the most amiable tendencies and affections implanted in human nature, of modesty, of delicacy, of sympathising sensibility, of prompt and active benevolence, of warmth and tenderness of attachment” (23). Emma and Jane each embody some of these traits, but only one is presented as achieving a “perfect happiness” (Austen 405) at the end of *Emma*. As Mr. Knightley proposes, Emma is said to be the “sweetest and best of all creatures, faultless in spite of all her faults” (368). Herein lies most critics’ issues with Emma: how much is she at fault for her misguided actions? Critics like Claudia Johnson see Emma as “a woman who possesses and enjoys power, without bothering to demur about it” (125), while others find her “intellectually lazy” (Bree 135) with “[elastic]” (137) social values. I believe Emma, as well as Jane, are much more nuanced depictions of young women educated at this time. When we read Jane and Emma as

embodiments of conduct literature precepts, we can recognize Austen's innovation in the world of early nineteenth-century literature through her demonstration of the peaks and pitfalls that result from following conduct literature rules.

As a marriage plot novel, *Emma* is an example of the important connection between education and sympathy. It is only by improving her ability to sympathize imaginatively with the situations of others that Emma is able to develop into a kinder member of her community and cement her romantic relationship with Knightley. Both Jane and Emma must develop their sympathetic abilities after receiving private, traditional educations, but Emma does so much more successfully than Jane. Sympathetic imagination, to recall, is the ability with which a subject recognizes and reflects on the situations of others, and a sympathetic education is the learned capacity of the subject to perform this process correctly and consistently with others. In *Emma*, the female characters absolutely need a traditional education to provide basic social and skill-based knowledge, but they need to exercise their sympathetic imagination even more frequently in order to develop into women with proto-middle-class values. While Emma, and Jane in certain situations, circulate in the upper classes of society, they are both taught lessons about morality and sympathy that, as Nancy Armstrong suggests, will later be associated with the middle classes of the nineteenth century (63). The novel suggests marriage is not an end to female independence, but rather is an effective way for women to receive the support and assistance they need to continue to develop into sympathetic subjects. Traditional education provides a foundation, but sympathetic education is what fosters true respect, honesty, and humanity in a young woman and helps her choose a supportive marriage partner.

In order to understand the innovative contribution *Emma* makes to the novel genre, it is important to first analyze the history of the novel and its author. For such a famous writer, there

is relatively little known about Austen's life. Modern film and novel adaptations have attempted to attach romantic intrigue to her life as a way to account for her stories, but in reality, scholars have just a small portion of Austen's letters and anecdotes to piece her life together. Kathryn Sutherland's essay "Jane Austen's Life and Letters" is an excellent analysis of the different accounts of Austen from her family members. Sutherland explains that Austen was born in Steventon on December 16, 1775 to a large family. She moved to several different towns throughout her childhood, and she finally settled in Chawton in 1809 where she most likely prepared all her books until her death in 1817 (Sutherland 25-26). However, Sutherland is more focused on the sources scholars cite to understand Austen's life, including letters to her sister Cassandra and other family members (14), the biographies published in 1870 by James Edward Austen-Leigh and in 1884 by Lord Brabourne (16), and the unpublished manuscript from Fanny Caroline Lefroy (28). Each account contains very different claims about Austen's writing and personal life, which makes any clear connections between her own life and her novels difficult to prove. Sutherland further references Deirdre Le Faye's analysis that there are only 160 letters remaining of an estimated 3,000 from Austen's correspondence (14). This is a shockingly small percentage from which to draw any insight into Austen as a writer, let alone a person.

Despite the little knowledge and conflicting accounts modern readers have of her, there are several documents that do speak to what *Emma* meant to Austen as a writer. The novel was first printed in 1815 by Austen's publisher John Murray. In her essay "The Literary Marketplace," Jan Fergus says *Emma* "sold only 1,248 of 2,000 copies printed in nine months; it was also remaindered in 1821 when 1,437 copies had been sold" (45). These would not have been considered large sales at this time when compared, for instance, to Sir Walter Scott, who had 10,000 copies printed of his 1817 novel *Rob Roy* (42). While *Emma* was not a particularly

profitable novel, Fergus also explains that Austen refused to sell the copyrights for *Sense and Sensibility*, *Mansfield Park*, and *Emma* to her publisher, and she claims that “Austen’s refusal to accept Murray’s £450 suggests how highly she valued *Emma* and how willing she was to risk a different valuation from the public” (48). While others may not have appreciated the innovation that *Emma* brought to nineteenth-century fiction, Austen herself knew this novel was special. In a letter to the Countess of Morley in 1815, Austen writes:

In my present state of doubt as to her reception in the World, it is particularly gratifying to receive so early an assurance of your Ladyship’s approbation. It encourages me to depend on the same share of general good opinion which Emma’s Predecessors have experienced, & to believe that I have not yet — as almost every Writer of Fancy does [p. 2] sooner or later — overwritten myself. (Letter 134D)

Austen acknowledges the fears she has about *Emma*, but she is also grateful for the Countess’ praise. Her comment about “overwriting” shows her confidence in *Emma* since she refused to sell the copyright despite believing *Emma* may be disliked. Although Austen’s own history may be sparse, critics have spent many decades attempting to unravel *Emma*’s complex narrative.

This chapter will engage with Thomas Gisborne’s 1797 conduct book entitled *An Enquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex* to demonstrate *Emma*’s innovation in terms of women’s traditional and sympathetic educations. Austen acknowledged reading this text in a letter to her sister Cassandra in 1805, saying “I am pleased with it, and I had quite determined not to read it” (Letter 47). Reading Gisborne’s text with *Emma* will illuminate some of the social expectations and educational recommendations Austen would have been familiar with. Indeed, Nancy Armstrong has said that “Austen knew perfectly well her readers had identified those [conduct book] rules not only with common sense, if not always with nature, but also with the form of the

novel itself” (63). Comparing *Emma* with *An Enquiry* will show how Austen applies those rules to illustrate their effects on young women. Emma and Jane embody the principles touted by Gisborne, and their respective storylines textually act out both the benefits and detriments of conduct book recommendations for women’s behaviour and educational content.

Gisborne claims that women complain their sphere “is so humble and so limited” (11), and that they do not “consider, the real and deeply interesting effects which the conduct of their sex will always have on the happiness of society” (ibid). He wants to demonstrate why women must remain in the domestic sphere. The type of “happiness” he refers to is that of a woman’s family, and her social obligations are to her family and community as a supporter. Gisborne believes that a woman has three main areas in which her presence is important. The first is “in contributing daily and hourly to the comfort of husbands, of parents, of brothers and sisters, and of other relations, connections, and friends, in the intercourse of domestic life” (12), the second “in forming and improving the general manners, dispositions, and conduct of the other sex” (12-13), and the third “in modelling the human mind during the early stages of its growth” (13). Many pieces of conduct literature supports Gisborne’s assertion that a high standard for women’s conduct will have a positive effect on men in their society. His opinions about women’s duties and education all demonstrate a desire for women to quietly improve those around them. A woman must contribute “daily and hourly” (12) to others’ comfort, but there is no mention of her own comfort. This is interesting when considering that Emma is the type of woman Gisborne may have been addressing; Emma’s position in life has allowed her to think almost exclusively about the comfort of herself and her immediate family. Jane Fairfax is the opposite – a woman who is distinctly uncomfortable with little ability to think about her own happiness. Instead, she must spend her time perfecting her traditional education so that she will be a successful

governess. *Emma* acts out many of *Gisborne*'s recommendations to showcase female characters who need to care for their families and communities, but who also should not be sacrificing their own health and happiness. Her novel acts a warning for following some of these precepts too closely, as many of the female characters are at risk of permanently subjugating their own health and happiness to keep others, particularly men, content.

While a character like Harriet Smith receives a basic boarding school education, Jane Fairfax was educated in a private home with the intention to have her privately teach others. Her education is of an immensely higher quality than that of other characters, but it creates a different set of challenges. The narrator explains that Jane

had fallen into good hands, known nothing but kindness from the Campbells, and been given an excellent education. Living constantly with right-minded and well-informed people, her heart and understanding had received every advantage of discipline and culture; and Col. Campbell's residence being in London, every lighter talent had been done full justice to, by the attendance of first-rate masters. (Austen 172)

This description appears to have been written expressly to contrast her with other female characters, particularly Emma. Emma did not grow up with "right-minded and well-informed people," but with a single hypochondriac father. Jane has had the advantage of living and learning outside of Highbury, so her knowledge and her accomplishments far surpass those of Emma and Harriet. Yet, her training has simultaneously supported the plan "that she should be brought up for educating others" (172). Instead of having the luxury of time to learn and eventually secure a social position through marriage, Jane must learn to teach other young women herself. She claims she will apply to "Offices for the sale – not quite of human flesh – but of human intellect" (270-271) to look for a position as a governess. The narrator's emphasis

on this point suggests that working as a governess is not a beneficial use of Jane's education and temperament, especially since she was raised in an upper-class circle. Jane's comparison of her future occupation with the slave trade paints a grim picture for readers about the squandered use of all her talents and knowledge gained from a quality education.

In addition to having a different education and future occupation than Emma, Jane also receives a different introduction within the novel. Unlike the introductions to other characters through the third person narrator, Jane is introduced directly through dialogue by the biased Emma, which gives readers a muddled view of her character. Readers meet Jane when Emma says, "I wish Jane Fairfax very well; but she tires me to death" (118). This immediately positions Jane at a further distance from the reader. Instead of receiving the same introduction from the narrator as others, which created a level of consistency for reader access to characters, Jane is introduced by someone within the story. This positions her further from the reader and makes it difficult to understand her history and opinions. Linda Bree says, "on rereading ...the reader begins to realize ... the whole 'story' of the novel has become something of a puzzle, requiring a solution from the hints and clues offered" (139). The puzzle Bree refers to can already be seen through Jane's introduction. Since readers have immense difficulty accessing Jane's character from the beginning of the novel, her story becomes a complex puzzle to put together, often through Emma's perspective. It is not until the end of the novel that readers get a holistic image of Jane and access to her interiority.

Emma's biased perspective also blurs with that of the narrator through free indirect discourse (FID). Rae Greiner explains FID as "shuttling between a generalizing, impersonal standard of judgement and individual perspectives that revise and refute it[.] FID reproduces the sympathetic circuit between collective and particular stances" (37). She also says that "narrators

in FID frequently adopt a character's speech patterns while at the same time casting judgment on her thoughts, criticizing her in her own voice" (41). FID accounts for the difficulties Austen's readers have in distinguishing objective reality from Emma's reality. The narrator sometimes critiques Emma, but also often frequently "adopts" Emma's elitist style of speech. When a reader attempts to engage sympathetically with a character, they are often forced to do so through Emma's perspective or through the narrator's Emma-style speech, which immediately skews any opinion formed. Austen's use of FID, for example, positions Jane as Emma's rival. Indeed, readers are told that Jane was "so cold, so cautious! There was no getting at her real opinion. Wrapt up in a cloak of politeness ... she was disgustingly, was suspiciously reserved" (Austen 175). This passage begins with the narrator explaining that Jane and her family visited Emma at Hartfield, but slowly slips into Emma's opinions after both women are asked to play the piano. The use of FID here leads from the narrator setting up the scene to observations that, through a lack of clear pronoun usage, could belong to Emma or the narrator. Emma is committed to disliking Jane because she is her opposite in terms of manners. Jane is reserved and talented where Emma is open and indolent, and readers have difficulty parsing Emma's bias to understand why Jane is reserved. Jane's immense talents and quiet nature make it difficult for her to engage as the sympathizer or object within the sympathetic exchange, as well as to improve her future prospects as a poor single woman.

In contrast to Jane's, only a glimpse of Emma's education is given. Readers know her mother died when she was young, and she had "been mistress of [her father's] house from a very early period" (55). This is an uncommon responsibility for a young woman, evidenced by Gisborne's belief that "to superintend the various branches of domestic management ... is the indispensable duty of a married woman. No mental endowments furnish an exemption from it"

(271). Gisborne suggests that no matter the intellectual or skill level of the woman, whether she is an avid reader or esteemed musician, domestic management is a primary duty for a married woman. Even Armstrong acknowledges this when she argues that for men in the middle and upper classes, a woman's "desirability hinged upon an education in frugal domestic practices. She was supposed to complement his role as an earner and producer with hers as a wise spender and tasteful consumer" (59). While Armstrong indicates that this was a move towards standardizing "a coherent idea of the middle class" (63) through "representing the household as a world with its own form of social relations, a distinctively feminine discourse" (ibid), Emma's life has been almost opposite to that which Gisborne and Armstrong describe. Instead of learning both artistic and practical accomplishments in order to gain the security of a husband and home, Emma has happily managed her own home from an early age and has not mastered the same accomplishments, such as drawing and music, as many of her peers due to a lack of application. She does not need marriage to create a household in which she is the controlling member. The narrator claims Miss Taylor operated "less as a governess than a friend" (Austen 55), and that "the mildness of her temper had hardly allowed her to impose any restraint [For many years] they had been living together as friend and friend ... Emma doing just what she liked; highly esteeming Miss Taylor's judgement, but directed chiefly by her own" (ibid). This description illustrates that Emma has possessed power in her family for a very long time. Miss Taylor was too "mild" to check her power, and her father "was a nervous man, easily depressed" (57). Emma has been managing both her house and her guardians for long time, and she knows her position is uniquely powerful.

However, Emma still wants to have her decisions approved by others, mainly Miss Taylor (hereafter referred to as Mrs. Weston) and Knightley. She is not always convinced that

her actions are correct, which leaves important space for her own development. To expand on Johnson's description of Emma as "a woman who possesses and enjoys power, without bothering to demur about it" (125), Emma's power depends on the circumstantial independence she has possessed since she was a child, not on a traditional education. Even Knightley, who "was one of the few people who could see faults in Emma Woodhouse, and the only one who ever told her of them" (Austen 59) admits Emma is "the cleverest in her family" (79-80). While he is concerned with Emma and Harriet's friendship, it is because he recognizes the power Emma holds in Highbury and is worried about its misuse. He fears Emma will simply give Harriet a "polish" (81) instead of "any strength of mind" (ibid) through their friendship, and that Harriet will become "just refined enough to be uncomfortable" (80). Harriet's ensuing actions and feelings regarding Mr. Martin, Mr. Elton, and Knightley himself demonstrate Emma's error in taking her as a companion. Emma's uneven education and somewhat selfish nature create problems with her judgement when it comes to thinking about what is best for others.

After learning about the educations of Emma and Jane, readers can see how education has affected their decision-making skills and other abilities. Jane Fairfax begins her time in Highbury with a looming secret that creates unflattering suspicion among her fellow inhabitants. As discussed earlier, she grew up with the Campbells who gave her an "excellent education" (172). However, the narrator says her arrival in Highbury is due to illness, and they suggest "there might be some truths not told" (173) about why she goes to the Bates' instead of Ireland. Emma adds to her history by imagining a "highly probable" and "naturally started" (175) attachment to Mr. Dixon, Col. Campbell's son-in-law. Readers are told that "Emma was very willing now to acquit her of having seduced Mr. Dixon's affections from his wife, or of anything mischievous which her imagination had suggested at first" (175). The use of FID leads readers

seamlessly from Jane's objective history to Emma's own thoughts about her situation. Until Jane's secret engagement to Frank Churchill is revealed, Emma's history for her appears to be a plausible plotline. However, Jane's "suspiciously reserved" (175) nature does not make her Emma's friend or confidante in regard to her relationship with Mr. Dixon, or any other character.

Churchill chooses an even more deceitful route, telling Emma "it is impossible for me to say on what terms [Jane and Mr. Dixon] really were – how it might all behind the scenes" (200). Instead of defending Jane from Emma's insinuations about an inappropriate relationship, he encourages her ideas about it to disguise his own connection with Jane. Jane's respectability, essential for her future employment as a governess, is threatened by Emma's ideas and Churchill's actions. Gisborne recommends that a woman discover a suitor's "moral character" (237) before they marry, and Churchill's character is immediately shown here as dubious. A man who would willingly insult his future wife's respectability would not have been considered a good man by Gisborne, or by other writers of this time. The fact that he does so to disguise his own relationship with her does not undo his damage to her reputation. His own reputation would not suffer as much as hers if he had a similar rumour circulating about him due to the strict, gendered expectations of women to possess "the stamp of modesty and of good sense" (246) in the nineteenth century. Bree notes that through the process of rereading, "narrative shifts on its axis ... into new possibilities of narrative, character, and action" (139). The axis shift she describes centers around Jane and Churchill's storyline, where every interaction gains new significance when understood as part of their secret engagement. Jane's story is meant to be reread so that her reserve is better understood, but it does not make Churchill's conduct any less damaging to Jane and her family.

Jane's behaviour continues to be misunderstood by all except Knightley. At the Coles' party, Jane is observed by Churchill, Emma, Knightley, and others, but readers never have access to her voice or thoughts. Readers ironically hear that Jane's "voice grew thick" (219) from too much singing, even though she does not talk at all in this scene. Churchill and other guests continue to demand more songs until Knightley and Miss Bates intercede. Jane is, in so many ways, an ideal woman according to Gisborne's standard, having no "thirst for admiration and applause ... vanity and affectation" (34) for her accomplishments. She does not want credit or applause for her performance, but she is still the object of intense scrutiny by many characters. While Churchill has been seen "looking intently across the room at Miss Fairfax" (Austen 214), Emma also notes that "Mr. Knightley [was] among the most attentive" (218) to her playing, and she herself watches until she is lost in her own thoughts. In a scene so crucial to understanding Jane's musical abilities and her relationship with Churchill, it is strange readers never hear or see her directly. She is always seen or heard by other characters, even when these moments are not explicitly narrated, but she is almost never the seer or hearer herself. This point of view denies readers a chance to engage sympathetically with her, and every character is influenced by different motives when they do have access to Jane.

Once Jane's voice is given a larger place in the narrative, she continues to actively ignore or avoid the sympathy of both Churchill and Emma. When she plays her new piano the next day, readers are told "Jane did not look round[;] she was not obliged to hear" (228) Churchill's insinuating questions about the piano's origins. She just answers questions "in a voice of forced calmness" (229). Her sentences are short and vague, and she is frequently said to be not listening or trying not to listen. Emma notices that "there had been a smile of secret delight" (229) on her face when Churchill was speaking, but again assumes it is about Mr. Dixon. Greiner notes that

“seeing others does not guarantee our sympathy (and instead frequently prevents it), [so] reflection becomes an indispensable activity in which potential sympathizers engage” (8). The theory that seeing does not guarantee sympathy characterizes Emma and Jane’s interactions. Emma’s sympathy is limited physically by Jane in having her back turned (Austen 227) or her body blocked (214), and emotionally by Jane’s reserve and Emma’s preconceived ideas. In order to fully engage in the sympathetic process, Adam Smith claims “[the individual] must adopt the whole case of his companion with all its minutest incidents; and strive to render, as perfect as possible, that imaginary change of situation upon which his sympathy is founded” (26). Neither Emma nor Jane does this, each only seeing a small part of the case of the other person and making judgements from there. Neither woman is willing to holistically consider the case of the other person because of jealousy, albeit of different objects (Jane’s talent and Churchill’s attention). They are both unwilling to fully sympathize with each other, which prevents a potential friendship. Jane later acknowledges she was being intentionally “cold and artificial” (Austen 387) to Emma to hide her feelings, which explains some of their issues with sympathetic engagement. To complete their sympathetic education, both women must learn to engage with “the whole case” (Smith 26) every time they sympathize.

The difficulty of sympathetic connection escalates in the Donwell scene. Churchill’s word “blunder” in the alphabet game is discovered by others, causing “a blush on Jane’s cheek” (Austen 305). His next word makes her “evidently displeased ... [she] blushed more deeply than [Knightley] had ever perceived her [she] pushed away the letters with even an angry spirit” (306). These actions, seen through FID with Knightley instead of Emma, give readers a clearer picture of Jane’s feelings. Her actions are not filtered through Emma, who would likely attribute them to Mr. Dixon, but through Knightley, who has begun to suspect something. This is one of

the first times readers are able to see Jane and Churchill through a perspective that is neither Emma's nor the narrator's, and this allows readers to begin a simpler process of sympathetic engagement with Jane. One of Jane's longest speeches occurs after the Donwell incident when she says, "I am fatigued; but it is not the sort of fatigue ... Miss Woodhouse, we all know at times what it is to be wearied in spirits. Mine, I confess, are exhausted. The greatest kindness you can show me, will be to let me have my own way" (317). Jane fluctuates between honesty and concealment here much like Churchill, debating how much to share with and hide from Emma about her difficult situation. She ends by saying "the comfort of being sometimes alone!" (317), which is ironic considering Jane always appears as lonely in this narrative because readers are never able to engage sympathetically with her. Her situation is ironic because Jane wants a solitude that she is never given as a constant object for other characters' observations, but she is alone according to the reader's perspective. Gisborne claims a woman's "sensibility ... is liable to sudden excesses; it nurtures unmerited attachments; it is occasionally the source of suspicion, fretfulness, and groundless discontent; it sometimes degenerates into weakness" (34-5). Jane and Churchill's secret engagement causes this kind of fretfulness and discontent for Jane. She becomes ill and reclusive as the novel progresses, and she hurts Emma and her family with her cold behaviour. Jane and Churchill injure not only their own happiness, but the happiness and comfort of others by maintaining secrecy.

Once revealed that Jane and Frank already have an understanding, sympathetic reflection on her situation allows both Jane and readers to see the effects of her mistakes. When their engagement is made public, Jane tells Mrs. Weston, "I can never be blameless. I have been acting contrary to all my sense of right Do not imagine, madam ... that I was taught wrong The error has been all my own" (Austen 358). She knows her education should have

prevented this behaviour, but she allows her secret personal feelings to overpower her judgement and training. Mrs. Weston's visit, and Emma's visit where Jane shows "consciousness, animation, and warmth [speaking] in a low, but very feeling tone" (382), show Jane's understanding and regret of how her actions have negatively impacted others, especially Emma whom she wants as a friend. Churchill correctly acknowledges he "behaved shamefully" (373), but he made several assumptions about Emma's "indifference" (371) that prove him to be an unworthy partner for Jane. Bree notes that "[Jane and Churchill's] 'story' turns out to be one much more familiar in terms of the plots of the novels of the time. Jane is a typical fictional heroine through her elegance and accomplishments on the one hand, and her helplessness and vulnerability on the other" (139). While I agree with Bree that Jane's type of story is told more often, I believe Austen offers it to us as a foil for Emma. Jane had all the education and training to make her a principled woman, but she makes a significant mistake.

Jane's relationship looks as though it will be happy, but Churchill's "laughing eyes" (Austen 400) and general manners are not nearly remorseful enough for true repentance. Gisborne admits that men often engage in "injudicious and reprehensible behaviour" (101) towards women, but he also says it "is frequently called forth and encouraged by the favourable reception which it is seen to attain" (104). While Churchill does not always flatter Jane's looks, she does encourage his feelings and manners in a reserved way. After all their difficulties, Churchill proves he has not changed his behaviour enough by still "[courting]" (Austen 402) their compromising, hurtful memories and turning them into jokes. While the novel still suggests the two will have a happy enough life together, it also shows Churchill to be in the wrong for his own mistakes. Gisborne's assertions that women must correct men's behaviour, but that they also encourage it, is rewritten in this courtship. Jane's behaviour was not perfect, but there is a

clear difference between her secrecy and his indelicacy. Austen encourages her readers to blame Churchill for his own conduct instead of holding Jane responsible. However, Jane's story shows that receiving a near-perfect education does not guarantee good sympathetic abilities or a good choice in marriage.

In contrast to Jane, Emma's marriage plot and sympathetic education take a different narrative route. Emma's storyline best shows the impact that improved sympathetic reflection and action can have in rectifying mistakes. Emma receives the most uneven education of all the female characters, but she holds the most power in the novel. Claudia Johnson notes that "Emma has been the heroine critics have loved to scold precisely because it never occurs to her to apologize for the control she takes over the destinies of others" (122). Emma's propensity to matchmake her neighbors and to manipulate the lives of others makes her a controversial figure for some critics, as Johnson illustrates. Audrey Jaffe discusses in *Scenes of Sympathy* how "the Victorian subject ... was figured crucially and with increasing emphasis as a spectator" (3), and that for Adam Smith, "the scene of sympathy in effect effaces both its participants, substituting for them images, or fantasies, of social and cultural identity" (4). Until Emma learns to properly sympathize with her community, she falls into the trap of creating inaccurate and anachronistic images of others. For example, Emma substitutes Robert Martin, with all his individual opinions and feelings, for an inaccurate image of Robert Martin, a member of an old form of yeomanry, and claims, "the yeomanry are precisely the order of people with whom I feel I can have nothing to do" (Austen 74). Instead of engaging sympathetically with Robert, and Harriet in this instance, Emma makes superficial judgements with just her "quick eye" (75) and negatively affects Harriet's future prospects with Robert.

However, after the Elton debacle, Emma starts to realize her issues with her judgement. She acknowledges that “her own behaviour to [Elton] had been so complaisant and obliging, so full of courtesy and attention” (154) that his mistake makes sense when reflected on. When she is alone, Emma “looked back as well as she could; but it was all confusion. She had taken up the idea, she supposed, and made everything bend to it. His manners, however, must have been unmarked, wavering, dubious, or she could not have been so misled” (152). She recognizes that her ability to sympathetically engage with Elton had been “bent” by her desires, mediated through moments of FID. These moments are revealed upon rereading, for example when he gives his charade and “the speech was more to Emma than to Harriet There was a deep consciousness about him, and he found it easier to meet her eye than her friend’s” (105). Elton is paying attention to Emma, but she misinterprets it as being for Harriet. Instead of engaging fully in the sympathetic exchange and imagining how Elton is feeling in his situation, Emma only reads his surface and fits his actions into her preconceived ideas. Harriet, whom Knightley originally described as “not a sensible girl, nor a girl of any information” (97), had no chance of understanding Elton’s true intentions at this moment in her life. Emma received an education that taught her social values and some skills, but not how to sympathize with others. The narrator says, “when [Emma] considered that Mr. Knightley could not have observed [Elton] as she had done, neither with the interest, nor ... with the skill of such an observer on such a question as herself” (102), she could dismiss his opinion. The word “interest” could reasonably be replaced with “lens” or “bias” here because Emma is watching their interactions and looks only for what she wants to see. Much like Rae Greiner has explained, Emma needs to better reflect on these moments of spectatorship (8). Her resolution “to do such things no more” (Austen 154) is

relatively well upheld, and she stays quiet about later gossip, such as the Jane/Knightley rumour from Mrs. Weston.

While Emma is beginning to realize her errors, the Cole dinner party and Crown ball become significant scenes for her development of mutual understanding and self-correction abilities with Knightley. Their relationship will create a new style of marriage plot where the courtship process is continually difficult and often awkward. While Emma fearfully ponders his potential love for Jane, readers are taken out of her thoughts by the narrator, who says, “presently Mr. Knightley looked back, and came and sat down by her” (219). Instead of joining the “numbers round the instrument” (218), Knightley shows his preference for Emma’s sole company. Until this point, Knightley has been a family friend with whom Emma sometimes argues, but this public moment of sitting by her instead of Jane gives the first hint of real preference. While Emma is dancing with Churchill at the Crown ball, she says “she was more disturbed by Mr. Knightley’s not dancing, than by any thing” (288), and then proceeds to have a short interior monologue about his “tall, firm, upright figure” (289). The narrative frequently turns inward when Emma thinks about Knightley’s conduct. Her thoughts about him stand in stark contrast to her thoughts about Churchill, where she muses on her feelings and ends up believing “she could not be very much in love” (244). She constantly convinces herself that she is not in love with Churchill, or anyone for that matter, but she is always aware of Knightley’s movements and looks. This moment of observation suggests that Knightley is not a perfect man, and he could use some of Emma’s attention and support to improve himself and stop the “imaginistic misreadings” (Johnson 140) he is creating about Emma and Churchill. At the ball, “whenever she caught his eye, she forced him to smile; but in general he was looking grave. She wished he could love a ball-room better, and could like Frank Churchill better. – He seemed

often observing her” (Austen 289). Knightley is becoming jealous of her connection with Churchill, but Emma attributes his looks to a hatred of Churchill and a criticism of her behaviour (289). However, when discussing Elton’s behaviour to Harriet, Knightley later says, “I shall not scold you. I leave you to your own reflections” (292). This moment indicates a shift in their relationship, where Knightley recognizes for the first time that Emma can learn from her own mistakes. His ability to pull back from being “half paternal and half pedagogical” (Johnson 140) towards Emma’s behaviour and just be Emma’s friend pushes their equal relationship forward. They are starting to realize they can help and support each other, and that each one is deserving of this type of care. Their conversations and looks provide an “agreeable recollection” (Austen 293) for Emma, and help spur better “readings” (Johnson 140) of each other in future aspects of their relationship.

After the ball, readers receive more insight into Knightley’s and Emma’s observations and mistakes. In a moment of FID, the narrator says Knightley “began to suspect [Churchill] of some inclination to trifle with Jane Fairfax there were symptoms of intelligence between them” (Austen 302). Knightley is often the embodiment of logic and social decorum in this text. Deanna Kreisel believes Emma’s “education consists in bringing her epistemological perspective in line with that of her future husband, who alone, we might remember, has forewarned Emma of [Jane and Churchill’s connection] Emma herself must forswear her own authorial meddlings in order to be united with Knightley” (“Where does ...” 8-9). While there is more to the “authorial meddlings” and power of Emma than Kreisel admits, Emma does acknowledge that Knightley is the only one who has “forewarned” her of certain events. Knightley becomes surprisingly “irritated” (Austen 308) when Emma shuts down his thoughts about Jane and Churchill. However, his fears for her behaviour are justifiable considering his own knowledge of

Jane and Churchill's behaviour, as well as the scene at Box Hill. Emma's affront to Miss Bates in saying she could only have "three [dull things to say] at once" (322) causes Miss Bates a "slight blush" (322) as she says, "I must make myself very disagreeable, or [Emma] would not have said such a thing to an old friend" (323). It is clear to readers that Miss Bates has been hurt by this statement, but Emma continues her flippant chatter. Theresa Kenney, analyzing an earlier visit of Emma's to poor neighbors, says, "we demand much of her because Austen shows us Emma privately thinking she is capable of more" (14). Kenney's claim explains the shock readers feel at Emma's joke about Miss Bates; Emma had been trying very hard to improve her attitude towards and sympathy with others, and this moment is a slip into old bad habits.

Instead of allowing Emma to get away with this hurtful comment, Knightley uses their growing mutual understanding to help Emma correct herself. He uses their position as friends to be candid and ask her, "how can you be so unfeeling to Miss Bates?" (Austen 325). Emma immediately understands the wrong she has done, and the narrator says that Knightley

had misinterpreted the feelings which had kept her face averted, and tongue motionless. They were combined only of anger against herself, mortification, and deep concern. She had not been able to speak; and, on entering the carriage, sunk back for a moment overcome – then reproaching herself for having taken no leave, making no acknowledgement, parting in apparent sullenness, she looked out with voice and hand eager to show a difference; but it was just too late. He had turned away ... (326)

This series of movements by Emma demonstrates her own knowledge of her mistake as well as of her regard for Knightley. She feels "overcome" by the hurt she has caused someone else and she cannot speak while she is reflecting on her actions. In this instance, their relationship becomes strained by his disappointment in her actions. Knightley assumes she has not improved

her abilities to sympathize, and he believes she has not done his advice “greater justice” (326). In reality, she is remorseful and ashamed of her actions. Emma and Knightley endure an emotionally significant moment of “faulty communication” (Armstrong 138) in this scene.

However, Emma and Knightley’s miscommunication demonstrates a new type of courtship. Gisborne believed it was proper for married couples to correct each other’s behaviour because flaws do not appear when a couple is courting in a “dazzled state of mind” (302). Austen combats this by using *Emma* to create a courtship that has no dazzle at all. Gisborne claims a husband should tell his wife of her faults “with a lively conviction of his own imperfections, and of the need which he has of indulgence and forbearance on her part; with a tenderness of manner flowing from the genuine warmth of affection; with an ardent solicitude to shun as far as may be possible the appearance of authoritative direction” (305). The Box Hill scene both supports and contradicts this assertion. Knightley admits that telling Emma of her faults is something to be “rather endured than allowed” (Austen 325), but he is not telling her about them with a “tenderness of manner.” He misinterprets her reaction just as she misinterprets others’ actions. She understands her error more through the process of reflection: as “she reflected more, she seemed but to feel it more” (327). While Emma has reflected on and learned from previous mistakes, this moment starts a new chapter for her. Instead of reflecting on her matchmaking and deciding to remain a passive observer, she takes an active role in rectifying the mistake. She does have “her eyes [toward] Donwell” (327) in the hope of reconciling with Knightley, but she goes directly to the Bates home to take action “in the warmth of true contrition” (ibid). The narrator says that Emma asks Miss Bates many questions about Jane to help “a return of old feelings” (328). Despite previous jealousy of Jane and contempt for Miss Bates, Emma is “sincerely interested” (329) in Miss Bates’ news and says “it must be unwelcome to [Jane] and all her

friends – but I hope her engagement [with the Smallridges] will have every alleviation that is possible” (330). While she does not directly apologize for her behaviour, she makes amends by sympathizing with them and praising Jane for the difficult occupation she will be entering. Emma enters into their situation imaginatively and sees the difficulties and sadness that will come for the family and for Jane when Jane leaves. Emma’s visit creates a new level of awareness and reflection in herself, and it contributes to her growing sympathetic education.

Emma’s commitment to improving her sympathetic abilities is rewarded by Knightley’s ensuing reaction to her visit to the Bates. The narrator says:

It seemed as if there were an instantaneous impression in her favour, as if his eyes received the truth from her’s [*sic*], and all that had passed of good in her feelings were at once caught and honoured. – He looked at her with a glow of regard. She was warmly gratified – and in another moment still more so, by a little movement of more than common friendliness on his part. – He took her hand; ... pressed it, and certainly was on the point of carrying it to his lips – when, from some fancy or other, he suddenly let it go. (333)

Their reconnection is one based in visuality. He sees “truth” in her eyes and shows “regard” in his, and she is happy with his approving reaction. The hand movement signifies a loving moment between them, and it all occurs with no words. This is a moment of reconciliation, where Emma sees it as “[speaking] such a perfect amity” (334) between them, but it also suggests a future romantic partnership.

Kenney claims that “we are merely betrayed by our own focus on Emma’s faults into being blind to her virtues. Why? Because Emma does not sit about enumerating them” (8). Emma does not spend time listing her good qualities, but instead turns her mistakes into

moments for learning and reflection. Despite her uneven early education, Emma is able to learn through experience how to correct her behaviour and engage sympathetically with others. Jane apologizes for her mistakes, but she still commits to marrying Churchill. The narrator does not give many passages where readers see Jane engage in the sympathetic process. She does sympathize with Emma at the novel's end, as Emma does with her, but otherwise readers do not see her improve her sympathetic education as much as Emma. All along, Emma has been able to follow Gisborne's recommendations "to give delight in the affectionate intercourse of domestic society; to relieve a parent in the superintendence of family affairs; to smooth the bed of sickness, and cheer the decline of age; to examine into the wants and distresses of the female inhabitants of the neighborhood" (220). She has performed all these duties from necessity, but her sympathetic education has changed her attitude when performing these actions. She is no longer "scornful [and] ungracious" (Austen 327) in her thoughts about Miss Bates and others, but rather hopes for a more "regular, equal, kindly intercourse" (ibid). Emma, with the frequent support of Knightley, has developed into a kinder and more sympathetic person.

The final marriage between Emma and Knightley has been the subject of much criticism from scholars. Many are convinced that their marriage will add nothing to Emma's life. Kreisel has argued that "the ending of Emma fails to do a very good job of convincing us that Emma's life will be all that much better after her marriage" (7-8) and that "she will, by her own prior admission, sacrifice the independence of singlehood, and her life will now be devoted to pleasing two rather than one" (8). Kreisel sees Emma's new responsibility to be a diligent daughter to Mr. Woodhouse and a supportive wife to Knightley as a sacrifice she did not need to make. Kreisel believes the opening scene of *Emma* was actually a "happily ever after" (4) unto itself, and by marrying Knightley, Emma has just added to her obligations. On a different note, Harry E. Shaw

argues not that she has added to her responsibilities, but that she has taken away her own ability to improve herself. He claims that if she had not married Knightley, “Emma would become better acquainted, not with the depths of her soul or its need to forge independent judgments of reality, but with herself and her feelings in relation to those around her. She would make fewer mistakes in spelling out such things” (214). He thinks she would have made better improvements in her own ability to judge had she remained single. Bree expresses a similar idea, stating, “it is a tribute to Austen’s skill in creating such a lively, intelligent, self-misleading, self-searching woman as Emma Woodhouse ... that we feel Emma may have deserved better than to dwindle into a Highbury wife” (141). Despite these criticisms of Emma’s marriage adding to her responsibilities and stunting her personal growth, I believe this marriage has significant merit for Emma’s happiness and plays a key role in Austen’s analysis of conduct book recommendations.

After slowly learning to sympathize with others and act on her feelings, Emma is able to gain the permanent support of the very man who both helped her and learned from her. When Harriet confesses her feelings to Emma about Knightley, “Emma’s eyes were instantly withdrawn; and she sat silently meditating” (Austen 350). While she is thinking, Emma pauses in the process to reflect on her own bias towards Harriet and discover that she herself loves Knightley. She believes it would be a “debasement” (354) for him to marry Harriet, and she finally sees how she has made Harriet “less humble” (354) than before. She decides to support Knightley, though, and tells him that he may talk to her if he has “any wish to speak openly to [her] as a friend, or to ask [her] opinion of any thing that [he] may have in contemplation” (365). Until this point, Emma has not had to sacrifice much of herself to assist others. Emma’s speech here is the absolute pinnacle of her transformation because she willingly sacrifices her own happiness to help him make a fair decision about Harriet. She acknowledges that, “cost her what

it would, she would listen” (ibid), showing she is prepared to engage sympathetically with him by listening to his troubles and providing any appropriate advice and support he may need. Adam Smith claims the unfortunate “are sensibly relieved by [discussing their grief]; because the sweetness of [the listener’s] sympathy more than compensates the bitterness of that sorrow” (13). Grief and pain are what Knightley, according to Emma, is experiencing over Harriet, and she is prepared to help. Instead, he asks, “have I no chance of ever succeeding?” (Austen 365), in which the object of his success appears vague to readers. However, the narrator then remarks, “he stopped in his earnestness to look the question, and the expression of his eyes overpowered her” (365). Emma understands the meaning of this look before readers are assured that “dearest [she] will always be” (365). Their ability to communicate almost wordlessly holds significance in this proposal, where he acknowledges that “if I loved you less, I might be able to talk about it more” (366). The earlier look of “perfect amity” is here transformed into an “overpowering” look of love. Readers receive a very subjective view of this scene; we only see Emma’s reactions through Knightley’s eyes, and then switch to an interior monologue from Emma. Their connection runs deeper than the narrative will allow. Emma’s vocal reply, where she says “just what she ought, of course,” is not given to readers. Kreisel argues that a “reading of Austen that insists on her unadulterated ... endorsement of the proper marriage misses crucial elements of her project, elements to which the author herself draws our attention ... [sic] by not drawing our attention” (9). Kreisel rightly sees there is more to these scenes than just endorsements, but I disagree with her point that Emma is limited by marriage.

I agree with Johnson’s analysis of their marriage, which puts Knightley and Emma on “equal footing” (141). She says Knightley “cedes a considerable portion of the power which custom has allowed him to expect. In moving to Hartfield, Knightley is sharing her home, and in

placing himself within her domain, Knightley gives his blessing to her rule” (143). Instead of agreeing with Gisborne’s view that husbands are superior to wives (226-227), Austen imagines a different kind of marriage. Knightley’s marriage to Emma puts her in a position of power as his wife, but also in their life at Hartfield. Austen is “drawing our attention” (Kreisel 9) to the adjusted power Emma will hold in the living arrangement at Hartfield. She is not going to stop growing as a person once she marries Knightley; instead, she has gained the partner she needs and deserves. Emma will be able to care for her father and receive support from her husband, and she will not have to worry that Knightley could eventually marry another woman and be taken away from his current connection to her and her father. This is the material difference that Kreisel misses. While the beginning scene looks like a “happily ever after,” there is still insecurity in the relationship between Emma, Knightley, and Mr. Woodhouse. With Knightley secured as a husband and Hartfield secured as their home, Emma will be able to carry out her life with the support of an equal partner and with the improved attitude and sympathetic education that she has developed throughout the novel.

By comparing Jane Fairfax and Emma Woodhouse, readers can see Austen bringing to life various conduct book concepts and seeing how they would perform when actually acted out by young women. The deciding factor in each woman’s final happiness is their ability to learn from their mistakes and develop their sympathetic education. While Harriet marries by little more than chance and Mrs. Elton becomes a snooty Highbury wife, Jane and Emma follow different paths. Jane mistakenly enters a secret engagement with the erratic Frank Churchill, but she learns from the experience and apologizes for her behaviour. While her marriage looks as though it will be successful, she is still marrying a gentleman whom most characters deem unworthy of her. Emma, by contrast, makes the most significant improvements throughout the

novel. Her situation in life gave her too much power, but she learns to use it in more sympathetic ways. Knightley loves her personal strength and power in spite of her faults, and he helps her see and rectify her mistakes. Their marriage has the promise of being “all right, all open, all equal” (Austen 393) and creating sympathetic connections in a way not seen in other characters’ marriages. *Emma* uses free indirect discourse and descriptions of the sympathetic exchange to show readers an imaginative alternative to the marriages described by the likes of Gisborne. Both women embody many of Gisborne’s ideal qualities in a woman, but they also exemplify the various difficulties and drawbacks that accompany these recommendations. Instead of a role “contributing daily and hourly to the comfort of [others]” (Gisborne 12), Emma creates a life for herself where she can give this comfort, but also receive it herself. Mr. Knightley will be “such a companion... such a partner” (Austen 380). The marriage plot in *Emma* advocates for a loving companionship where both partners are able to help and improve one another.

Chapter Two

Jane Eyre and “Natural Sympathies”

Many audiences read Charlotte Brontë’s 1847 novel *Jane Eyre* as the heroine’s romantic triumph over social and class expectations. What many readers do not notice is the way Jane’s story develops and adapts progressive ideas about women’s education and marriage as they are developed in conduct literature. Brontë’s novel is an ongoing engagement with, as well as challenge to, many pieces of conduct literature from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Although Nancy Armstrong argues that “as education became the preferred instrument of social control, fiction could accomplish much the same purpose as the various forms of recreation promoted by Sunday schools” (17), I believe that conduct literature precepts were still being parsed out by nineteenth-century authors. Novels were still engaging with educational, conduct-focused texts to develop their form, plots, and characters, which led them in a different direction than the more prescriptive conduct texts. Armstrong believes that as the eighteenth century ended, “there is every reason to think that by this time the [feminine] ideal⁴ had passed into the domain of common sense where it provided the frame of reference for other kinds of writing, among them the novel” (63). What Brontë’s novel demonstrates is that this idea of femininity and the domestic woman was still being actively discussed and reimagined in the novel form with the help of conduct literature.

Much like Austen’s *Emma*, Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* imaginatively embodies a form of woman’s education in its heroine, but it uses a controversial foundational text to do so. Decades before Brontë’s novel, Mary Wollstonecraft authored *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* in

⁴ Armstrong’s feminine ideal refers to conduct literature’s depictions of domestic-focused middle-class womanhood. She says it comes from texts “for children [that] all posited a similar feminine ideal and tended toward the same objective of ensuring a happy household” (63).

1792, which was a complete indictment of the frivolous, accomplishment-based education often given to middle- and upper-class women. The text was considered controversial in the early nineteenth century due to Wollstonecraft's scandalous personal life, but many people read and discussed it in secret. While her work does not list specific educational instructions like Gisborne's *An Enquiry*, which was discussed in Chapter One, it does imply a proper trajectory for women's education that is focused on rationality and equality between the sexes. James Diedrick notes that "no attempt has been made" (22) to link *Jane Eyre* with "a tradition of feminist discourse that originated fifty-five years before" (23). He compares Brontë's novel with Wollstonecraft's treatise in his university classes, and has students look at "the extent to which Jane herself ... fulfills Wollstonecraft's wish that women 'may every day grow more and more masculine'" (24). While my paper will not focus on Wollstonecraft's idea of masculinist rationality, it will look at how Jane embodies Wollstonecraft's recommendations for education and marriage.

Jane Eyre is an apt text to read with *A Vindication* because Brontë's marriage plot ends with a unique union that is based on the friendship and equality of both partners, much like *A Vindication's* ideal marriage and family situation. Wollstonecraft's text describes the ideal marital union as a friendly, sympathetic connection that is reminiscent of the one described by Adam Smith, where two people can listen to and sympathize with each other. Both Brontë and Wollstonecraft adapt aspects of Smith's model of sympathy in their depictions of personal friendships and marriages. Jane learns to sympathize within her friendship with Helen Burns before sharing similar feelings with Rochester. As an educated, middle-class British woman with a companionate marriage, Jane is a prime example of Wollstonecraft's agenda come to life in the mid-nineteenth century. Dror Wahrman notes that "the aftermath of the Reform Act [of 1832]

witnessed not only the decisive proclamation of the ‘middle class’ as a powerfully rising social constituency at the core of the ‘public’; it also witnessed a complementary proclamation of the ‘middle class’ as the epitome of hearth and home, at the core of the ‘private’” (381). These domestic roles were even further solidified after 1832, which makes Brontë’s innovative engagement with the middle class ideal timely.

Both Wollstonecraft and Brontë seek to help women become more rational partners in marriage, but each author takes a different approach to doing so. Wollstonecraft’s image of the rational marriage partner is based on the idea of an educated British woman of the middle orders avoiding the pitfalls of aristocratic excess to become the friend of her husband. Wollstonecraft was primarily concerned with fixing the education of women to make them into “affectionate wives and rational mothers” (29). Brontë, by comparison, elaborates on this idea but applies it strictly to the nineteenth-century British middle class to the exclusion of other identities. She demonstrates the unique qualification of the white British middle-class woman by attaching Wollstonecraft’s critique of the coquette to other racial and class identities. Jane’s superiority to Rochester’s other love interest, Blanche Ingram, and his first colonial bride, Bertha Mason, is demonstrated through her rational education and non-sexualized passion. Blanche’s calculated femininity is attached to the frivolity of aristocratic excess that Wollstonecraft critiques, while Bertha’s coquettish behaviour and overt sexuality are attached to a Creole racial identity. Bertha’s physical appearance and personality are sexualized and racialized to distance her from Jane and portray an imagined threat to English marriage. Patricia McKee argues that “Jane’s strategic representations of women who appear to be dark and savage enable her to strengthen her own civilized image” (80), which applies to Brontë’s attempt to create a distinctly rational, friendship-based English marriage between Rochester and Jane. Where Wollstonecraft identifies

just two categories of the rational and the coquettish woman, Brontë creates further distinctions by sexualizing and racializing certain women to prove the British middle-class woman's superiority. Her novel demonstrates that there is a difference between the more reserved passion of equal lovers and the intense, sexual passion of other types of lovers. Brontë uses *Jane Eyre* to promote a strictly British, middle-class, mid-nineteenth century version of Wollstonecraft's ideal educated woman in a loving, equal marriage, and she does this by attaching different forms of sexuality in women to sharply defined racialized and class-based identities.

Much like Jane Austen, the personal life and romantic attachments of Charlotte Brontë have been investigated by many different writers. I will focus on the relevant pieces of Brontë's biography that provide evidence of her experience with writing and teaching. While there is no record of Brontë herself having read Wollstonecraft, Brontë's education and work experience, combined with certain language choices in *Jane Eyre*, imply she was engaging with analogous ideas to those Wollstonecraft articulated over 50 years before. Richard Nemesvari explains that the Brontë sisters' "status as middle-class ladies prevented them from undertaking any job involving physical labour or trade yet the opportunities for any 'higher' mode of employment were also few, leaving marriage as the most likely 'salvation' from their lot" (10-11). Instead of an early marriage, Brontë worked as a governess, which she strongly disliked, and then trained in Belgium to open her own school. She published *Jane Eyre* in 1847 to huge success, even after being told by poet Robert Southey that "literature cannot be the business of a woman's life, and it ought not to be" (11). While there are many studies on Brontë's personal life, writing, and editing styles, it was her own teaching experiences that allowed her to create an imaginative and faithful novelistic representation of Jane as a well-educated and independent governess.

In order to understand why *Jane Eyre*'s connection to Wollstonecraft's work would not have been publicized, we must look at the personal history of Wollstonecraft herself and her 1792 *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. Wollstonecraft was born to a middle-class family in London in 1759, and she, much like Brontë, had to financially support them through various occupations. Eileen Hunt Botting explains that Wollstonecraft "financially sustained her extended family through work as a lady's companion, schoolmistress, governess, and, finally, professional writer" (1). Her series of occupations are similar to those chosen by Brontë due to the social constraints on middle-class women's work. Wollstonecraft wrote many texts in different genres, and the treatise *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* was published in 1792 by London publisher Joseph Johnson (1). In *A Vindication*, Botting claims that Wollstonecraft argues for "the idea that women's rights are a kind of human rights" (4), and she uses various political and philosophical theories to prove it. Wollstonecraft's goal with *A Vindication* was to imbue British society with more rational values, and she wanted women to exhibit these values instead of feeding their "fascinating graces" (Wollstonecraft 31)⁵.

While her intentions with this text were to help elevate women and men into better states of humanity, her untimely death in 1797 and the publication of *Memoirs of the Author of "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman"* in 1798 by her husband William Godwin greatly damaged her reputation. Botting notes that "the early reception of Wollstonecraft was mixed but mainly positive" (2), but Godwin's biography revealed aspects of her personal life that made her appear indecorous. For example, he reveals that she had a "'republican' (unofficial) marriage and illegitimate child with the American Gilbert Imlay during her residence in revolutionary France" (2). These revelations hurt her reputation as a female revolutionary writer because women were

⁵ I believe this phrase refers to artful accomplishments and turns of conversation that many women learned and displayed to attract men and become popular in society.

still held to exacting standards as proper, chaste wives and mothers. Wollstonecraft's personal actions would have reflected poorly on her professional writing, and the backlash made it nearly impossible to read her work publicly in the early nineteenth century.

A Vindication is unique in the period because it explicitly critiques other works that discuss women's conduct while creating its own radical ideas for education. For example, Wollstonecraft takes issue with Dr. Gregory's (54, 57-58) and Dr. Fordyce's (120-124) famous advice for educating young women, and she devotes a significant part of her text to explaining her own ideas about educating women. Wollstonecraft's work is ground-breaking because "she theorizes new institutions and practices of womanhood with the precise aim of producing a different kind of female subject, while her Enlightenment contemporaries more ambiguously seek to reinforce status quo elite masculine ideals of freedom" (Hirschmann and Regier 649). Wollstonecraft wanted to use education as the means to reinvent the way women think and act, and this reinvention is realized in a mid-nineteenth century form in Brontë's novel. Brontë's novel is able to further delineate between types of womanhood in the mid-nineteenth century in order to demonstrate that a quiet, passionate, and equal relationship with an educated, middle-class woman is ideal. Jane's female counterparts in Blanche and Bertha demonstrate the dangers of artifice and sexuality respectively. Wollstonecraft herself did not abide by the idea of marriage for status or wealth, and she had passionate, but monogamous, connections with men. Her conception of ideal womanhood is made even more specific in Brontë's novel over 50 years later, making this a relevant comparison for current readers to explore. Reading *A Vindication* alongside *Jane Eyre* will demonstrate how many of Wollstonecraft's radical ideas are both realized and critiqued in the novel genre over 50 years later.

Jane's difficulties with education and socialization begin when she is living at Gateshead with the Reed family. Wollstonecraft defines education as "such an attention to a child as will slowly sharpen the senses, form the temper, regulate the passions⁶ as they begin to ferment, and set the understanding to work before the body arrives at maturity" (47). These attributes are key outcomes of a child's education, and Elizabeth Frazer argues that Wollstonecraft's other treatises, such as her 1787 *Thoughts on the education of daughters*, support the idea that "education includes care and socialisation from the earliest days of infancy" (610). Jane's early education with the Reeds does sharpen her senses and form her temper, but in the opposite way to that which Wollstonecraft desires. Jane must hide herself and her interests from her family, who do not care for her or allow her to socialize with them. In the opening scenes, narrator Jane claims she desired only solitude and her copy of *Bewick's History of British Birds* as a child, saying she "was then happy: happy at least in [her] way" (Brontë 65). Her version of isolated happiness is not normal, and this introduction illustrates both her ostracism from the Reeds and her imaginative capacity. While this is not a strict course of study, Jane does show an unusual affinity for reading books and listening to "tales" (65) from her nurse Bessie. Jane is not partaking in the girlish amusements that Wollstonecraft dislikes, such as "adorning [a] lifeless doll" (Wollstonecraft 68), but instead is exercising her imagination and reading in solitude.

Although she educates herself, she lacks in basic kindness from the Reeds. When her cousin John interrupts her reading, for example, he reminds her that she is a "dependant" with "no money," and that she should not "live here with gentleman's children like [them], and eat the same meals [they] do, and wear clothes at their mama's expense" (Brontë 67). Young Jane is emotionally and physically bullied by John, and his statements illustrate her social isolation from

⁶ Wollstonecraft uses the word "passion[s]" throughout her work to refer to both general intense emotions and intense romantic feelings. Here, she refers to intense emotions felt by children.

her cousins. Esther Godfrey has pointed out that, early in the novel, readers see Jane's origins as "working class" (856) because she is a dependent orphan with no inheritance or other financial prospects. Jane is actively discouraged from interacting with her cousins as their equal. Godfrey also claims that "gendered performances become acts that are increasingly tied to material wealth, and the text suggests that only the middle and upper classes can afford the costly performance of gender" (856). Godfrey suggests here that only wealthier classes are able to portray themselves as beautiful and feminine, and young Jane feels plain and ugly right from the novel's beginning. Jane is described as a "rat" (Brontë 67) by John and a "mad cat" (69) by Bessie, attributes which make her appear inhuman and animalistic in comparison to her three wealthier cousins. Jane is socially ostracized and differently educated than her cousins, which Brontë shows as shaping a major aspect of Jane's personality and desires later in life.

In addition to her cousins, her aunt, Mrs. Reed, withholds love and kindness from Jane and embodies the type of motherhood Wollstonecraft seeks to eradicate. Wollstonecraft noted in her treatise that a wife who has been intellectually confined and taught only to care about her husband's feelings is "a cold-hearted, narrow-minded woman ... [and she] is jealous of the little kindness which her husband shews to his relations; and her sensibility not rising to humanity, she is displeased at seeing the property of her children lavished on an helpless sister" (93). When a woman has not been educated to be rational or generous, she becomes jealous of any attention her husband shows to others, even family dependants like an unattached sister who relies on him for support. Wollstonecraft's portrait of the jealous wife extends to Mrs. Reed as the jealous aunt. She withholds all love and humanity in order to hurt Jane, and she later reveals it is precisely because her husband cared for his niece Jane and her mother. On her deathbed, Mrs. Reed says, "I had a great dislike to her mother always; for she was my husband's only sister, and

a great favourite with him Reed pitied [the baby]; and he used to nurse it and notice it as if it had been his own: more, indeed, than he ever noticed his own at that age” (Brontë 315). This shows her intense jealousy of her husband’s sister and niece, and she refuses to be generous or forgiving after her husband has died. Instead of using her position to benefit her niece, Mrs. Reed fails to be a Wollstonecraftian educated mother and encourages Jane’s isolation within the family.

Jane engages in her first act of outward rebellion when she calls John a “wicked and cruel boy” and a “slave-driver” (67). This is her first vocal outburst against her abusive relatives, and it garners a severe punishment. Her “active watching” and difference of temper are what “[provoke] the other inmates of the Reed household” (Newman 35), but Jane’s actions stem from a lack of care and education. When Jane is locked in the Red Room, she thinks, “had I been a sanguine, brilliant, careless, exacting, handsome, romping child – though equally dependent and friendless – Mrs. Reed would have endured my presence more complacently; her children would have entertained for me more of the cordiality of fellow-feeling” (73). Her desire for fellow-feeling is reminiscent of Adam Smith’s definitions of sympathy, where “nothing pleases us more than to observe in other men a fellow-feeling with all the emotions of our own breath; nor are we ever so much shocked as by the appearance of the contrary” (Smith 10). This explains the dynamic between Jane and her aunt, where Jane has no “harmony” (Brontë 73) with the Reeds. The narrator Jane now understands that she lacked a kind, sympathetic connection with Mrs. Reed, and she sees that her emotions and situation, contrary to creating fellow-feeling, merely made her aunt angrier and more distant. Jane’s reflection on what would have made Mrs. Reed love her is only her perceived list of her cousins’ characteristics, which shows that her individuality was not valued or respected.

Mrs. Reed's characteristics of selfish vanity and coldness to those who do not benefit her are reminiscent of Wollstonecraft's idea of a selfish mother and coquette, and these characteristics are demonstrated in different ways in her three children. When Jane imagines a vision or ghost coming, Newman says it

suggests at once that Jane expects to see something – to be the subject of vision – and also that she unsettlingly experiences herself as the object of an otherworldly seeing. It is no accident that this 'coming vision' (a vision that never really arrives) threatens at the precise moment she has been seeking to reassure herself that she is in control of what she sees and of her own place in the world of vision. (31)

This moment inspires Jane's desire to control her own life. The impending vision terrifies her, and she faints after being wholly abandoned by her aunt. At her core, Jane wants to be noticed and loved by people, but the Reed household consistently refuses to do so. Therefore, she finds power in becoming the invisible observer of others, and she is able to reassert herself as an individual subject. The Red Room scene signifies a definite movement for Jane towards a confident and quiet subjectivity as well as a strong understanding of right and wrong.

When she is released, Jane confronts and censures her aunt for her complete lack of fellow-feeling. Jane's childish anger is inflated but accurate when she says, "if anyone asks me how I liked you, and how you treated me, I will say the very thought of you makes me sick, and that you treated me with miserable cruelty" (Brontë 95). Wollstonecraft notes that women often learn in "snatches" from "sheer observations on real life" (49) instead of through disciplined study. Jane's observations of her own life form a large basis of her early education, and she comes to conclusions about Mrs. Reed from her powers of silent watching. She has not had the advantage of rigorous study, so her early experiences shape the way she learns through feeling

and sensation. Jane also says, “you think I have no feelings, and that I can do without one bit of love or kindness; but I cannot live so: and you have no pity” (Brontë 96). Aspects of this speech are echoed later in a discussion with Rochester, but here it is important to note that young Jane understands that she needs love and care in order to grow. She can educate herself and develop into a thinking, feeling individual, but she needs friendship and sympathy to become the educated, virtuous woman Wollstonecraft advocates for.

Jane’s subsequent time at Lowood Institution, a pauper school, is key to developing her sense of sympathy and friendship, especially since she gains her first true friend in Helen Burns. Wollstonecraft says that “friendship is a serious affection; the most sublime of all affections, because it is founded on principle, and cemented by time” (100). This definition of friendship, key to marriage as well, is reminiscent of the model of Smithian sympathy where it is “a mode of relating to others and of defining a self” (Ablow 2). Until she reaches Lowood, Jane had not had the benefit of socializing with peers, and her sense of self and opinions still fluctuate depending on others’ reactions to her. In becoming Helen’s friend, Jane learns to engage in the sympathetic process and become both the object and subject in the sympathetic exchange. Jane watches Helen’s punishment at the hands of an unjust teacher and claims, “her sight seems turned in, gone down into her heart: she is looking at what she can remember” (Brontë 113). Helen is the opposite of Jane because she accepts punishment and uses it as an opportunity for reflection.

However, when Jane is forced by the headmaster Reverend Brocklehurst to stand alone on a stool in front of the school, Helen shows her the importance of resistance too. The narrator comments that while Jane is on the stool, “a girl came up and passed me: in passing, she lifted her eyes. What a strange light inspired them! What an extraordinary sensation that ray sent through me! She smiled at me as she again went by I know that it was the effluence of

fine intellect, of true courage” (130). This is a courageous act of kindness and sympathy on Helen’s part because Brocklehurst has demanded that Jane be shunned and ignored, which Helen quietly refuses to do. Helen’s small act of defiance, founded on Wollstonecraft’s “principle” (100) in friendship, shows Jane that others can care for and believe in her honest character. Helen’s eye contact, essential to the sympathetic exchange, demonstrates the first form of friendship Jane experiences. Jane claims an “extraordinary sensation” (Brontë 130) went through her at this small act of sympathy and rebellion. However, when she gets down from the stool, she says, “the spell by which I had been so far supported began to dissolve Now I wept: Helen Burns was not here; nothing sustained me” (132). Alone, Jane loses her ability to restrain her emotions, reverting back to the temper she had at Gateshead. Without Helen’s sympathetic connection, she has lost “the spell,” which is fellow-feeling and understanding, that supported her. Jane tells Helen that “if others don’t love me, I would rather die than live – I cannot bear to be solitary and hated” (133). Helen believes that Jane should think more of the love of God, but Jane says earlier “that is not enough” (133) for her. Jane knows she needs human connection in order to grow. As stated by Wollstonecraft, “friendship is a serious affection” (100), and it is necessary for children like Jane to develop and foster meaningful relationships. Her need for personal friendship and sympathy manifests at Lowood, and it carries into her later relationship with Rochester.

After being comforted by Helen, Jane begins to learn how to comfort others. She claims that after Helen helped her, Jane sensed “inexpressible sadness” in her, and she “momentarily forgot [her] own sorrows to yield to a vague concern for [Helen]” (134). This is a key moment in the sympathetic process for Jane. After finding a sympathetic listener, Jane is able to reverse the sympathetic process and be the sympathizer for Helen. Adam Smith notes that the object of

sympathy will “take pleasure ... in [reliving their grief], and, it is evident, are sensibly relieved by it; because the sweetness of [the listener’s] sympathy more than compensates the bitterness of that sorrow” (13). Jane encounters this in her exchange with Helen, as Helen provides sympathy that helps soothe Jane’s shame. Thus relieved, Jane can turn her attention to Helen, who needs a sympathetic listener as well. The night of Helen’s death, Jane sneaks into Miss Temple’s room determined to “embrace her [Helen] before she died – [Jane] must give her one last kiss, exchange with her one last word” (Brontë 145). The idea of losing such a good friend is overpowering, and Jane knows she wants to have one last conversation with her first friend. Jane assures her “no one will take me away” (147), and she falls asleep while Helen passes away. Jane provides Helen this last comfort before she dies and acts as a true friend to her. These two enjoy the “calm tenderness of friendship” (Wollstonecraft 56) in these last moments, and their sympathy with one another brings them a sense of peace and fulfillment. Helen is the first to show Jane the powers of sympathy and friendship, and their relationship expands Jane’s sympathetic education.

Jane’s need for a proper education as well as a sympathetic connection is manifested completely in her relationship with Miss Temple. Miss Temple proves formative to Jane’s education, sympathetic development, and understanding of equality. When Brocklehurst tells the school to “avoid [Jane’s] company, exclude her from your sports, and shut her out from your converse this girl is – a liar!” (Brontë 129), Jane is furious and ashamed. Brocklehurst has attempted to impose the same type of social isolation that Jane wanted to escape from at Gateshead. However, Miss Temple offers Jane a fair trial, and says, “we shall think you what you prove yourself to be” (134). This declaration offers Jane a chance to share her side of the story, and it outlines the way she can use her own abilities to gain the respect of others. Jane uses

more “subdued” (135) language to explain her history to Miss Temple, and it is important to recognize that Jane is restraining her emotions, not erasing them. Miss Temple’s kindness encourages her to control her emotions in the service of clarity and honesty, and Jane’s explanation embodies Wollstonecraft’s hope that education will “regulate the passions” (47).

Jane is then able to listen to Miss Temple and Helen Burns discuss different subjects. Elizabeth Gargano argues that, in this moment, “schoolgirl and school-mistress participate equally; lessons are replaced by conversation genuine learning is signaled by Jane’s passive silence” (73). Jane is observing a different style of learning and teaching in this moment, and this style is analogous to the type of domestic relationship Wollstonecraft desires between husbands and wives. Wollstonecraft believes the “calm tenderness of friendship, the confidence of respect” (56) are what should follow the initial passionate love in a marriage, and this foundation will improve family life. Miss Temple and Helen’s conversation not only shows Jane the possibilities of education, but also the potential for respect and friendship between two educated people. She sees them engaging as almost equals in knowledge, and she is in awe of their education and respect for each other.

After observing this style of learning, Jane later explains she had “a fondness for some of my studies and a desire to excel in all, together with a great delight in pleasing my teachers” (Brontë 149-150). She also says, “to [Miss Temple’s] instruction I owed the best part of my acquirements ... she had stood me in the stead of a mother, governess, and latterly, companion” (150). Miss Temple’s example of equality, fairness, and kindness helps Jane get her education and eventually teach herself. Wollstonecraft believes that “to spur their faculties [children] should be excited to think for themselves; and this can only be done by mixing a number of children together, and making them jointly pursue the same objects” (188). Under Miss Temple’s

tutelage, Jane and other students gain this type of knowledge at Lowood, and they are able to enjoy the process of learning. Gargano further claims that “Miss Temple’s assumption of the parental role fosters an instruction that elides disciplinary boundaries and educates Jane’s intellect and affections simultaneously” (72). Miss Temple’s actions show that creating a sympathetic connection between teacher and student helps encourage learning. She shows Jane sympathy and fairness, and in return sees Jane become a better student and, eventually, friend. Jane’s early life shows a transition from a spotty education and lack of love from the Reed family to the ability to sympathize with and learn from her equals at Lowood.

With a sympathetic education underway and a multitude of skills learned at school, Jane becomes a teacher at Lowood, and then a governess. Wollstonecraft argued that there are benefits to women being involved in work outside the home and learning beyond simple domestic tasks. She says, “in the middle rank of life ... men, in their youth, are prepared for professions, and marriage is not considered as the grand feature in their lives; whilst women, on the contrary, have no other scheme to sharpen their faculties” (87). Brontë’s heroine takes this to the next level by entering adulthood without any dreams of marriage, just of independence. Instead of wanting to become a married, dependent woman, Jane wants to use her middle-class teaching skills in other settings as a way to earn her own income and see the world. Jane’s transition into an independent governess brings up many questions about class. Mary Poovey argues that the position of governess was fraught with complexities because she simultaneously represented “the middle-class ideal she was meant to reproduce” in teaching middle-class children and “the sexualized and often working-class women against whom she was expected to defend” (131). This poses a nearly impossible situation for governesses and shows the problems Victorians had with the idea of governesses. Godfrey argues that Jane’s transition to governess is

an important development in the text's subversion of gender, since governesses served as a hole in the invisible wall between working-class and middle-class gender identities. As governess, Jane bridges the gap between the dangerous androgyny of working-class homogeneity and the fragile stability of middle-class separate spheres. (857)

Godfrey's analysis suggests that Jane will occupy a liminal position in the middle-class household as a governess with potentially working-class origins. Godfrey's overall argument claims that Jane uses notions of femininity and androgyny to her advantage throughout the novel, and that her use of each class' rhetoric at strategic points allows her to control her decisions. In this case, becoming a private governess will help Jane accomplish her goals of seeing new places and meeting new people. Jane must work to survive and becoming a governess will allow her more financial and emotional freedom. Instead of following the traditional route, according to Wollstonecraft, of living at home and waiting for marriage, Jane happily embarks on a similar form of preparation for work to men in the middle classes.

When she arrives at Thornfield, Jane must navigate teaching her young female pupil, Adele, who is at risk of becoming the frivolous woman that Wollstonecraft dislikes. Jane embarks on the Wollstonecraftian idea of education to help "sharpen the senses, form the temper, regulate the passions as they begin to ferment, and set the understanding to work" (47) of young Adele. This is precisely the type of education that the Reeds denied Jane, and she is determined to help Adele avoid becoming a coquettish woman. Wollstonecraft claims that "novels, music, poetry, and gallantry, all tend to make women the creatures of sensation, and their character is thus formed in the mould of folly during the time they are acquiring accomplishments, the only improvement they are excited, by their station in society, to acquire" (88). Wollstonecraft believes such women will become "troublesome" (88) with this kind of education, and she

worries they will focus too much on sensation. Young Adele performs these attributes, first singing, then reciting poetry, and then stating she would dance for Jane (Brontë 169-170). According to Wollstonecraft, Adele's enjoyment of performing accomplishments would deter her from pursuing a serious education. Jane observes that Adele was "sufficiently docile, though disinclined to apply: she had not been used to regular occupation of any kind" (171). Jane, having been educated on a rigorous schedule herself, plans to slowly integrate more serious study into Adele's life and structures her lessons gradually. She does not pamper Adele too much and is happy with her progress into an "obedient and teachable" child (177).

Jane claims she is "not writing to flatter parental egotism" (177), which is a concern Wollstonecraft holds about children's education. Wollstonecraft has specific fears about schools that manipulate mothers and fathers "whose parental affection only leads them to wish that their children should outshine those of their neighbours" (194). Jane appears to address this directly in her comments about the "cool language" (Brontë 177) she uses to discuss Adele, and she shows that there are more effective and sympathetic ways to encourage children's learning than just focusing on rivalry. Poovey argues that the novel purposely "idealiz[es] her [Jane's] work" (137) to avoid certain issues within governess work, but I believe Brontë purposely shows Jane's sympathetic, rational teaching approach as effective in order to demonstrate the proper way for a governess to treat a female pupil according to Wollstonecraft's advice. Jane's lack of flattery will allow her to educate Adele rationally, and it will keep the child from turning into the type of vain coquette Wollstonecraft fears.

After making progress with Adele, Jane confronts another challenge in the form of the child's guardian, Mr. Rochester. From their first meeting, Jane and Rochester understand that they have each encountered a unique mind. Nancy Armstrong has argued that for Rochester,

“Jane represents a desire so highly personalized that it can be understood only through the force it exerts on the social surface of experience. It defies explanation in terms of any rational and worldly motive” (194). While Rochester’s desire for Jane does seem strange to readers at first, I believe it makes sense when read with Wollstonecraft’s notion of friendship-based marriage in mind. As a love object, Jane is not a traditionally aristocratic woman like Blanche or a sexualized coquette like Bertha, but she embodies a new form of middle-class desire entirely. Jane’s rivals represent other forms of traditional womanhood, but Brontë creates a completely unique emotional bond between Jane and Rochester. When Jane first sees him, she says, “I felt no fear of him, and but little shyness The frown, the roughness of the traveller set me at my ease” (Brontë 182-183). She appreciates that he is not full of airs and graces, and her lack of fear and shyness immediately surprises Rochester. She does not flatter or submit to him, instead assertively standing by to offer assistance.

After this strange first encounter, they continue their unique way of speaking to each other. His tone is rough and abrupt, which she believes “gave [her] the advantage” in its “eccentricity” (190). Already, Jane is engaging in her previous habits of active watching to decide the best way to interact with and understand him, not how to best submit to his problematic “freak of manner” (ibid). He tells her he “marvelled where [she] had got that sort of face” (192), and asks short, deliberate questions about her personal history. Politeness is not part of their discussion style, and he is openly critical of things like her paintings. He later claims she is “singular” in the “if not blunt ... at least brusque” way she speaks to him, and he asks her to “criticize” (203) him. She does engage with him, but she refuses to speak just for his entertainment. She recognizes what Cora Kaplan identifies as “the aestheticized and artificial language of the ruling class” (170), and like Wollstonecraft would want, she refuses to partake in

it. She continues with her plain speaking despite his demands for convoluted conversation. She notes that he “seemed to dive into my eyes” (Brontë 205) after he tells her to speak, and he later tells her he “is quick at interpreting [her eyes’] language” (207). Jane’s watchfulness was feared by the Reeds, but Rochester confidently questions and returns her gaze. He matches her watchfulness and encourages a more equal discussion based on her observations.

Their increasingly friendly connection becomes significant to Jane’s happiness. Wollstonecraft argues that women should try “to become the friends” (30) of men around them instead of dependants, and the early friendship between Jane and Rochester signals their potential for a naturally friendship-based marriage. Jane happily reflects that she “really possessed the power to amuse him” and that “the friendly frankness, as correct as cordial, with which he treated me, drew me to him. I felt at times, as if he were my relation” (Brontë 219). While not overtly romantic at first, this type of male-female friendship is unknown to Jane. She has had Helen Burns and Miss Temple as close friends before, but Rochester’s demeanour and terms of friendship are new to her. Lara Freeburg Kees has noted that “Jane’s *feeling* dictates that Rochester is something like herself, and she insists on a common point of origin by calling him her ‘relation.’ She takes up this notion of original unity over and over again when referring to Rochester” (882). Kees studies how different versions of sympathy operated in the nineteenth century as a way to explain the connection between Jane and Rochester in ways outside of traditional religion and morality (873). Here, Kees suggests that Jane uses a version of sympathy to show how she and Rochester have a natural connection with each other. They are not afraid to assert their opinions or engage in equal discussions because they already feel akin to each other. The night that Bertha sets fire to Rochester’s room, Jane feels “surges of joy” (Brontë 225) after saving his life, and he mentions his belief in “natural sympathies” (224). The near-death

experience allows them to move to a new level of connection, where he holds her hand and has a “strange energy” (225). These moments develop their connection, and their “natural sympathies” move them beyond their friendly employer/employee status. Contrary to Armstrong’s assertion that Rochester’s attraction to Jane cannot be explained (194), I argue that these feelings of equality and respect make his desire for Jane seem completely natural and warranted. Their early interactions demonstrate how Brontë uses her characters to create a modern version of the Wollstonecraftian rational, friendship-based model of marriage.

However, Blanche Ingram’s existence, and her later appearance at Thornfield, place her in direct comparison with Jane in terms of their performances of British womanhood. After hearing about Blanche’s beauty and accomplishments from Mrs. Fairfax, Jane acknowledges her “hopes, wishes, sentiments” (Brontë 236) regarding Rochester, and is severe on herself for her feelings. She asks herself, “he said something in praise of your eyes, did he? Blind puppy! It does good to no woman to be flattered by her superior” (237). She dismisses her hopes as foolish, even though her interactions with Rochester thus far have signalled a growing, equal connection. Her secret, solitary love calls to mind Wollstonecraft again, who warns against women not giving serious thought to their love interests. She claims, “solitude and reflection are necessary to give wishes the force of passions, and to enable the imagination to enlarge the object, and make it the most desirable” (85). Wollstonecraft says this to explain that women who are always in groups need time for isolated reflection in order to fully comprehend their feelings, but Brontë flips this idea to show how solitude can be an enemy to understanding. Jane is constantly alone and enjoys her lone wanderings, which has allowed her passion for Rochester to grow exorbitantly. To subdue it, she uses an aspect of her formal education (painting) to reason herself back into her position. Her drawings of herself and Blanche “kept [her] head and hands

employed, and had given force and fixedness to the new impressions [she] wished to stamp indelibly on [her] heart” (Brontë 238). She thrives in her work, and she uses her abilities to restrain her feelings. She becomes calmer and more controlled in the weeks after doing this, and she is able to observe the Thornfield party more objectively. When she reaches Rochester, however, she says she “had an acute pleasure in looking” (252) at him. She has returned to her role as invisible observer, but she now gets pleasure from watching and knowing him to be superior to other men, describing her watching as “pure gold, with a steely point of agony” (252). She later says she has “something in my brain and heart, in my blood and nerves, that assimilates me mentally to him” (253). She draws on the natural sympathetic language discussed earlier by Kees in asserting their bodily connection. Despite her understanding of Rochester, Jane must keep her feelings secret.

This section of the novel also demonstrates how Jane recognizes the significant differences between herself and Blanche. Early in her treatise, Wollstonecraft asks women to excuse her for treating “them like rational creatures, instead of flattering their *fascinating* graces” (31). Her request here illustrates the main difference between Jane and Blanche: one is rational, and one is fascinating. Jane recognizes social expectations as an impediment to Rochester’s own happiness when she believes he will marry Blanche “for family, perhaps political reasons; because her rank and connexions suited him” (Brontë 265). Jane sees the class-based reasons to marry a woman like Blanche, and she also knows her own background would make marriage awkward for herself. However, despite their class differences, Jane says, “Miss Ingram was a mark beneath jealousy: she was too inferior to excite the feeling She was very showy, but she was not genuine: she had a fine person, many brilliant attainments, but her mind was poor, her heart barren by nature” (264). McKee suggests that Jane’s remarks serve as a way to set herself

up as a moral superior to Blanche. McKee notes that “Jane’s observations read morality into bodily signs, abstracting the meaning of what these show into a taxonomy of racialized class attributes. She both abstracts Blanche from her situation and insists that the ‘dark’ Blanche cannot practice this abstraction” (76). Jane’s first-person observations of Blanche associate the latter with a darker physical appearance and show Jane has a bias against her. She assumes Blanche does not have the capacity to reach the same moral level as her and attributes this inability to her class and aristocratic qualities. Jane knows it is a “paradox” (Brontë 264) to see Blanche as inferior, but she also reflects the ideas held by Wollstonecraft. Blanche’s beauty and accomplishments have made her selfish, and Wollstonecraft notes “the sexual attention of man particularly acts on female sensibility, and this sympathy has been exercised from their youth up vanity is oftener fostered than sensibility by the mode of education” (92). Blanche has been admired for her beauty and accomplishments for many years, and it has made her vain and often rude to those beneath her.

Furthermore, Jane notes that “to watch Miss Ingram’s efforts at fascinating Mr. Rochester” (Brontë 265) was difficult because she felt she could have done better. She herself knows she can make him happy in their conversations, but Blanche fails continuously. Blanche’s attempt at “fascination,” a word used by both Brontë and Wollstonecraft, shows the aim of a traditional education for wealthy women. Jane never attempts to fascinate or flatter anyone, but Blanche continually tries to use her “fascinating graces” (Wollstonecraft 31) to impress Rochester. Jane understands that “all their class held these principles” of marrying for “interest and connexions” (Brontë 266). Here, she dissociates her own class position from that of Rochester and Blanche, and she acknowledges she would marry for different reasons. Chris Bossche notes that Jane’s “narrative strategically deploys the languages of class as a means of

constituting contingent identities capable of dealing with the dilemmas her circumstances present to her as she seeks to achieve autonomy, kinship, and social inclusion” (56). Her thoughts on marriage are part of this strategy as Jane separates herself from the upper classes as a form of self-protection, but also as a way to conceptualize herself as a better, more equal partner for Rochester. Instead of learning to be a “rational creature” (Wollstonecraft 31), Blanche has only been “taught to please” (53) while Jane has learned to be virtuous, honest, and caring.

After he disguises himself as a gypsy and discovers the fundamental differences between Jane and Blanche, Rochester resumes his friendship with Jane. When Jane tells him of his secret brother-in-law Mason’s arrival, he tells her, “I’ve got a blow, Jane!” (Brontë 284) and “holding [her] hand in both his own, he chafed it” (ibid). Like the night of the fire, he leans on his “little friend” (284) for emotional support and initiates physical contact. Their friendship and trust in each other have resumed, but Rochester continues to tease and test her. Jane enjoys her independent situation, where she has not been “trampled on” (337), as well as her relationship with Rochester. She asks him, “do you think, because I am poor, obscure, pale, and little, I am soulless and heartless? I have as much soul as you it is my spirit that addresses your spirit” (338). Her questions reflect Wollstonecraft’s desire for “equality” (82) between marriage partners. Jane believes he is being callous with her feelings, and she asserts her rights to equality in spirit. She may be of a different class, but she knows she is his friend and equal in everything else. She says he has “no sympathy” (Brontë 338) with Blanche, which she believes is essential to marriage. Kees analyzes Jane’s reaction, saying:

Jane uses ‘inferior’ again to describe Blanche, and she combines her qualitative ideal with Rochester's understanding of ‘sympathy.’ She effectively translates her idea of meritocratic love for him in terms of sympathy by first telling him that Blanche is his

inferior and then proving her inferiority through his own felt lack of sympathy with Blanche The two ostensibly negotiate a way around the class system, one based on internal merit or sympathy. (887)

Kees' analysis shows how Jane navigates her relationship with Rochester. Jane uses their system of conversation and their friendship-based equality with each other to discuss how sympathy operates. She shows that the form of sympathy they have with each other is better than his class-based connection with Blanche, and their sympathetic connection will better serve them both. With real, natural sympathy, they can have a successful marriage. He claims, "my equal is here, and my likeness" (339). His word choice shows that equality and similarity are not always the same, but that in Jane he has found both. He claims she is his true equal, as she asserts earlier, but also that they are alike in personality and character.

However, as their engagement shows, she is not truly his equal yet. She says he has "strange gleams in the eyes" (340) as he is proposing, and he then talks about defying the "world's judgment" (341) in his marriage choice. The energy of this proposal is still controlling and overly passionate. Brontë sees a place for passion in a marriage, but not when it is paired with uncontrollable or manipulative feelings. Wollstonecraft argues that passion is not a feeling that should continue forever into a marriage, saying, "in order to fulfil the duties of life, and to be able to pursue with vigour the various employments which form the moral character, a master and mistress of a family ought not to continue to love each other with passion" (56). Her idea of passion here relates to the intense romantic feelings at the beginning of a courtship. If Rochester and Jane had married, or lived together without being married, Wollstonecraft's fears may have been accurate. This proposal is too passionate and possessive, and the intensity of their feelings is overpowering. Rochester is more controlling after they are engaged, and Jane feels "a sense of

annoyance and degradation” (Brontë 354) when he tries to give her expensive clothes above her class expectations. She also despises his reference to her replacing a “seraglio” (355).

Wollstonecraft herself makes a similar reference, claiming married women “dress; they paint, and nickname God’s creatures. – Surely these weak beings are only fit for a seraglio!” (32). Jane is the total opposite of these “weak beings.” She is a unique heroine in her desire to remain plain and independent. She refuses to give any illusion of grandeur or enjoyment of intense wealth, instead stopping all efforts to turn her into a more traditional, fine, vain lady.

After the discovery of Bertha, Jane knows she must leave Rochester, but she fears leaving him “decidedly, instantly, entirely” (Brontë 387). Their unique form of sympathy, based on equality and honesty, has given her the type of friendship she has always wanted. She refuses to act as his mistress, and she “felt an inward power; a sense of influence, which supported me” (393). Here, her desire for independence and self-worth outweighs her desire for Rochester. She knows their sympathetic connection would wane if she stayed with him in their present condition, and she feels “power” in her quiet denial of his ideas of living together. She knows she cannot be “the successor of these poor girls” that Rochester has lived with before her, the girls he knows are “inferior” (403) to him in the same way as Blanche. When faced with this difficult choice, she says to herself, “*I care for myself. The more solitary, the more friendless, the more unsustained I am, the more I will respect myself*” (408). She now understands what it means to have complete independence and freedom from temptation. Hirschmann and Regier claim Wollstonecraft believed that if women “properly appraised their competing desires and prioritized their more important purposes, they would make different life choices, consonant with their truer, higher selves” (651). Jane appraises these desires in this moment and acts in the way she believes is more honourable. Instead of choosing the love of other human beings, Jane

realizes the importance of love for herself. The narrator Jane says, “my eye rose to his; and while I looked in his fierce face, I gave an involuntary sigh: his grip was painful, and my overtaken strength almost exhausted” (Brontë 409). They are engaging in their own form of the sympathetic exchange, where Jane is demanding understanding from Rochester about her morality and independence. Her defiant eye contact shows him she is “indomitable” (ibid). Jane’s transition from fiancée to wanderer demonstrates her Wollstonecraftian desire for independence and self-worth. Brontë’s heroine is once again reliant on her education and sympathetic abilities, and she understands for the first time just how important and valuable these skills are.

After wandering for days, Jane finds comfort, friendship, and resiliency in the company of the Rivers family. She discovers friendship and care from others, similar to the care she and Helen Burns provided each other, and she is able to make uninhibited choices given to her by her education and her sympathetic abilities. Jane feels an immediate connection with the Rivers family as she watches from outside the window, as she “seemed intimate with every lineament [of their faces]” (424). She can sense that they are kind and caring people, and when Diana feeds her, Jane says, “there was pity in [her face], and I felt sympathy in her hurried breathing” (429). Like on the occasions of her arrivals at Lowood and Thornfield, Jane discovers that there are kind strangers in the world, and that she has the power to earn their respect and love. The Rivers siblings note that “she is not an uneducated person,” but they sense she has gone through “strange hardships” (432). These accurate initial readings of Jane’s situation create further sympathy with her plight. The Rivers sisters treat her as a guest in their home, and they feel “curiosity” (440) about her situation. St. John, however, has less sympathy and more expectations. Jane notes multiple times that his “firm and piercing look” (440) demanded

information from her about her situation, even bringing her to “tears as well as colour” (ibid) with his emotionally difficult questions. When compared to Rochester, who would never willingly bring Jane to tears, the unsympathetic St. John appears to require them to improve their relationship. Despite his honourable profession, Jane senses a “strange bitterness; an absence of consolatory gentleness” (446) in him. Although she has found family, her relationship with St. John remains less sympathetic.

However, Jane happily takes up his offer to be a village school mistress in order to further secure her independence. She knows it is “humble – but then it was sheltered ... it was plodding ... [but] independent” (450). Much like her move from Lowood to Thornfield, Jane needs a new environment and a renewed sense of autonomy. She respects the shelter and the freedom even more after her time at Thornfield, and this position will use her abilities in a new way. She initially laments the “ignorance, the poverty, the coarseness” (ibid) of her students, but she knows she needs to change her attitude in order to see their improvement and happiness. She later notes “there was a difference amongst them as amongst the educated” (462), and sees they were “obliging, and amiable too; and I discovered amongst them not a few examples of natural politeness, and innate self-respect, as well as of excellent capacity” (ibid). Her acknowledgement of her students’ differences shows readers that learning ability is not unique to the middle- and upper-classes; Jane’s students have as much natural talent as she did at a young age. Indeed, Jane just needed to support her students like Miss Temple supported her. She creates a reversed “hole in the invisible wall between working-class and middle-class gender identities” (Godfrey 857) by bringing her middle-class education and experience to working-class girls, helping them “[acquire] quiet and orderly manners” (Brontë 462). Jane asks herself if it is better “to be a slave in a fool’s paradise at Marseilles – fevered with delusive bliss one hour – suffocating with the

bitterest tears of remorse and shame the next – or to be a village-schoolmistress, free and honest, in a breezy mountain nook in the healthy heart of England?” (455). She acknowledges that despite the challenges, it is better to be free and alone than tethered as an unhappy mistress. Wollstonecraft says that women have “chosen rather to be short-lived queens than labour to obtain the sober pleasures that arise from equality” (82). Here, Jane has chosen to work for “sober pleasures” instead of becoming Rochester’s “queen.” She uses her reason and sense of morality to make her choice, and thanks God for helping her listen to “principle and law” (Brontë 455). Her choice to teach gives her the continued independence she needs to survive.

Jane’s happy independence is further developed when she discovers she is an heiress. Wollstonecraft claims that too much sensibility⁷ in a woman “prevents intellect from attaining that sovereignty which it ought to attain to render a rational creature useful to others, and content with its own station” (88). Jane’s contentment is tested here when she discovers her inheritance. Instead of being ruled by excitement and using her fortune to raise her class position, Jane is thrilled to know she has a fortune that could “free [the Rivers]” and “reunite them” (Brontë 483). She has equality now with a set of people who care for and love her, which is wholly different from the power struggles she felt in her engagement to Rochester. When she is told that she is the sole inheritor, she sarcastically says to St. John, “Brother? Yes; at the distance of a thousand leagues! Sisters? Yes; slaving among strangers! I, wealthy – gorged with gold I never earned and do not merit ... Famous equality and fraternization!” (485). Her speech here shows that her belief in equality extends to the financial aspects of life. She indicated earlier that she wanted an

⁷ Wollstonecraft defines sensibility as the word used to describe when “[women’s] senses are inflamed, and their understandings neglected, consequently they become the prey of their senses ... and are blown about by every momentary gust of feeling” (88). She does not approve of women allowing impulsive feelings to govern their actions.

independent life and source of income, and she shows here that she is not greedy. She wants to assist her family instead of making others feel dependent and isolated as she felt with the Reeds. She becomes an apt manager and member of the Rivers household, and her championing of equality and family over selfishness makes her a contemporary version of the Wollstonecraftian mother and manager. Her newly independent life, complete with financial comfort for all around her, makes her desire for human connection even more achievable. She tells St. John, “I want my kindred: those with whom I have full fellow-feeling” (486). She has finally discovered relations who want to share her sense of fellow-feeling. With her equal distribution of fortune and her refurbishment of Moor House, Jane demonstrates to her cousins just how important friendship is to her. The Rivers family gives Jane a different type of sympathetic connection and familial love that brings her happiness.

St. John, however, pushes Jane beyond any kind of sympathetic, equal relationship. In addition to believing husbands and wives should be equal friends, Wollstonecraft also argues they should “allow friendship and love to temper the heart for the discharge of higher duties” (200). St. John’s call to Jane to become a missionary’s wife could be construed as a higher duty, but Brontë uses this proposal to show that higher duties are not exclusive to religion. Jane claims that “he acquired a certain influence over [her] that took away [her] liberty of mind” (Brontë 496). Despite her love of independence, her relationship with St. John begins to slowly take this away. When he asks her to marry him and become his “help-meet and fellow-labourer” (501), Jane says “have some mercy!” (ibid). She knows this type of marriage would not be one of equals. She knows it would be a form of work to marry and please him “till my sinews ache” (503), and her idea of an equal, companionate marriage does not fit this model. She asks herself if she can marry and “know that the spirit was quite absent? Can I bear the consciousness that

every endearment he bestows is a sacrifice made on principle?" (504). Jane knows she needs the "spirit," as she calls it, of romantic, equal love as she received from Rochester, not the type of demanding, controlling care St. John provides. James Phillips argues that "it is Christian duty against which Jane finds she must struggle It falls to Rochester to answer [the proposal] for her It is not to the temptation of Christian duty that Jane (and Charlotte) has an answer, but to the respectability of loveless marriage" (208). His analysis reflects Wollstonecraft's idea of higher duties in marriage; Phillips sees Brontë as questioning what exactly constitutes a higher duty. Jane receives this offer of a "loveless marriage" tied to a Christian duty, and she cannot accept it. She knows St. John could not love her in the way she needs. When he pressures her again, she says she was tempted "to rush down the torrent of his will into the gulf of his existence, and there lose my own. I was almost as hard beset by him now as I had been once before, in a different way, by another" (Brontë 518). Once again, Jane is given the option to give up her independence and be consumed by a man. However, her vision of Rochester and subsequent return show that she chose the correct form of duty to follow. Jane's time with the Rivers family allows her to exercise her sympathetic abilities as well as her education, but it also shows her an alternative type of marriage that was above or equal to the distress brought on by becoming a mistress. Jane once again chooses independence, this time with the financial and emotional support from Diana and Mary that she has wanted her whole life.

After Jane travels to Ferndean, she describes Rochester as a "caged eagle" (532), a reference that calls to mind her own claim of being a free "bird" (338). They have now both experienced the feeling of being trapped, which allows them to meet on more equal terms. He is thrilled by her return, and says, "my very soul demands you" (537). They return to their old way

of speaking, but Jane decides to give short, evasive answers about the Rivers, especially St. John. Godfrey argues this is a way for Jane to gain power over Rochester, saying,

Rochester's relationships with Bertha and Blanche contribute to his control of sexual and economic power, but Jane's marriage proposal from St. John Rivers completes the power reversal brought about by Rochester's loss of his estate, his social position, and his eyesight After Jane has returned to the blinded Rochester, but before her romantic interests in him are clear, Rochester must address his own fears of her power. (866)

His reactions to her relationship with St. John are entirely jealous, and it takes a while for Jane to reveal that she does not love St. John. Godfrey's analysis shows a way Jane was able to gain a new equal power in her relationship with Rochester. She has remained elusive but kind in her interactions, and he must come to terms with the power she now possesses in her return to him. When they begin to discuss marriage, he says, "I will abide by your decision" (Brontë 547). This is wholly different from his usual commanding tone with Jane. He now acknowledges their changed positions and respects her decision-making. He says, "I did wrong: I would have sullied my innocent flower – breathed guilt on its purity" (549). Rochester knows taking Jane as a mistress would have been a huge mistake, and her absence allowed him to reconcile with his faith and himself. Kees argues that, "in Jane and Rochester, we see the attempt to reinterpret the rules, especially when they rework the Judeo-Christian myths of Eden and heaven" (892). Their combined reaffirming faith helps them to return to each other, and their final marriage sounds Edenic. Jane says, "no woman was ever nearer to her mate than I am: ever more absolutely bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh we talk, I believe, all day long: to talk to each other is but a more animated and an audible thinking perfect concord is the result" (Brontë 554). Their

relationship has moved beyond the traditional sympathetic exchange, as they have become a familial unit based on respect, love, and equality.

The effectiveness of their marriage has been questioned by different scholars, but I believe it reflects an updated version of the marriage Wollstonecraft desires. For example, Lorri Nandrea asks if, through writing the autobiography, Jane is given “an opportunity to produce what this [novel’s] end excludes, to repeat the kind of experience that has been suppressed in the interests of achieving mastery” (123). In other words, Nandrea wonders if Jane has written this text to re-experience moments of heightened sensibility and emotion that she has had to repress in her married life. Nandrea believes this text shows the differences between sensibility and sympathy through moments that resist complete understanding, such as Jane’s return to Thornfield. While I agree with Nandrea that certain parts of Jane’s experience do not lend themselves to total understanding, I do believe that Brontë uses this ending to give an example of the Wollstonecraftian ideal marriage. Wollstonecraft claims:

But, we shall not see women affectionate till more equality be established in society, till ranks are confounded and women freed, neither shall we see that dignified domestic happiness, the simple grandeur of which cannot be relished by ignorant or vitiated minds; nor will the important task of education ever be properly begun till the person of a woman is no longer preferred to her mind. (223)

Jane fits this critique exactly. She establishes equality with Rochester through her financial and familial independence gained while she was in Moor House. She also establishes it by gaining and rejecting a potential romantic rival through whom she can see an alternative to Rochester’s style of courtship. She then gains “domestic happiness” with Rochester and their child, as well as by saving Adele from a harsh boarding school reminiscent of Lowood. With equality and

friendship created between herself and Rochester, Jane becomes a fully capable, kind, and caring mother and domestic manager. Jane's tale fulfills Wollstonecraft's ideal for a woman's education, meaningful employment, and equal marriage.

Thus far, I have not discussed Bertha Mason's character in-depth, but her presence is key to Jane's transformation. Jane would not have been able to gain the independence and sympathetic education she receives at Thornfield, Moor House, and Ferndean without Bertha having first experienced many of Rochester's personal failings. Bertha's position in the text acts problematically as a way to demonstrate the superiority of Jane's personality and education. Jane learns about the importance of a strictly regulated passion within marriage by observing Bertha and her fate. Bertha represents the problem with overt, coquettish sexuality, but whereas Wollstonecraft aligned the coquette with the excesses of the upper orders, Brontë ties it specifically to Bertha's racial and colonial difference. McKee argues that in this novel, "white persons exercise and cultivate spirit and free will; dark persons' contamination is sensual and involuntary" (72). While Jane is permitted to grow and become a moral centre in the novel, McKee shows that Bertha is seen as too sensual and capable of contaminating Rochester's own Englishness. Bertha and Rochester's relationship illustrates the detriments of too much passion and sensuality within a courtship and marriage, so much so that the threat of sexuality prompts Rochester to lock up his wife. Jane learns the importance of correcting his behaviour within her own sympathetic, equal marriage; otherwise, she would have married him the first time and become a controlled and sexualized wife herself.

Bertha's racialized physicality and exaggerated sexuality are apparent in most descriptions of her. When describing his marriage to Bertha, for example, Rochester says she was "tall, dark, and majestic. Her family wished to secure me, because I was of a good race; and

so did she she flattered me, and lavishly displayed for my pleasure her charms and accomplishments ... I was dazzled, stimulated: my senses were excited” (Brontë 395). His early encounters with Bertha are exactly what Wollstonecraft writes about. He says Bertha displayed excellent “charms and accomplishments,” and that he did not have much “private conversation” (ibid) with her. Wollstonecraft disapproves of the “trivial attentions” (84) men pay to women, and says, “the woman who has only been taught to please will soon find that her charms are oblique sunbeams, and that they cannot have much effect on her husband’s heart when they are seen every day, when the summer is passed and gone” (53). Bertha’s ability to affect Rochester’s senses does not last after they are married, which shows the difference between Bertha and Jane. Jane never attempted to charm or dazzle anyone, but according to Rochester, charm and sensuality are all Bertha displays. He claims her “nature [was] wholly alien to mine” (Brontë 396), unlike his professed “natural sympathies” with Jane. Nicole Diederich further argues that Bertha’s fortune and appearance “demonstrate the capitalist element of desire more so than love: Rochester and his family vie for Bertha as a bride, framing her more as an object to be gained within a system of marketplace competition and less as an individual to be valued within the domestic sphere” (3). This assessment matches some issues Wollstonecraft would have had with this marriage. Rochester’s family was interested in her fortune, but Rochester himself is interested in her sexuality and charms. Instead of looking for a wife who is equally intelligent and useful, Rochester looks instead for a valuable “object” to become his wife.

The language Rochester uses to describe Bertha is also significant when looking at her place in their marriage. Diederich argues that their marriage story shows “differing levels of education that would lead to a different level of conversational ability. ‘Obnoxious,’ ‘alien,’ ‘common, low, narrow,’ ‘incapable,’ ‘coarse,’ ‘trite’ - these words not only demonize Bertha but

also convey Rochester's expectation for a wife: if she fails to satisfy him, that wife is dismissed linguistically and physically” (6-7). These words align Bertha with a lower, colonial class in her described sexual desires and lack of taste. His language choice works to elevate Jane’s middle-class station and upbringing above those of Bertha, despite her wealth and appearance. The novel sets up Bertha as mad, perhaps to create sympathy for Jane and to morally allow her to marry Rochester later, but Diederich suggests that education was a factor in Rochester’s hatred for Bertha. Jane is not only middle-class and educated according to English curricula, but also sympathetic and understanding of others. She receives a nuanced education in sympathy from her relationships, and the novel suggests Bertha receives neither a sympathetic education nor a rationality-based English one as Wollstonecraft would want. Kees also notes that “Brontë loads Rochester’s speech with three concepts that recur throughout *Jane Eyre* – those of sympathy, ‘nature,’ and ‘kind.’ Bertha Mason is ‘alien’ to Rochester, and he begins to suggest that they are of different races (or even species) by referring to their lack of ‘kindly conversation’” (880). According to Kees, being of different races or species would have precluded true sympathetic connection at this time. Kees claims this concept was used by colonizers at the time to sympathize selectively with slaves in order to retain white people’s power of giving sympathy (877). This type of selective sympathy gives Rochester the power to decide with whom he will extend the power of his own sympathy, which is evidently not his racialized wife. Their early marriage shows signs of how she would be inhumanely treated later.

When Bertha is locked up in Thornfield, her interactions with Jane hold significance. Jane has several run-ins with her, whether it is hearing her “curious laugh; distinct, formal, mirthless” (Brontë 175) on Jane’s first day at Thornfield or “a demoniac laugh” (221) when Bertha sets Rochester’s bed on fire. All of these instances are attributed to Grace Poole, but

actually signify the confinement of Bertha on the third story of Thornfield. Deanna Kreisel asks, “why do we insistently relocate poor Bertha, already so maltreated, from a well-heated and decently furnished third-story room to a blank and featureless space outside human habitation?” (“The Madwoman ...”102). Kreisel’s argument situates Bertha as having her own space within Thornfield, but Jane’s situation as a potential alternate wife to Rochester shows the threat she poses to Bertha’s life. The presence of the other is a threat to them both, but Bertha lacks the independence and British education Jane possesses that would help her escape and be successful in England.

Jane vacillates between describing Bertha in racialized terms and exhibiting sympathy with her situation. Jane says Bertha was “tall and large, with thick and dark hair” (Brontë 370) and with “a discoloured face – it was a savage face ... red eyes and the fearful blackened inflation of the lineaments” (371). Her description sounds both sexual and monstrous, and further creates a distance between Jane’s plain English self and Bertha’s foreign self. McKee claims that Bertha’s self “is identified with material corruption: not only is her body swollen and purple, but she also contributes to a corruption of the spirit that ensues when material considerations – both Rochester’s interest in Bertha’s fortune and his own sensuality – overpower his judgment and cause him to marry her” (71). Where Jane is the influence that saves Rochester, Bertha is the apparent cause of his downfall. This is how she is associated with a racialized identity in Brontë’s hierarchy of women’s values in marriage. As a potentially corrupting and material-focused influence, Bertha poses a symbolic threat to Jane’s morality and even Blanche’s aristocratic wealth and stature. When Bertha tears Jane’s veil in half, she commits an act of rebellion against her replacement. Diederich claims, “while Rochester’s attempt at bigamy violates Jane, he also perpetuates a symbolic and physical violence against Bertha, whom Jane

would replace, or double” (2). Bertha’s tearing of the veil could be read as rebelling against Jane’s potential place as a doppelganger wife (8-9) or it could be her attempt to protect Jane from a similar fate. Either way, it shows that Bertha will not be subjugated forever.

Rochester uses offensive language to describe his wife, but Jane does not support his choice of language. She later says to him, “you speak of her with hate – with vindictive antipathy. It is cruel – she cannot help being mad” (Brontë 391). Jane expresses sympathy for Bertha and her situation, and she blames Rochester for being mean when describing his wife. Diederich notes that “Jane’s capacity for sympathy for a rival who has sought to harm both her and her beloved not only undercuts Rochester’s depiction of Bertha, but also emphasizes the connection between the two women created by Rochester’s remarriage attempt” (9). Jane herself felt trapped during her engagement to Rochester when he compares her to a member of a seraglio, just as Bertha is trapped in Thornfield. Both women become objects for him to possess. The difference is that Bertha cannot escape her confinement. Rochester, seeing Jane as independent, “consents” (Brontë 410) to her leaving his presence, but Bertha has a guard and remains confined to the house. Rochester respects Jane’s independence and faculties much more than he respects his wife’s.

Bertha’s death in the Thornfield fire is what allows for the final marriage of Jane and Rochester. The innkeeper explains that Bertha set a fire in the room next to her, “and then ... made her way to the chamber that had been the governess’s ... and she kindled the bed there” (528). Much like the veil tearing, Bertha sets these fires as an act of rebellion against Jane and/or Rochester. Although Jane is not there, the symbolism of burning her bed shows she was sexually threatened by Jane. The innkeeper further explains that after Bertha set the house on fire, Rochester tried to save her, but she jumped away from him and died (529). This description

makes Rochester's final interaction with his wife look like an act of care, but this is one of few moments he acted from that motive. Kreisel suggests, "yes, Bertha burns down the house, but the house is what kills her" ("The Madwoman ..."112). Bertha's imprisonment inside Thornfield is what leads to her early death. Kees claims, "Brontë settles for a kind of unity of two, forming a system of lovers closed against a divisive world" (892) at the end of the novel, but it is important that it is a unity of two seemingly equal lovers. Jane learns from the mistakes Rochester made with Bertha to create her own marriage. The only way Jane could escape Rochester's control was by understanding the issues he had with Bertha and using her own abilities to change their own dynamic. Her escape is how she finds her sympathetic, supportive family. Then, she can return freely to Rochester. The existence of Bertha allows for Jane to learn from the mistakes of Rochester's first marriage and develop her own equal, and distinctly middle-class, marriage.

Brontë's novel embodies and expands on many of the ideas put forth by Mary Wollstonecraft five decades earlier. Her heroine is able to achieve the equal, companionate marriage Wollstonecraft advocated for, but her novel takes Wollstonecraft a step further by creating several foils to Jane. These women are all controlled by Rochester to some degree, but the nuances of their relationships are what drive the novel. Bertha is the unfortunate victim, according to the Wollstonecraftian idea, of a faulty education. Her position in the text is sexualized and racialized in order to show the superiority of Jane's self-regulation and plain physical appearance, and more fundamentally, to reserve Wollstonecraft's model exclusively for white British women of the middle class. Rochester marries Bertha for selfish, sensual reasons, and she suffers tremendously at Thornfield. Blanche by contrast embodies the calculating, social-climbing aristocratic bride in her attempts to charm Rochester with her accomplishments. She fails to do so, and she relents when she discovers his aristocratic lineage is not accompanied by

an aristocratic fortune. Jane, however, is educated to Wollstonecraft's standards, and is further able to sympathetically engage with Rochester. She uses her education and independent finances to make her own decisions and eventually become an equal marriage partner to Rochester.

Unlike *Emma*, which neatly ties together the marriage plot with an equal, socially appropriate marriage, Brontë's marriage plot further develops the idea of an equal marriage by creating foils to Jane's plain English womanhood. In order to realize Wollstonecraft's ideal woman, Brontë creates portraits of unideal women so that the ideal woman can fully understand the importance of sympathetic equality. Independence and equality in marriage have a price in Brontë's novel, and this strain of thought is key to future marriage plots to come in the Victorian period.

Chapter Three

“[Giving] strength out of her own scanty stock”: Sympathy and Caregiving in Elizabeth

Gaskell’s *North and South*

After the sympathetic educations and equalizing marriages of Austen’s *Emma* and Brontë’s *Jane Eyre*, Elizabeth Gaskell’s *North and South* creates a new form of the marriage plot that uniquely integrates the heavy burdens of sympathy and caregiving that fall specifically on women. Gaskell creates a heroine who not only visibly suffers when doling out her “scanty stock” (Gaskell 243) of sympathy and strength, but also finds herself attracted to the one man who does not need her support and dependence. While the heroines of *Emma* and *Jane Eyre* must learn how to sympathize with others and occupy both the sympathizer and sufferer positions within the sympathetic exchange, Gaskell’s heroine is already familiar with this exchange and has implemented it into her relationships. Gaskell’s popular novel explores the effects of possessing and using this sympathetic education in various ways. From September 1854 to January 1855, Gaskell published *North and South* as a weekly serial, and it was published as a two-volume novel in 1855 (Sharpe 197). The novel was serialized in Charles Dickens’ popular journal *Household Words* (Shuttleworth xi), which automatically gave it a farther-reaching audience than Austen’s or Brontë’s novels. The novel follows the life of Margaret Hale, who was educated in a wealthy family in London, moving from the southern area of Hampshire to the northern industrial town of Milton. She is put through immense trials of personal strength and familial caregiving before she marries local mill owner John Thornton, all while becoming increasingly involved in the class conflicts between mill workers and owners. Many twists and turns in this marriage plot would have felt familiar to readers of Brontë and Austen, such as repeated proposals, challenges to female education, and complex family

dynamics, but Gaskell aptly uses this basic genre familiarity to expand on Austen's and Brontë's portrayals of marriages and relationships. In the wake of mid-Victorian England's focus on establishing women's innate connection to the domestic sphere, Gaskell's novel builds on the idea of equal, companionate marriages as a way both to share the responsibilities associated with caregiving and to show that women's characteristics are valuable in the political sphere as well the domestic sphere.

Nancy Armstrong argues that for writers like Gaskell and Dickens, "domestic fiction carried the process of suppressing political resistance into the domain of popular literature, where it charted new domains of aberrance requiring domestication," and that "desire became a strategy" (163) for dealing with industrialization and political issues. While her reading of Gaskell's work does note many of the ways the political and domestic become intertwined in the latter's fiction, there is room to analyze how sympathy and expectations of female caregiving are an integral part of this connection. While Armstrong studies the sublimated position of political agendas within depictions of desire, I want to study how politics and the domestic are interwoven in *North and South* using the widely-circulating discourse of conduct books. Where Armstrong provides an overview of the mechanisms of desire to show how "the domestic woman exercised a form of power that appeared to have no political force at all" (19), Gaskell explicitly writes about the form of political power exercised by women through sympathy and caregiving. The benefits of the equal, sympathetic marriage between Gaskell's heroine and Thornton represent the critical mutual dependence of the political and domestic spheres as well as the underlying need to share emotional labour in order to sustain each partner. Gaskell posits that the rigidly separate spheres and gendered duties are in fact emotionally detrimental to both men and women.

The domestic and political roles assigned to men and women in the mid-nineteenth century were significant drivers of conflict. Historian Dror Wahrman claims that the descriptions of the middle-class family “dictated certain virtues for both men and women, complementing each other according to their assigned roles. The vision of the happy hearth and home shaped not only women’s lives, but also imposed requirements on men both at home and at work, where they were expected to provide their families with a secure living” (403). Gaskell’s novel takes a deeper look at these virtues and roles expected of men and women, and her novel demonstrates the benefits and drawbacks of these middle-class domestic roles as well as their implications in the wider community. While Gaskell had addressed class issues in her 1848 novel *Mary Barton*, dissecting the politics and domestic practices of labourers, I would argue that *North and South* takes a different approach by discussing the politics and domestic practices of the middle class. This novel takes a deeper look at the critical issues facing both the rich and the poor inhabitants of mid-century Britain, focusing specifically on the physical and mental costs of sympathy and caregiving as a form of emotional labour and domestic duty for middle-class women.

In examining these political and domestic issues facing middle-class families, Gaskell discusses many of the same concepts that were circulating in the period through various forms of conduct literature, most popularly in the Women of England series by Sarah Stickney Ellis. Stickney Ellis’ 1842 *The Daughters of England*, published after her highly successful *The Women of England*, gives specific recommendations and instructions to young English women about their education, duties, and desires, and many of its concepts can be seen in *North and South*. Ellis famously said women should be happy that their “sphere of action is one adapted to the exercise of the affections, where [they] may love, and trust, and hope, and serve, to the utmost of [their] wishes” (14). Ellis’ image of this ideal Christian woman is based on her notion

of love, which she believes should drive every woman's actions and is often displayed in caregiving roles. Caroline Austin-Bolt recognizes in her analysis of Ellis that "as social producers of happiness, women were to derive personal happiness from their ability to cultivate the happiness of others" (184). Austin-Bolt suggests that Ellis' idea of societal happiness is the product of women's labour, thereby according women's domestic influence broad significance. Austin-Bolt's analysis also helps us identify consonances between Ellis's argument and Gaskell's novel, and more specifically Gaskell's intervention in the period's conception of gendered virtues and duties. Ellis' book focuses on the importance of women's role in creating happiness for others, but Gaskell's novel, without rejecting that role, focuses on other ways women might make meaningful contributions to society, as well as on the immense burden of the sympathy and caregiving responsibilities constantly thrust on women. Gaskell shows that in addition to domestic caregiving, politics is a space where women can operate and provide assistance and knowledge, and that the two spheres are mutually determining in key ways. Both writers focus on the power women can hold, but they come to different conclusions about what this power looks like and how it can be used in terms of political action and domestic structures.

This chapter will explore the position of Margaret Hale as an educated caregiver and an exhausted, but sympathetic, spectator within her family and the wider Milton community. The "too dignified and reserved" (Gaskell 17) young woman is called on to perform many acts of sympathy and caregiving in different social circles. Gaskell's heroine performs both emotional labour and a version of Smithian sympathy, all while her own need for support and sympathy is often forgotten. Both sympathy and emotional labour require an investment of feeling on the part of the listener, and the novel shows that this commitment often drains the listener of energy and their ability to process their own emotions. Moreover, the novel suggests that caregiving, when

cast as women's sole and defining duty as Ellis advocates, stifles their ability to engage in broader political issues. Gaskell's heroine is able to meet with multiple communities and familiarize herself with local politics despite being called home to care for her parents. While she performs this labour for her family, she also slowly cultivates a love for the one man who frustrates her capacity for sympathy and challenges her opinions. Gaskell creates a new form of the marriage plot that takes into account the invisible emotional labour and burden that traditional caregiving roles exert on women, while also demonstrating that women's characteristic virtues are compatible and even complementary with the dynamic intellectual exchange that earlier novelists such as Austen and Brontë advocated for their protagonists. Gaskell's central characters must participate in a true exchange of sympathy and caregiving in order first to feel rested and supported, and from there to take action and effect change in the political sphere.

Gaskell's novel illustrates the systemic issues of making sympathy and emotional labour a duty for middle-class women, and the novel's characters often challenge the ideas that caregiving in itself is enough for happiness. When Margaret is not keeping up cheerful smiles or assisting in household management, she is often grieving alone or arguing with Mr. Thornton. Gaskell's marriage plot shows that a young woman can find relief in the "antagonistic friendship" (239) and unconventional sympathy of someone she frequently disagrees with. Ellis believes young women should love their partners with a "sameness of purpose" (227), but Gaskell's novel shows that sameness does not mean unswerving devotion or agreement. Gaskell demonstrates that acts of loving and caregiving require consideration and care of the self, not endless selflessness or self-sacrifice. Margaret and Thornton constantly challenge each other, but they never waver in their respect and ability to listen. Their respect and comfort within

disagreements are what grow into a strong, equal love. Their friendship alleviates many of Margaret's burdens, and they slowly learn to integrate the other's opinions into their own.

Gaskell and Ellis lived and wrote in the same time period in mid-Victorian England, and their upbringings and lives were similar in many respects. Gaskell was born in London in 1810, and she spent much of her childhood with her aunt in Knutsford and her married life in Manchester (Easson 2-3). She received a well-rounded education in "modern subjects" such as "literature, history, modern languages" (19) and "having a lively mind and curiosity, she picked up much through conversation, observation and reading" (18). Angus Easson's biography of Gaskell suggests that she was well-acquainted with many of the character types in her novel *North and South*. For example, her own brother was a sailor who went missing in 1827, which could have inspired the character of Frederick Hale, and her father was a classical tutor who was affiliated with the Dissenting ministry, which could have inspired Mr. Hale (2). Gaskell was also well-connected to many political issues in Manchester. She was aware of educational efforts, such as the Working Men's College and the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society (19), and her husband frequently gave lectures to these groups. She had a wide network in Manchester and other cities, and she was actively involved in her community, including teaching at Sunday-schools (18). In addition to this experience, Gaskell held more traditional domestic roles in her own household. Easson notes, for example, that her husband did not let her talk about her children with him often, and that "he did not play the heavy paterfamilias, but expected Gaskell to get on with her side of things (even if she were an author as well)" (33). Gaskell had many duties to attend to outside and inside the home, despite having constant issues with illness. The burdens of care and community engagement, but also the satisfaction of having a good education

and a partner who was supportive of her career, are all aspects of *North and South* that could stem from Gaskell's own experiences.

Like Gaskell, Ellis was also a well-known writer, wife, and caregiver whose experiences led her to write about women's lives in England. Born in 1799, Ellis wrote to help support her family, and she married William Ellis in 1837 (Twycross-Martin). She wrote moral fiction, conduct literature, poetry, and other works in her authorial career, and she had experience running a school where "she put her theories into practice" (Twycross-Martin). Many of her works were very popular, but "her most influential works were those that focused on the role of women in the middle-class family, and emphasized the moral influence a Christian woman, particularly as wife and mother, should bring to bear on the men of that family" (Twycross-Martin). Daryl Ogden writes that "Ellis was by far the most popular author of the female advice books in nineteenth century Britain," and that she "undoubtedly struck a widespread and sympathetic chord with her female 'fellow-beings'" (585). Ellis had experience in many of the same public and domestic roles as Gaskell, including teaching and managing a home. Although there is no record of Gaskell and Ellis reading or speaking with each other, Ellis' popularity shows the relevance of reading her conduct writing in relationship with Gaskell's novel about a young woman coming-of-age in a new setting. Gaskell's novel is not only grounded in nearly the same contemporary domestic and political settings as those addressed in Ellis' conduct books, but also deals with nearly the same concepts of women's roles in family and society. Both texts are concerned with how women operate in the domestic and political spheres and seek to show how a young middle-class woman should act. While Ellis' text leads the reader to believe that women's constant, care-based action is the path to happiness for all, Gaskell's text shows that truly reciprocal sympathetic exchanges and the regulation of emotional labour strengthen both

men and women, and promise greater benefit to society. This textual comparison will show how Gaskell's novel updates and challenges analogous conceptions of female duties and roles that Ellis would have supported.

To help analyze Gaskell's innovative contributions to then-contemporary notions of women's duties and the work of caregiving, I will also rely on Arlie Russell Hochschild's modern foundational text *The Managed Heart* when discussing emotional labour as part of sympathy. Hochschild defines emotional labour as a state which "requires one to induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others" (7). She sees emotional labour as a form of work that primarily women perform to assist others. The act of emotional labour has a physical aspect, and she explains that she "[uses] the term *emotional labor* to mean the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display" (7). In many cases, this is the act of smiling or the restraining of tears in order to make others comfortable. Her text looks mainly at modern occupations that demand emotional labour, such as flight attendants, but her concept can be applied retroactively to acts of caregiving advocated by Ellis and exemplified by characters in Gaskell's novel. Hochschild claims that "this kind of labor calls for a coordination of mind and feeling, and it sometimes draws on a source of self that we honor as deep and integral to our individuality" (7). This model of labour can be traced throughout the novel's staging of the sympathetic exchange. When a character is performing emotional labour, they must draw on their own individual strength to help soothe and care for others, which leaves them emotionally drained. Similarly, within the sympathetic exchange, the sympathizer must imagine to themselves what the sufferer thinks and feels, as it is "a mode of relating to others and of defining a self" (Ablow 2). These performances of emotional labour and sympathy require the

same ability to draw on a person's own sense of self and experiences to listen to and assist the person in need. Gaskell's novel uses these concepts to show the specific toll that sympathy and emotional labour have on women, who are deemed apt for caregiving roles within their families and larger societies but who suffer immensely in suppressing themselves to help others.

Gaskell's novel begins with demonstrating the ways Margaret's education and emotional labour are intertwined within the Shaw household where she was raised. Many aspects of Margaret's character are developed in response to her treatment by the Shaws as a sort of family manager. Margaret would have received a good private education in the Shaw home because they possess significant wealth, and her manners and attentiveness later in the novel further prove its quality. Ellis advocates a form of constant, mindful activity for young women as part of their education, and this is exactly what Margaret learns with the Shaws. Ellis, in advocating for cleverness⁸, says, "the cleverness of hand ... imparts the additional charm of perpetual cheerfulness, added to a capability of general usefulness, and a consequent readiness for action whenever occasion may require our services" (42). Margaret has learned to be so useful to the Shaws that her individuality is almost erased. When her aunt has a dinner party, she acts as "a sort of lay figure" (Gaskell 9) to drape shawls on while their recipient, her cousin Edith, is asleep. Later on, Margaret must entertain visitors when her aunt and cousin forget their own duties as hosts (10). Instead of being driven by impulse and emotion like her aunt and cousin, Margaret takes on any duties that could be useful to them with gusto. She has learned to assume emotional burdens in order to make Edith and Mrs. Shaw happy, and she does enjoy caring for them. In a moment of remembering her arrival at the Shaws, the narrator says Margaret "was brought, all untamed from the forest, to share the home, the play, and lessons of her cousin

⁸ For Ellis, cleverness refers to "dexterity and aptness in doing everything which falls within the sphere of ordinary duty" (42). She wants women to be clever in the sense that they can anticipate and fulfill any domestic needs.

Edith” (8). Margaret’s memory shows the reader that she has received a higher-quality education than she would have received with her parents at Helstone. This memory also provides readers with a glimpse of her ability to hide her emotions. She learns at age nine to silence herself when she is told not to cry because it would disturb others, including Edith and her father who would be “unhappy” (8) hearing her. Margaret uses her early honed skills in emotional labour and emotion management to ensure the Shaws, and to some extent her distant parents, are kept happy and comfortable.

Gaskell’s framing of the novel shows how Margaret’s position in the Shaw household already has many unfortunate consequences for her emotional wellbeing. Hochschild notes that women are “traditionally more accomplished managers of feeling in private life” so they “know more about its personal costs” (11). While she does stay active and busy as Ellis would wish, Margaret is already feeling the personal costs of sympathy. For example, Henry Lennox says she has “been carried away by a whirlwind of some other person’s making” throughout Edith’s wedding preparations, to which Margaret “rather sadly” replies while feeling an “indescribable weariness” (Gaskell 11). While she enjoys helping her cousin, she is tired and exasperated with the preparations. She also does not receive much sympathy from the Shaws themselves. For example, Margaret “had to brood over the change in her life [of moving to Helstone] silently as heretofore” (6) after Edith falls asleep while sitting with her. Margaret’s complete removal from the Shaws’ home is only addressed by Henry, who selfishly wants to discuss her future so he can plan his proposal. After Edith’s marriage, Margaret feels a “sad regret” at the quick goodbyes to the Shaws, and “her mind and body ached now with the recollection of all she had done and said within the last forty-eight hours” (16). She feels a physical and emotional exhaustion after performing so much emotional labour for the Shaws. Her ability to remain “[ready] for action”

(Ellis 42) is neither noticed nor appreciated by her extended family. By showing the extent of Margaret's exhaustion seemingly produced by fulfilling her role as a young woman in the domestic sphere, Gaskell challenges readers to question the idyllic ways female emotional labour is represented by writers like Ellis. Margaret's fully-developed sympathetic education and awareness of others' needs have given her skills and strength, but exact from her a heavy toll.

Aside from the Shaws, Gaskell also shows how Margaret's parents require a significant amount of her emotional labour. When she arrives at home, Margaret notices that "all was not as it should be" (Gaskell 17) between her parents. Her mother is not content, and her father is sad and reclusive. Ellis notes that some young women "who, remembering that their parents, however humble and unenlightened, are their parents still . . . make it their constant study to offer them tokens of respect and regard of such a nature as not to draw forth their intellectual deficiencies, but to place them on the higher ground of moral excellence" (184). Ellis praises these women who are consistently supportive of their parents, but Gaskell demonstrates the issues that a young woman encounters when needing to work constantly to assist her parents, who are themselves comparatively thoughtless or ineffectual. When her parents are unhappy, Margaret takes it upon herself to help both of them through their issues in the move to Milton while also suppressing her own emotions. Gaskell shows that female emotional labour is central to how the family functions, but that it also requires the labourer to set aside her emotions to help others. When Margaret is on the train with her father, she sees her father's face has "lines of habitual anxiety," so she is "ready with a bright smile, in which there was not a trace of fatigue, to greet her father when he awakened" (Gaskell 16). The word "ready" signifies that her smile is not natural; she erases symbols of exhaustion and fear from her face when she talks to her father. Margaret's learned behaviour with the Shaws of hiding her emotions to serve others continues

within her own family, and she tries to support her parents even in some of their “unenlightened” (Ellis 184) choices and feelings.

Gaskell further shows how many of Margaret’s parents’ demands on her emotional labour are competing and often contradictory. Margaret “bend[s] her whole soul to sympathise in all the various turns her [mother’s] feelings took” (Gaskell 46) when Mrs. Hale is told they are leaving Helstone. Unlike previous novel heroines, Margaret is already adept at providing sympathy and care for others, and she has a finely tuned awareness of when others need her help. She listens to her mother in order to help her come to terms with their move, but she also wants to make sure her father has “a soothing welcome home” (46). Gaskell demonstrates how young women like Margaret are expected to cater emotionally to their families, even when this catering is contradictory. John Kucich argues that “these early scenes blow up domestic fiction’s usual portrait of the norms of middle-class marriage, family, and gender roles as well as the comfortable everydayness of the middle-class home” (8). When Mr. Hale fails to perform his emotional duty as a husband and father, Margaret must take over his role in caring for her mother and breaking the news to her. Shuttleworth notes that “the narrative clearly convicts Mr. Hale of cowardice in his failure to tell his wife of his plans to leave Helstone whilst Margaret takes over the role of head of household, he lapses into childlike, or ‘feminine’, incapacity, paralleling that of his wife” (xv). Instead of taking on a traditional patriarchal duty of leading his family, Mr. Hale asks Margaret to perform what should be his emotional labour of supporting his wife. Gaskell inverts traditional family roles to show the negative effects of Ellis’ dream that “to love, is woman’s duty” (15). Margaret must overstretch herself to help her family because of this form of love, and they are not supportive in return. Ellis believes that young women should express gratitude for their families because “all our evil tempers and dispositions have been exhibited

there, and consequently the kindness received at home is the more generous” (179). While Margaret has had emotional outbursts in front of her family, she has not received Ellis’ idea of kindness in return. Her own feelings are not attended to by her family members, and she does not receive the kind of sympathy she deserves. Margaret’s home is not a “comfortable” (Kucich 8) place, but rather a space for continuous and unfair emotional labour. Gaskell’s representation of the Hale family as a dysfunctional unit demonstrates the holes in Ellis’ recommendations: kindness is not always presented as a reward, or indeed present at all, within the family.

Margaret can only release her “rigid self-control” (Gaskell 47) when she is alone. Jessie Reeder explains that “[Margaret] is constantly at war with her countenance and body, that they might not betray her inner turmoil in front of others, even her family” (10). Margaret’s preparation of a smile that she does not naturally feel, for example, is a form of emotional labour. Hochschild would say this is a way for her to “[create] the emotional tone of social encounters,” which Hochschild claims is often used by “dependent women of the middle and upper classes” (20) in exchange for financial support from men. Margaret’s emotional labour helps regulate the feelings of her parents and change the often sad tone of their discussions surrounding the move. This labour, as articulated by Ellis and later by Hochschild, is seen as a part of Margaret’s role as a dependent young woman within a household. Margaret must stifle her emotions in order to perform her other household duties. When she is packing up Helstone, her servants wonder how she stays so calm, but the narrator explains how Margaret’s observers

could not understand how her heart was aching all the time, with a heavy pressure that no sighs could lift or relieve, and how constant exertion for her perceptive faculties was the only way to keep herself from crying out with pain. Moreover, if she gave way, who was

to act? ... Besides, was Margaret one to give way before strange men, or even household friends like the cook and Charlotte! Not she. (Gaskell 53)

This passage demonstrates Margaret's ability to hide her feelings as well as her motivations for doing so. Readers can see that she chooses to be overly active in order to stifle her feelings, which Gaskell presents as an unintended consequence of Ellis' assertion that "readiness for action" (42) is a benefit that accompanies youth. Margaret often works to avoid painful feelings, not just to selflessly perform emotional labour for others. Austin-Bolt notes that Ellis' conception of happiness "is not an individual happiness based on self-interest" (188). Gaskell critiques this idea in her depiction of Margaret's stoic nature, but she also takes the consequences a step further by making Margaret completely unable to stop working in case her emotions take over. The latter part of this scene in the novel also shows that Margaret has a certain amount of personal pride, and she does not want to appear weak in front of others. Gaskell shows all of the different social forces that keep Margaret silent and rigid during the moving day, as well as the detrimental effects they have on her self-presence and wellbeing.

After the scenes of moving and packing, Gaskell shows readers what happens when the duty of constant caring is lifted for a moment. When Margaret does finally break down in front of her father, he is "distressingly perplexed," and Margaret "tried to check herself, but would not speak until she could do so with firmness" (Gaskell 55). Until this point, readers may have thought the Hale parents deserved more trust and could be capable of helping their daughter through grief. Instead, Gaskell shows Mr. Hale's complete inability to help her. Margaret must soothe herself, only to then reassure her father that they must still move to Milton. His mumbling while she cries puts her in the position of secret griever and open sympathiser simultaneously. She often cannot be sympathized with because so many around her do not possess the ability to

soothe themselves and require her constant sympathy. If sympathy is “a mode of relating to others and of defining a self” (Ablow 2), Margaret is stifled in her attempt to define herself and her interests because of the constant sympathetic demands of others. Gaskell’s heroine is incapable of personal growth at this time because she is expected to be the full-time sympathizer and care provider for her parents. Throughout the moving process, Margaret’s duties have increased with no outlet for relief or sympathy from either her parents or the Shaws.

After their move to Milton, Margaret does not give up her role as family manager and head of the household. Instead, Gaskell continues to show readers the effects of familial demands on young women’s emotional labour. When they arrive in Milton, Mrs. Hale asks questions with a “blank dismay” (Gaskell 65), and Mr. Hale “equally came upon Margaret for sympathy” (66) in their new home. Both parents use Margaret as a ready sympathiser. She attempts to pacify them both, and then she sinks into “a stupor of despair” (66) afterward. Both of her parents make unreasonable demands on her sympathy upon their first move to the city, even though she holds the least power in terms of traditional familial roles. Jennifer Maclure argues that, culturally, “middle-class women’s sympathy is not suppressed but rather expected and required in the bourgeois domestic space, filling the vacuum created by the systematic suppression of other channels of sympathy” (350), such as the suppression of sympathy between men and between employers and workers through capitalist structures. Maclure’s point pertains to Margaret’s position as a middle-class female “sympathy mill” (350) who is constantly at work for others, first for both her parents in different ways, and later for the Milton community. When Margaret learns about her mother’s terminal illness, she walks into a room to “recover strength” (Gaskell 127) before confronting anyone. Her thoughts about the illness focus almost exclusively on others as she plans ways to hide the illness from her father and prays for her mother. Gaskell

uses Margaret to show the ways her sympathy is an essential part of her family's ability to function, but also how it forces her to hide her own feelings and individuality from them.

Instead of being rewarded for her efforts at sympathizing with others, Margaret is chastised when she steps out of her role as the emotional labourer. When Margaret mentions her concern about her mother's illness to her father, for example, he calls her "fanciful" and commands, "don't let me hear of these foolish morbid ideas" (104). Margaret is actively ignored and silenced in her own feelings by the only other family member who sees her mother daily. The narrator says later that in light of her father's ignorance, Margaret became "a confidential friend" to her mother and "took pains to respond to every call made upon her for sympathy – and they were many – even when they bore relation to trifles" (105). Her father has ignored her concerns, so Margaret must fulfill the role of friend and confidant to her mother. Margaret finds herself in the caregiver position in a sympathetic exchange with her mother, but the sympathy she provides is not reciprocated. Her mother responds to Margaret's knowledge of the illness, for example, by telling her not to be angry with Dixon for knowing first and then collapsing into "violent hysterics" (129) at the thought of her son Frederick. Mrs. Hale's reaction is to chastise Margaret and then use her as a personal "sympathy mill" (Maclure 350). Margaret must continue to soothe herself and hide her feelings from her parents.

Gaskell also works to show the different approaches to emotional displays taken by men and women in this time period. Ellis celebrates the kind of woman who can carry on in the face of extreme difficulties. She claims that a clever woman "never yields to her own feelings, so as to incapacitate her from the service of others at any critical moment assistance may be most needed" (50). This is exactly how Margaret functions within her family; she constantly subdues her own needs in service of others. When Mr. Hale finally realizes the strength of Mrs. Hale's

illness, he “began to shake all over” (Gaskell 168) with “deep, manly sobs” (169). Margaret “caress[es] him with tearful caresses” (169), but he does not check on her emotional state. In this scene, Gaskell shows the extent to which the emotions of a young woman are given less attention than those of a man. While Ellis believes that expressing emotions will “incapacitate” (50) a woman’s ability to perform her duties, Gaskell shows that yielding to this incapacitation is necessary. Margaret witnesses a series of violent emotions displayed by her father, and she must then suppress her own feelings in order to prevent potential violence from him. Her own emotional suppression is an act of violence against herself, and it is one she has to perform alone. Margaret steps in to provide sympathy and care for her father, but Gaskell represents Mr. Hale as incapable of engaging sympathetically with his daughter. Even the servant Dixon is upset by Margaret’s private display of emotion because she is meant to be nothing but the stoic provider of care for her parents. Even when she is physically injured in the riot at Marlborough Mills, Margaret hides it from her family and “with sweet patience did she bear her pain, without a word of complaint; and rummaged up numberless small subjects for conversation” (Gaskell 191) with her father. The narrator later describes that “she let her colour go – the forced smile fade away – the eyes grow dull with heavy pain. She released her strong will from its laborious task. Till morning she might feel ill and weary” (191). This moment of solitude allows Margaret to drop her forced emotions, but she must give herself an actual time limit, now until morning, to feel her own emotions. Gaskell demonstrates the actual violence against the self that comes from constantly suppressing natural emotions as Ellis would recommend.

The only person, aside from Thornton, who almost recognizes the extent of Margaret’s burden is her long-absent brother Frederick. Margaret has not received any kind of support from him throughout her youth because he was living in exile in Spain, and she only hears about

Frederick's justified involvement in a naval mutiny after she becomes her mother's confidant (106-109). When Ellis describes aspects of a woman that make her a more desirable companion, she notes that some young women become acquainted with illness early in their lives. She claims, "there was a tenderness of feeling, and a power of sympathy derived from early acquaintance with human suffering, which remains with woman till the end of life, and constitutes alike the charm of youth, and the attraction of old age" (141). Gaskell uses this idea of the young woman acquainted with suffering to show how Margaret's early life unfortunately prepared her for emotional labour and sympathy. Early in her life, she suffers first in her removal from Helstone, then in the loss of her brother. Even before her parents move to Milton and become ill, Margaret has had to deal with suffering and becomes familiar with how to manage it in others. To take Ellis' point further, Gaskell represents Frederick as also acquainted with human suffering, which makes him an apt listener and sympathizer as well. Unlike Mr. Hale, who becomes overly emotional when faced with struggle, Gaskell presents Frederick as an alternative male figure who is more familiar with and effective at performing emotional labour.

While he does not carry the primary care burdens that Margaret does, Frederick does understand the effects of suffering and is able to share some of the burden with Margaret, which provides her with much-needed support and rest. When they are reunited, the narrator says, "the brother and sister had an instant of sympathy in their reciprocal glances," making Margaret "sure she should like her brother as a companion" (Gaskell 244). Their sympathetic connection brings just a moment of happiness to Margaret before she immediately turns to perform more emotional labour in telling her father. Instead of celebrating, Mr. Hale shows his incapability of handling emotional situations and begins "to cry and wail like a child" (245). Once she guides him to Frederick, "she turned away, and ran up-stairs, and cried most heartily. It was the first time she

had dared allowed herself this relief for days” (245). The sequence of events here demonstrates that while Frederick may be an understanding companion, Margaret is still primarily responsible for managing the grief of others. Kathleen Steele notes that Mrs. Hale similarly does not cry much in front of Mr. Hale, “reflecting the difficulty that women of the period had in legitimising and expressing their sorrows and pain” (31). This difficulty is certainly true for Margaret, who must hide her emotions even sometimes from her brother. While Frederick has moments of helping her, such as when he “sprang up in a minute, and relieved her of her burden” (Gaskell 246) of carrying a tray, Margaret is still the primary caregiver in her family. Gaskell shows that there has to be a more active acknowledgement and attempt on the part of men to share the emotional labour within the family unit. Margaret benefits from Frederick’s help, but she also needs him to possess a greater awareness of the many situations that require this labour.

Not only does Margaret perform emotional labour for her brother and father, but also strategizes for Frederick’s escape from Milton. After Mrs. Hale dies, Frederick “cried so violently” (250) and Margaret “could not think of her own loss in thinking of her father’s case” (251). She and Dixon make all the house arrangements, and the narrator says, “the father and brother depended upon her; while they were giving way to grief, she must be working, planning, considering” (252). Gaskell’s image here is the height of female emotional labour; Margaret has just lost her mother, but she must continue to work for others instead of being allowed to grieve herself. After his emotions are processed, Frederick once again scratches the surface of emotional labour when he recognizes Margaret’s actions and says, “no one has thought of you” (255). However, he then immediately has to plan his escape from Milton after his encounter with Leonards. Margaret helps him escape by train, which opens her to potential scandal since she was seen alone with a man at night by Thornton. The escape is also almost thwarted by

Leonards, but Frederick pushes him away, thereby opening himself up to further criminal charges and ensuring his perpetual banishment from England. Frederick's absence removes the only family member who recognizes her emotional labour, but it also means Margaret must add the secret of his visit and potential capture to her list of personal secrets and burdens.

After her mother dies, Margaret continues to help her father, but the cracks in her ability to sympathize and care for him begin to show. She believes "the only thing she did well was ... the silent comforting and consoling of her father" (343). She puts her whole energy into supporting him, while she pushes her own needs away. Austin-Bolt notes that Ellis' idea of female happiness is "gleaned through mutual reciprocity: women's happiness derives from promoting 'the happiness of others'" (189). Gaskell shows that this reciprocity does not always apply within the family, as Margaret does not gain personal happiness from helping her father. Right after his wife dies, Mr. Hale demonstrates his inability to help Margaret when "she had been so subdued in her grief, so thoughtful for others, so gentle and patient in all things, that he could not understand her impatient ways to-night; she seemed agitated and restless" (Gaskell 267). His form of care and concern cannot help her because he has become so accustomed to her "subdued" ways. Unlike Frederick, Mr. Hale does not really acknowledge how much she has been doing, and his attempts at soothing made her "[cry] the more" (267). When Mr. Hale leaves to visit Oxford, Margaret quietly rejoices in the "relief" (347) she feels in being alone and able to look at "all her own personal cares and troubles [that] had had to be stuffed away" while she was providing "cheering care" (344). Margaret is finally able to relieve herself from the emotional labour she has performed for over a year for both her parents and her brother. This care came from a sympathetic place, but Gaskell demonstrates that only in complete solitude from her parents is Margaret relieved from demands on her emotional labour. Armstrong notes that a type

of women's power comes from performing "domestic surveillance" (19) within the home, and Gaskell shows that a form of this surveillance (attending to the needs and feelings of others) is a heavy burden on a young woman. The only relief from women's watching and caregiving duties comes in solitude.

While Margaret appreciated the time for reflection, her father's death completely collapses her sympathetic abilities. Hochschild claims "there is a cost to emotion work: it affects the degree to which we listen to feeling and sometimes our very capacity to feel" (21). While emotional labour draws on a person's individuality and strength, Hochschild shows there is a personal cost to the work of constantly helping others. Until this point, Margaret has been able to possess a "readiness for action" (Ellis 42) when needed by her family, but the novel turns at this point to show the consequences of emotional labour. Margaret's labour has left her emotionally and physically depleted, which means she can no longer perform actions for anyone. The narrator claims she "fell into a state of prostration" and "lay motionless, almost breathless" (Gaskell 353) when Mr. Bell delivers the news. She has lost the ability to feel and manage anyone's emotions, including her own, and she only cries when her motherly aunt helps her finally express the grief in her "numbed heart" (356). She has performed so much emotion work for her family that she no longer has the capacity to feel and grieve in a healthy way. Her numbness and shock exemplify the costs that Hochschild suggests inevitably result from sustained emotional labour. Steele claims that "Margaret's exhaustion, mentally, physically, and emotionally ... demonstrates the harm in 'bearing up' without sympathy from others" (33). Throughout the novel, Margaret has always taken on the role of the sympathizer in the sympathetic exchange, not the suffering object. Gaskell's narration of this total collapse shows what happens when the sympathetic exchange is a one-sided endeavour, and when the

accompanying exhaustion finally hits its breaking point. Despite glimpses of sympathy from Frederick and others, Margaret needed more acknowledgement and sympathy from her family in order to stay healthy and happy. That her rise to independence happens only after the duties of constant caregiving in her immediate family have been taken away demonstrates not only that the selflessness that Ellis advocates is unsustainable, but also that all-consuming devotion to family and service is incompatible with a woman's autonomy and sense of self. Without denying the importance and value of women's emotional care, *North and South* suggests that a woman's sympathetic education must include care of the self.

Gaskell develops this point by broadening Margaret's sphere of influence beyond her home and illustrating the potential work a woman might undertake in the community. Outside her family and even after her parents' deaths, Margaret is called upon to provide sympathy and emotional labour for other families in Helstone and Milton. Ellis supports the idea of the Christian woman performing charitable works outside the home and helping others. She claims:

How happy ... is that woman, who, by the habitual exercise of her ingenuity, is able so to make the most of the means within her power, as to supply, without its having to be solicited, the very thing which is most needed; and though her endeavours may possibly fail again and again, there will sometimes be a smile of grateful acknowledgement on the lips of the sufferer, that will richly repay her most anxious care. (46)

Ellis' statement encourages women to care for others using their natural "ingenuity," or cleverness in domestic affairs. She wants a woman to anticipate the needs of others and care for them as best she can, even if she fails to provide exactly what they need or receive gratitude for her efforts. This idea of charitable works also complies with Hochschild's ideas of emotional labour, where the labourer creates "the sense of being cared for in a convivial and safe place"

(7). Margaret's work within her family but also within the Helstone and Milton communities is focused on providing care and a sense of emotional safety for those she helps. She exemplifies Ellis' image of the ideal woman when she moves back to Helstone, visiting her poor neighbors and intending to teach at the local school when possible (Gaskell 17). After she has relocated to Milton, she acts with "anxious care" (Ellis 46) towards Bessy Higgins as well. When Margaret gives Bessy flowers she had gathered, Higgins says he'll "think a deal o' your kindness" (Gaskell 72) and is touched by the "tender pity" (73) in her voice when she talks to Bessy. They are friendly with each other, but when Margaret asks their name and address, she fears "impertinence" (73). Her Helstone ways do not translate to Milton, but the Higgins family relents and tells her to visit. Although she is "half-amused, half-nettled," Margaret is happy to have found "a human interest" (74) in Milton. This exchange exactly demonstrates Ellis' plan for women's work. Margaret fails to correctly understand the way Milton visits are conducted, but she is greeted with Bessy's "grateful acknowledgement" (Ellis 46) for her inquiries. Margaret's initial interactions in Milton conform with Ellis' recommendations for charitable duties and emotional labour, and they indicate the benefits to be gained by both givers and receivers of middle-class women's charity.

As the novel progresses, however, Gaskell shows that both Margaret's influence and self-realization can expand when she successfully moves from performing female-specific charity work to typically androcentric work: politics. Where Mary Wollstonecraft advocated for women's rational education and active involvement in duties outside of the home, Ellis advocates for women to remove themselves from politics and other work. Ellis does recommend having a basic understanding of history and local issues. However, she also says, "do not suppose it would add any embellishment to your conversation, for you to discuss what are called

politics, simply as such, especially when, as in nine cases out of ten, you do not really understand what you are talking about” (65). As Margaret’s time in Milton goes on, Gaskell represents her as completely rejecting Ellis’ idea of female duties and actively learning about and involving herself in local politics. Not only does Gaskell’s heroine involve herself in politics, but she also plays an integral role in bringing the employer and labourer communities together. This involvement is reminiscent of Jane Eyre’s desire to find new work and responsibilities outside of Thornfield in Brontë’s novel, but Margaret’s desire is even more focused on political work. John Kucich’s article, “Political Melodrama Meets Domestic Fiction: The Politics of Genre in *North and South*,” looks at the ways Gaskell’s novel combines two genres, political melodrama and domestic fiction, to explore new generic possibilities, and also at the way Gaskell is “refusing to let the genres she hybridizes settle into a comfortable synthesis” (2). He argues that the novel intentionally leaves gaps and imperfect combinations, which makes it more effective in challenging political situations. For example, he argues the main political melodrama between Thornton and his workers has an “apocalyptic culmination [that] occurs halfway through the novel – not at the end, as in a proper melodrama – and apocalypse dissolves into anticlimax when Margaret Hale defuses Thornton’s confrontation with an angry mob” (5). The mob scene will be discussed later, but it is important to note now how interwoven Margaret’s relationships are with local politics and with the novel’s genre combinations. Her political involvement embodies Wollstonecraft’s idea of intellectual equality between men and women. Many of Margaret’s storylines begin and end in abrupt ways by situations that force her to re-evaluate and adapt her positions within her family and with Milton inhabitants. The novel inverts many typical aspects of the domestic fiction genre, including the marriage plot, and uses them to

explore questions of women's roles in politics, sympathy, emotional labour, and other topics relevant to a nineteenth-century working-class town.

Margaret's interest in politics and labour relations begins with a growing, sympathetic relationship with Bessy. She and Bessy discuss Milton mills, labour, strikes, religion, and many other topics (Gaskell 100-103; 132-138) during their short friendship. Even though they come from different classes, have different states of health, and hold different responsibilities, they are able to have a meaningful friendship. Although Ellis argues that "there must be an equality in friendship" (195) in terms of class, she also believes that if a friend "never attempts to correct your faults, or make you better than you are, she is not worthy of the name; nor ought she to be fully confided in, whatever may be the extent of her kindness to you, or the degree of her admiration of your character" (198). While Bessy does admire Margaret as a middle-class young woman, they are able to correct and help each other in more nuanced ways than Ellis describes. They achieve equality in their sympathetic friendship, even though they are of different classes.

In a particular scene, Margaret visits Bessy and discusses the upcoming strike with the Higgins family. As Bessy explains her father's drinking issues and her fears about the strike, she jadedly claims that Margaret has "never known want or care, or wickedness" (Gaskell 137). Her remark prompts Margaret to share some of her own issues, partly to remind Bessy that others struggle aside from her and partly to relieve herself to someone who can listen. Margaret claims:

I shall go home to my mother, who is so ill – so ill, Bessy, that there's no outlet but death for her out of the prison of her great suffering; and yet I must speak cheerfully to my father, who has no notion of her real state, and to whom the knowledge must come gradually. The only person – the only one who could sympathise with me and help me –

whose presence could comfort my mother more than any other earthly thing ... would run the risk of death if he came to see his dying mother ... have I not care? (137)

Margaret's description of her familial situation shows a level of trust and sympathy not previously seen between these two women. Margaret reveals her trials to Bessy, both an eldest daughter and an invalid, and her only friend who could understand the burden of female emotional labour. Margaret acknowledges the difficult "cheerfulness" she must perform for her father to keep him happy while she knows the situation of her mother's illness. She also admits that her constant emotional labour is not as valuable to her mother as a short visit from Frederick.

The effects of this conversation move the women into a new stage of friendship. When Margaret prepares to leave, she says, "you have done me good Bessy" and explains, "I came here very sad ... and now I hear how you have had to bear for years, and that makes me stronger" (138). Bessy acknowledges the stereotypes around this, saying, "I thought a' the good-doing was on the side of gentlefolk. I shall get proud if I think I can do good to yo'" (138). Their acknowledgement of helping to improve the other demonstrates their ability to sympathize. She and Bessy enter Adam Smith's idea of the sympathetic exchange here, where the object of sympathy "seem[s] to disburthen themselves of a part of their distress [the listener] not only feels a sorrow of the same kind with that which they feel, but as if [they] had derived a part of it to [themselves]" (Smith 13). Although his model is focused on strangers, in some ways this exchange moves the women from strangers to friends. Much as Jane Eyre and Helen Burns learn to listen to each other, Margaret and Bessy are able to listen and feel with each other. This exchange brings them closer as friends and removes the need for some of the more patronizing emotional labour from Margaret. They learn to trade roles as object and sympathizer by listening to each other's problems and feeling the other's suffering.

Margaret takes on more political and emotional labour during the riot at Marlborough Mills as well as after Bessy's death with the Higgins and Boucher families. When she finds herself without her parents at Marlborough Mills at the beginning of the riot, the narrator says that "she forgot herself, and felt only an intense sympathy – intense to painfulness – in the interests of the moment" (Gaskell 175). Margaret's reaction is to feel deep sympathy with the worker population. She cares about the protestors and understands their issues more than the mill owners do at this point. She tells Thornton to "speak to your workmen as if they were human beings. Speak to them kindly. Don't let the soldiers come in and cut down poor creatures who are driven mad" (177). Margaret finds her own sense of independence and authority in this moment; she is well aware of the politics of the strike, even if she is biased against the mill owners. She sees that conversation and respect are key to understanding and resolving problems, and she wants the workers and mill owners to develop more sympathy for each other. When she runs out to protect Thornton, she tells the workers, "do not damage your cause by this violence" even though her voice is not "distinct" (179). Although she is afraid and later injured, Margaret actively uses her political knowledge and sympathetic education to assist in the situation. She has learned from providing sympathy and emotional labour for her family and larger community, and she uses her skills to help deescalate the situation and attempt to make both sides understand each other. She later reflects that "it made me the more anxious that there should be fair play on each side" (190), showing how she is committed to helping both parties understand each other by ensuring more equality between the groups. The riot creates tension between herself and Thornton, but it also demonstrates Margaret's growing independence and ability to use her sympathetic education successfully to solve problems in the wider community.

Later, she continues to perform labour specifically for the Boucher and Higgins families. She is the one who must break the news of Boucher's death to Mrs. Boucher because Higgins and Mr. Hale are too stunned to do so. Steele correctly notes that in doing this, the men in the novel are "assigning grief and its effects to women and reestablishing the Victorian order of gendered emotionality" (29). Like Mr. Hale, many of the local men refuse to perform emotional labour and force it on women. Although Margaret is a stranger, she is the one who must perform the emotional labour of comforting Mrs. Boucher. Her revelation culminates in Mrs. Boucher fainting and the Boucher children "set[ting] up such a cry of despair ... that Margaret knew not how to bear it" (Gaskell 297). Although she is not called on to nurse Mrs. Boucher, she takes an active role in visiting her and her later orphaned children. While her interactions with the Bouchers are more charity-based, she also performs more subtle emotional labour for Higgins and Mary. When Bessy dies, Higgins "throw[s] his body half across the table, [shaking] it and every piece of furniture in the room, with his violent sobs," so Margaret comforts Mary by "[taking] her hand, and [holding] it softly in hers" (219). Higgins is incapable of providing comfort and support for his other daughter, much like Mr. Hale when Mrs. Hale dies, so Margaret suppresses her emotions again to perform emotional labour for him and prevent further violence. She takes on the responsibility of comforting Mary, and she even prevents Higgins from going drinking when she barricades the door and "never moved a feature – never took her deep, serious eyes off him" (220). Her resoluteness keeps him stable enough and prevents further violence in the household. She sympathizes with his "pale, haggard face" (221) as he looks at Bessy, and she decides to bring him to her father for sympathy and religious guidance. All this while, Margaret herself is mourning Bessy's death, but she attends to the needs of others before her own. Gaskell's further development of Margaret's storyline in *Milton* confirms the value of

the kind of caregiving work that Ellis endorses for women, but it also illustrates the greater impact a woman might have who is able to practise her sympathetic education in a sphere outside of the home.

Once Margaret brings Higgins to her home, she is able to facilitate his further friendship with her father. She is happy to see them “speaking with gentle politeness” (225) to each other, and she suggests they give Higgins “all the sympathy he needs” (228) after the death of his daughter and the failure of the strike. They have a long discussion about the workings of the union and the implications of the strikes, which helps Mr. Hale and Margaret better understand the politics and motivations of the working men. Higgins later visits with them to discuss finding work in the South, but Margaret understands that “the dulness [*sic*] of the life” would be too much for him, and that he “could not stir [Southerners] up into any companionship” (306). Margaret has learned that Milton has its own culture that is based on “companionship” and sympathy. She understands the politics of the situation as well as the human sympathy needed to change it. She suggests he meet with Thornton, which also spurs an important friendship. Higgins and Thornton work together to create the dining hall at Marlborough Mills, and Thornton later claims these experiments and interactions help him and his labourers “understand each other better, and I’ll venture to say we like each other more” (432). These interactions help create companionship and sympathy among the classes and end some of the violence of strikes, and they are made possible through women’s intervention in politics and male relationships. Gaskell’s heroine takes on many challenges outside the home like Wollstonecraft would recommend, and she is successful in finding commonalities between different groups. Margaret can facilitate these other relationships precisely because she moves beyond the virtues narrowly prescribed for women and proves herself not afraid to discuss “politics” (Ellis 65).

While Margaret appears to be at the beck and call of both her family and Milton's struggling inhabitants, there is one person who almost never demands her labour: Thornton. Their hate-to-love marriage plot is unique not only because it is overlaid with the political situations of Milton, but also because their arguments are often the place where Margaret can truly express her opinions and recognize her biases. Ellis notes that "to have loved faithfully, then, is to have loved with singleness of heart, and sameness of purpose, through all the temptations which society presents, and under all the assaults of vanity, both from within and without" (227). Ellis' idea of love does not appear to have much room for disputes or honest self-expression, but Gaskell develops this model further to accommodate intellectual exchange, including differing opinions, as a solid basis for love. Although Margaret and Thornton do not always agree, and take the entire novel to express their mutual feelings, their arguments are important to developing their relationship. They are tempted by many situations and often disagree, but they always respect and value the other throughout their courtship.

Their initial meeting in Milton shows an inequality of both class and manners. Thornton, the straightforward "bulldog" (Gaskell 135), as Higgins calls him, is stunned by the "stately" (271) Margaret, and despite his "habits of authority himself ... she seemed to assume some kind of rule over him at once" (62). She gives "the impression of haughtiness" (62) even though she is just tired, and he feels "mortified" (63) in their interaction. Their initial meeting is the opposite of a sympathetic interaction, but it does show the beginnings of independence and freedom in their discussions. While Thornton both admires and detests her in this conversation, a moment of free indirect discourse (FID) shows how they interact with each other from his view. Rae Greiner sees FID as "shuttling between a generalizing, impersonal standard of judgement and individual perspectives that revise and refute it" (37). In this scene, the impersonal narrator shuttles to

Thornton's perspective when claiming, "her eyes, with their soft gloom, [were] meeting his with quiet maiden freedom" (Gaskell 63). This type of eye contact does not denote sympathy, but it does show a form of bravery and "freedom" on Margaret's part. Thornton can sense that she is not intimidated by him; she can meet his gaze with an equally strong gaze of her own. Their constant fluctuation between admiration and anger characterizes many of their later interactions.

In the first scene of Thornton visiting the whole Hale family for tea, Margaret and Thornton demonstrate both their disagreements and their intrigue with each other. When writing about the ways men and women should interact with each other, Ellis asks, "is it not good, then, for woman to bear about with her, even in early life, the conviction that her only business with men in society, is to learn of them, and not to captivate, or dazzle them" (215). Margaret not only shows no interest in dazzling men, but also argues with those who disagree with her. Her "business" goes beyond just learning from men; Margaret actively challenges Thornton with her own knowledge and observations. In return, Thornton becomes flustered and angry at their disagreements and speaks to her with less politeness than he usually uses with women. In their conversation, Margaret argues that in the South, there is no "sullen sense of injustice" (Gaskell 81) that currently exists in the people of Milton. He responds with an "inexpressible gentleness in his tone" (82) in attempting to correct her, but also feels "piqued" (84) by her tones, showing he cares about her opinions. Despite disagreeing with some of his opinions, she "was compelled to listen" (83) to his conversation with her parents about Milton mills. He reveals deeply personal aspects of his upbringing to the family in a straightforward manner, and Margaret says she "really liked that account of himself better than anything else he said" (86). Already, Gaskell shows that honest communication contributes to their attraction.

When they part, they have a moment of disconnection where Margaret “was sorry she had not been aware of the intention” (86) of Thornton’s to shake her hand. He believes she is a “proud, disagreeable girl” (86) after this incident, but he did not see she was sorry for the misunderstanding. Their initial meeting demonstrates a more complex relationship than that illustrated by Ellis. Gaskell complicates Margaret and Thornton’s relationship beyond a “sameness of purpose” (Ellis 227) both to weave in political melodrama and to showcase a different kind of equality. They may disagree, but the compulsion to listen to and discuss things with the other persists with a more equal tone than usually seen between men and women. They later disagree about how to speak to workers, but when she mutters an opinion, Thornton tries to discover it as “his thoughts [were] suddenly bent upon learning what she had said” (Gaskell 117). He is “vexed at the [their] state of feeling” (119) after their discussion, and he wants to understand her opinions better. Their intense disagreements actually allow them to conceptualize and express their opinions. Margaret especially is free to express her feelings to a listener who is not dependent on her for “cheering care” (344).

Furthermore, Gaskell shows that Thornton’s friendships with her parents relieve Margaret from potential emotional labour, which gives her much-needed space to rest and reflect. Thornton is known as “the favourite” (69) pupil of Mr. Hale, and they develop a close friendship. At Thornton’s first visit, Margaret feels “that she might let her thoughts roam, without fear of being suddenly wanted to fill up a gap” (80) in their conversation. She is able to let go of her hosting duties in this moment because Thornton and Mr. Hale are content to talk by themselves, allowing Margaret space to “roam” in her own imagination and listen only when she wants to. Even after Thornton’s proposal, with all of its emotional challenges, Margaret’s last words were that “you have been very kind to my father Don’t let us go on making each other

angry” (196). She can already sense that the loss of friendship with her father because of her rejection would be devastating to Mr. Hale. This loss does happen later, and the narrator claims “the very rarity of their intercourse seemed to make Mr. Hale set only the higher value on it” (342), which does not help Margaret at all. She is always concerned about the emotional wellbeing of her family, even when it causes her pain or embarrassment.

Indeed, Thornton and Mr. Hale later have a conversation that “made them peculiar people to each other; knit them together, in a way which no loose indiscriminate talking about sacred things can ever accomplish” (276). This conversation about religion and faith brings them to a deeper level of connection and friendship. Mr. Hale acknowledges “he could unburden himself better to Mr. Thornton than to [Margaret],” and Thornton’s replies “showed how deeply its meaning was entered into” (276). It is significant that this deep connection is forming while Margaret has fainted in another room from her own emotional burden. Thornton’s visit prevents her father from finding her, which likely would have made him more anxious and depressed. Thornton’s friendship with Mr. Hale helps preserve her father’s wellbeing in this moment, even at her physical expense. Even Mrs. Hale begins to appreciate Thornton after he brings her fresh fruit. She calls Margaret “prejudiced” against him and says it was “kind of him to think of me” (215). She later says, “I really begin quite to like Mr. Thornton” and believes “he is really getting quite polished in his manners” (236). Although this is not the deep friendship he has with Mr. Hale, Thornton’s thoughtful gift-giving creates a connection with Mrs. Hale. He finds ways to quietly alleviate the stress on Margaret to entertain and care for her parents, leaving her space to reflect and rest even when it is painful to think of him.

Margaret only begins to openly admire Thornton at his dinner party, which is also where Thornton begins an unconventional method of sympathy where he notices her without eye

contact. At the dinner party, his “straightforward ... simple yet modest” manners made her think “she had never seen him to so much advantage” (162). Margaret begins to see Thornton’s value to the community in his capacity as a respected mill owner among his peers, even though she does not speak with him. Margaret is also able to take the position of interested, informed listener during the dinner discussions, where she is pleased the guests “talked in desperate earnest, – not in the used-up style that wearied her so in the old London parties” (163). The narrator notes that she had learned enough “to understand many local interests – nay, even some of the technical words She silently took a very decided part in the question they were discussing” (163). These scenes demonstrate Margaret’s interest in the political situations of Milton as well as her enjoyment of Milton’s style of communication. She discovers a new, more direct way of talking and listening, and Thornton’s opinions and explanations are often at the centre of the dinner debates. While they do not often speak directly to one another, they are always aware of each other’s presence. For example, the narrator says Thornton “never went near her himself; he did not look at her. Only, he knew what she was doing – or not doing – better than he knew the movements of any one else in the room” (162). His sympathy is unconventional in the sense that he refuses to make eye contact, but he is attentive to her feelings from afar. She watches and thinks of him silently, and he senses her emotions and movements.

Later, he approaches her quietly to discuss her agreement with his opinions at the dinner, and they have a short but earnest conversation about the term “gentleman” (164). After their silent noticing of the other throughout dinner, this discussion is conducted on more equalizing, less antagonistic grounds. Margaret asks questions and comes to a “slow conviction” (164), despite his being pulled away. Where Margaret has previously replied immediately to Thornton’s opinions and fought him on his ideas, she instead takes her time to formulate her response and is

more respectful of his opinions. Kucich argues that the politics of their situation influence their feelings for each other, as the “social frictions between Margaret and Thornton are both the cause of their difficulties and the source of their attractions: he finds her haughtiness alluring; she is intrigued with his power over wealthy commercial men” (12). The political implications of their attraction are a large part of their courtship, but I also think it is the lack of emotional labour and demanded sympathy that helps them grow closer. Their “social frictions,” or disagreements, enable more honesty with each other in a way not seen in their other relationships.

When Margaret further challenges him at the Milton riot, Gaskell shows how this disagreement leads to significant development in their relationship. Ellis discusses what comprises her idea of woman’s love, and she claims that in it “is mingled the trusting dependence of a child, for she ever looks up to the man as her protector, and her guide; the frankness, the social feeling, and the tenderness of a sister – for is not man her friend? The solicitude, the anxiety, the careful watching of the mother – for would she not suffer to preserve him from harm?” (224). Ellis’ description of what encompasses love mentions some qualities Margaret possesses, but many she entirely rejects. She does want to keep Thornton safe from harm, but she does not see any man as her own “protector.” As mentioned earlier, Margaret asks Thornton to “speak to your workmen as if they were human beings. Speak to them kindly” (Gaskell 177). This passage shows a direct challenge to Thornton’s authoritarian management style, and Margaret encourages him to treat his workers with the sympathy she herself shows them. She challenges him to not be “a coward” (177), and she is not afraid for her safety. However, she later sees the crowd becoming restless and fears “all would be uproar ... even Mr. Thornton’s life would be unsafe” (178) as she runs outside to protect him. Her actions demonstrate care for his safety as well as a simultaneous acceptance and rejection of Ellis’

different ideas. Gaskell shows Margaret as fearing for his safety and establishing herself as his protector.

The fallout from the riot firmly grafts the political melodrama to the domestic romance, as Kucich notes. When Margaret goes outside to protect Thornton from the crowd, her moment of putting her arms around him (179) is construed as an intimate act. Kucich argues that in this scene, “Margaret crosses the threshold between domestic and public space by rushing out to protect Thornton – only to be carried back across that threshold moments later, a victim of political violence” (12). This scene blurs the distinctions between the domestic and political that Ellis wants to uphold, and it demonstrates a larger connection between intimate and community sympathetic exchanges. When Thornton later decides to propose after Margaret’s actions at the riot, he claims he was “ungrateful” for her actions, but she refutes his apology while “raising her eyes, and looking full and straight at him” (Gaskell 194). She does not avoid eye contact, as she has done in previous moments, but encourages it so that he will stop his proposal. She says he “offends” her with his speech, and he replies, “I am a man. I claim the right of expressing my feelings” (195). Instead of asserting her own right to express feelings, she says, “I yielded to the right,” but she begins to cry against her will (195). She continues to cry silently while Thornton storms around her. Although her answers were hurtful, her position as a middle-class woman and her own opinions prevent her from storming around like Thornton. Her usual position is as a “sympathy mill” (Maclure 350) for her family, so she stays silent and attentive to Thornton despite his open anger and her quiet mortification. What she has seen as a community-based act of sympathetic emotional labour is what Thornton has seen as a private act of sympathy. Their misunderstanding shows the levels of interconnectedness that Gaskell posits as part of women’s work in the family and community.

Furthermore, Gaskell represents the fundamental misunderstanding in this proposal as creating more assertive feelings in both Margaret and Thornton. She believed she was making a political statement in saving him, while he believed, in Margaret's words, it was "a personal act" (195). Instead of understanding the difficulty of her situation, including her position as the daughter of his friend Mr. Hale, Thornton declares he will continue to love her and "reject[s] her offered hand, and making as if he did not see her grave look of regret" (196). Thornton leaves her with intense "self-reproach" (196), even though he purposely ignores her "look of regret." This moment re-enacts their first encounter at home where Margaret misses his signal to shake his hand, and Margaret is once again left with the guilt. The whole proposal is composed of mixed signals and hurtful phrases, but also an understanding that "he would love her" forever while she viewed his love as "some great power" (197) over her. She thinks that "their intercourse had been one continued series of opposition" (197), but this opposition is exactly what draws them together. They have respected each other, but Margaret has never wanted a protector figure. Their opposing views and frequent arguments show they can share their opinions equally. Even after the proposal, they still respect each other with a "sameness of purpose" (Ellis 227) and feel a sense of awe in the other's power.

Thornton returns to ignoring her after his failed proposal in an attempt to forget about his feelings for her. The emotional labour of ensuring his continued visits are not awkward for him and her father is extremely difficult for Margaret. He is certainly not her protector as Ellis would want, but he does show himself to still be a friend to her family, and by extension her. Ellis asks, "why is [man] not the friend of women in society, as well as in the more intimate relations of social and domestic life?" (216). Thornton has proven that he cares about her opinions in society, but he now shows himself a dedicated, albeit angry, friend to the Hales. In his first visit, he

brings her mother fruit and thinks, “I do it for Mr. Hale; I do it in defiance of her [Margaret]” (Gaskell 214). Thornton invokes his friendship with Mr. Hale as a reason for continuing to visit, but there is enough thought of Margaret to show readers he still cares about her. Margaret’s “heart fluttered” when he entered, but she believes “it would be awkward for both to be brought into conscious collision; and fancied that ... he had overlooked her in his haste” (215). While she thinks he does not see her, he sees her without looking. The narratorial voice shifts into FID again in the next sentence, which says, “as if he did not feel the consciousness of her presence all over, though his eyes had never rested on her!” (215). This shift in perspective reminds readers of their dinner party interactions, where Thornton is aware of Margaret’s movements without looking. The proposal has not changed their awareness of the other; it has just made them feel awkward. He visits again and the narrator says, “he would not – deny himself the pleasure of seeing Margaret” (236), proving that his visits still revolve around her.

Margaret also comes out of her denial to realize that many of her thoughts and feelings revolve around him as well. She later realizes “a friend’s position was what she found that he had held in her regard” and she “thought about him more than she had ever done before” (239). They had an “antagonistic friendship” (239) that shows a respect for the other’s opinions, and the time after his proposal develops this position. After Mrs. Hale dies, Thornton is surprised by Margaret’s look of “gentle patient sadness – nay of positive present suffering” (271) that has accompanied her emotional labour for her family members. This is the first moment he breaks his silence and surprises himself by speaking to her “in so tender a voice, that her eyes filled with tears, and she turned away to hide her emotion” (272). This is one of their first moments of acknowledging their sense of care and respect for the other. Thornton makes eye contact and acknowledges her feelings with his tone. However, Margaret retreats into her habit of emotional

invisibility by hiding her face from him and working. Although she could not fully engage in the sympathetic exchange herself, she does see that Thornton still respects and cares about her. They still hold many different opinions, but they slowly begin to return to a steadier friendship after his proposal.

After lying to the inspector and being saved from inquiry by Thornton, Margaret comes to greater clarity about her feelings for him. At first, “she had sunk under her burden” (276) when questioned by the inspector, showing the sheer amount and weight of the emotional labour she has conducted for her family. She feels an “intuitive desire to efface the traces of weakness” (277) so that her father and Thornton would not find her in distress. She has survived this difficult experience, and she is assisted later by Thornton removing the inquest. He sees himself as saving her and thinks that “the woman he had once loved should be kept from shame; and shame it would be to pledge herself to a lie in a public court” (280). His interference saves Margaret from another act of emotional labour, which readers know could make her faint again. She is too upset by his knowledge to be grateful because she does not want to appear “degraded” (283) in his eyes, but she acknowledges “how much she valued his respect and good opinion” (284). She is beginning to see him as a romantic partner instead of just a friend. After Mrs. Thornton chastises her for her behaviour at the train station and towards Thornton himself, Margaret again seeks solitude to think about him. She asks herself:

Why do I care what he thinks? ... I cannot tell. But I am very miserable I have had no youth – no womanhood; the hopes of womanhood have closed for me – for I shall never marry I am weary of this continual call upon me for strength. I could bear up for papa; because that is a natural, pious duty ... I must give way sometimes. No, I will not, though ... I won't examine into my own feelings. (322)

Margaret's thoughts move from speculating about her true feelings for Thornton to her familial emotional labour. She is upset by her current standing with Thornton and wants to return to friendship. She claims she does not understand her feelings, but she also refuses to "examine" them closely. She then feels sad about her imagined perpetual singlehood and the "strength" she must give her father. This is where Gaskell shows how Thornton's sympathetic visits with Mr. Hale are helpful because he lifts some of the emotional burden off Margaret to entertain, which gives her space to reflect. As it stands to her, however, she sees she must "give way" sometimes to her emotion, but she is always met with either misplaced acts of sympathy or further solitude.

Their final days in Milton together show they will continue to have difficult romantic feelings for each other. As mentioned earlier, Ellis believes true love is when a person has loved with the "sameness of purpose, through all the temptations which society presents" (227). Margaret and Thornton have certainly weathered many temptations and difficulties throughout their friendship. The reader can tell, for instance, that Thornton's claim of being "disinterested" in Margaret is false, particularly after "he followed her for several yards, admiring her light and easy walk, and her tall and graceful figure" (Gaskell 327) after he visits with Higgins. Their exchange is brief, but they both leave wanting, and failing, to not think of the other. When Thornton later offends Margaret in his "evil" (335) temper by implying she is not truthful, he becomes "anxious only for a look, a word of hers, before which to prostrate himself in penitent humility ... she could not care for him, he thought, or else the passionate fervour of his wish would have forced her to raise those eyes" (336). They once again miss an opportunity for sympathetic connection. She does not look at him because she is ashamed, and he mistakes this as her not caring for him. Thornton is agitated by the knowledge that she will not remember her time in Milton fondly, while it was "so unspeakably precious, down to its very bitterness" (357)

to him. He sees it as “a royal time of luxury” when he could take a walk where “every step of which was pleasant, as it brought him nearer and nearer to her” (358). At the prospect of her leaving, it becomes clear that Thornton has cared for her with a “sameness of purpose” (Ellis 227) all throughout the novel. Margaret also carries her desire for his friendship and forgiveness past her days in Milton. She decides “never to dwell upon” (399) his old love and her potential return of this love. They part each in love with the other but determined to not think about it.

When they finally reunite in London, Margaret and Thornton have both undergone more of a sympathetic education as part of their personal growth. Each has learned more about their communities and the roles they wish to play in them. In her attempt to rouse young women to care about others, Ellis asks, “was there nothing, in short, in that mighty mass of humanity, or in the millions of pulses beating there, with health or sickness, weal or wo? – was there nothing in all this to think about?” (109). Both Margaret and Thornton answer this question with a deep sense of care for others, particularly those in different social classes. Margaret’s return to London demonstrates what happens when thinking of others is not encouraged, and it helps her develop into a more assertive and independent woman with a new definition of work for herself. The narrator says before Margaret was truly done recovering from her parents’ deaths and her move, she takes “the semblances of duties off Edith’s hands” (Gaskell 373), essentially becoming Edith’s manager again. This time, however, Margaret “was getting surfeited of the eventless ease in which no struggle or endeavour was required There might be toilers and moilers there in London, but she never saw them” (373). In Milton, Margaret threw herself into local politics and worked hard to understand the lives of those around her, but in London, Edith’s proposed solution to her discomfort is frivolous dinner parties. After losing Mr. Bell, Margaret realizes “she herself must one day answer for her own life, and what she had done with it” and thinks

over the question of “how much was to be utterly merged in obedience to authority, and how much might be set apart for freedom in working” (416). These questions are key for Margaret’s sympathetic education; she realizes she can take control of her own life and enjoys possessing the freedom to work on what she chooses. Gaskell shows that a woman can still help others in her family while finding meaningful work outside the home using a similar set of skills.

Margaret can use her sympathetic abilities and traditional education to invest in others and help them bridge political gaps as she has done in Milton. She defies Ellis’ ideas of women looking for protection, and she asserts herself in the statement that “no one can please me but myself” (417). Gaskell’s heroine has learned that independence and personal happiness begin with caring for the self and understanding that others should help her as much as she helps them.

Meanwhile, Thornton has also learned to engage sympathetically with his workers, and he gains a better understanding of their needs. He had earlier revealed his dining room plan for his workers to Mr. Bell (361). As his business starts to fail, he feels the “apprehension of losing his connection with two or three of the workmen whom he had so lately begun to know as men, – of having a plan or two, which were experiments lying very close to his heart” (419-420). He has developed his relationships with his workers more fully, especially with Higgins with whom he can talk “with far more charity and sympathy, and [they can] bear with each other more patiently and kindly” (420). When Margaret and Thornton first see each other in London, they appear to fall back into their ways of missing each other’s signals, where “she disappointed him by the quiet way in which she asked ... necessary questions” (429). However, Margaret is just intent on watching and listening to him again. At the dinner, he discusses some of his work experiments and says he hopes he and his workers “should understand each other better” (432). Despite their avoidance of each other, Thornton does approach Margaret after “as if he knew she had been

listening to all that had passed” (432) to explain his workers’ petition. Margaret says she is glad for him, and she “look[s] straight into his face with her speaking eyes, and then drop[s] them under his eloquent glance” (432). This exchange marks one of the first moments they look directly at each other in agreement. Margaret can see that Thornton has learned to engage sympathetically with his employees. Their development allows them to achieve a moment of true sympathy and the beginnings of an openly romantic connection.

In their final scene of reconciliation and engagement, Margaret uses her independent fortune and desire to do good work to make a business proposal to Thornton. This business proposition, however, quickly turns into a moment of romance. Kucich argues that “the conventional closure of the romance plot is inadequate to resolve the generic dissonance of Gaskell’s domestic/political hybridization” (16). While I agree that there are some parts of the novel that are not perfectly hybridized in terms of genre, I do believe this finale resolves most of the issues surrounding the couple personally and politically. Margaret’s position as investor, despite the terms of coverture that would change her ability to use her fortune as a married woman, still shows a great development in her independence. She can set the initial terms of the business proposition, and her opinions about mills and workers are now respected by Thornton. After his romantic feelings for her are clear, Margaret quietly places her face on his shoulder and claims she “is not good enough” (Gaskell 435) for him. He returns this by allowing a quiet silence to pass and then showing her the roses from Helstone he has collected. This moment shows their final respect for and understanding of each other, and their union ensures that both will continue to care for and assist the Milton community. Margaret also will be able to leave her position as tenant/cousin/manager with the Shaw family and live more independently as she wishes. Ada Sharpe notes that Margaret “wields sufficient capital and understanding of political

economy to help Thornton save Marlborough Mills,” and that “she has the ability to reject the sort of idle, unfulfilled lives modelled by many of the women around her” (207). Sharpe’s analysis articulates the new life Margaret will be able to enter with her political knowledge and sharpened sympathetic abilities. Her position as an active, respected, and openly opinionated wife of a mill-owner will prevent her being “surfeited” (Gaskell 373) as she has been in London.

The union of Margaret and Thornton represents the larger union of Gaskell’s efforts to create cross-class sympathy and render visible emotional labour, especially the labour of women. After caring for others her whole life, Margaret enters an engagement with Thornton only after gaining emotional and financial independence. Her family demanded so much of her emotional labour, and she spends much of the novel suffocating under the weight of others’ demands. The Shaws and the Milton community also demand much of Margaret’s time, and it takes several abrupt movements and deaths to give Margaret the space she needs to become emotionally independent. Ellis advocated for women to devote their whole lives to care. In a section about the benefits of poetry, Ellis reflects on the roles and qualities of women. She claims that women’s lives “[are ones] of feeling, rather than of action; whose highest [duties are] so often to suffer, and be still For woman, who, in her inexhaustible sympathies, can live only in the existence of another, and whose very smiles and tears are not exclusively her own” (94). Gaskell’s novel engages with these claims by showing that women do not have an infinite amount of sympathy and that emotional collapse is sure to follow when women’s suffering becomes too much. Gaskell’s heroine becomes a stronger woman, daughter, friend, and community member when she participates in mutual exchanges of sympathy instead of providing one-sided emotional labour. Her heroine learns to live as she wants and assert herself to those who make too many demands. Only then does Margaret possess the ability to enter into an equal relationship.

Thornton never demands that Margaret live only for him or use her emotional labour to help him. Instead, he offers his sympathy to her in different ways and relieves her of burdens. He sees that she does not have “inexhaustible sympathies” (94), and he does his best in various ways to help her, even if it means staying away. Their final union promises a more understanding and equal relationship, and it represents the wider union of class and community issues. Sharing the duties of emotional labour and sympathy allow both men and women to make meaningful contributions in their homes and in the larger political landscape. Gaskell’s novel illustrates exactly what happens when the demand that women live only for others is replaced with the idea that emotional work and sympathy can and should be shared across gendered and class divides.

Conclusion

The works of Jane Austen, Charlotte Brontë, and Elizabeth Gaskell are essential resources for understanding the ways women's roles and duties changed during the early nineteenth century. Each writer brings a unique critical perspective to the issues of women's education, sympathy, and marriage, and each works to define new spaces for their characters to inhabit as independent women. The heroines of these novels engage directly with concepts pulled from various forms of conduct literature, and they defy many conduct precepts to create their own roles and responsibilities. The more prescriptive language of conduct discourse, even in the hands of a radical thinker like Mary Wollstonecraft, cannot account for the nuances of daily life and social relationships, which is something novels are uniquely positioned to do. The novel genre, especially realist novels of the nineteenth century, is able to depict the ways these ideas could play out in the lives of Victorian women; the novels I have studied in particular shed light on the unforeseen consequences of conduct discourse. Sympathetic engagement also plays a large role in the ability of each heroine to learn from her familial and political community, and it lays a solid foundation for an equal marriage to a romantic partner. My thesis has shown how issues of education, middle-class values, sympathy, and domestic structures are interwoven in the lives of nineteenth-century women. By finding commonalities among these different areas, I have identified new ways in which these renowned authors challenged the status quo about women's roles in society.

In the decades following the publication of my novels, more questions arose surrounding the rights and roles of women in Britain. The 1860s and 70s saw the rise of early feminist thought and discussions of women's rights. Karen Chase and Michael Levenson ask how, "as the ideology of separate spheres becomes finally entrenched [in the period], feminism will rise to a

prominence and a visibility from which it is never again dislodged? One beginning to an answer lies in the recognition that a traditionalism such as Ellis's began to generate its own undoing—that precisely in the extreme character of its separation between the sexes, it trained women for an independence” (85). Chase and Levenson's point can be seen in all three novels discussed in this project. Heroines Emma, Jane, and Margaret are each tied to the domestic sphere in some way, and each is able to change their relationships within their families and communities to create more freedom for themselves. After finding ways to effectively manage expectations in relation to the domestic sphere, they take their skills outside the home, never again seemingly to be “dislodged” from the political world.

In her epilogue to *Desire and Domestic Fiction*, Nancy Armstrong says, “a central purpose of my argument has been to show how the novel exercised tremendous power by producing oppositions that translated the complex and competing ways of representing human identity into a single binary opposition represented by male versus female” (253). While gender binaries and different expectations for women's engagement in the private and public worlds absolutely play out in my novels, I believe Armstrong's argument misses the key fact that this binary opposition has never been stable. These novels, to use Poovey's language, demonstrate that there is an “unevenness within the construction and deployment of mid-Victorian representations of gender” (4), and much of this unevenness is seen in the use of sympathy in personal and community relationships. The sympathetic exchange represents characters' abilities to change and adapt to new situations as well as to understand the feelings of others. Through their fiction, these novelists demonstrate that the combination of a more rational traditional education with a sympathetic education and an understanding partner can create more possibilities for young women in this time period.

Reviewing the ways these novels are studied and discussed is relevant to our contemporary moment because these stories are adapted and retold in many formats. Just in 2020, a new film adaptation of *Emma* was released to the general public. The marriage plot is just as attractive to readers and viewers as it was in the early nineteenth century, and its popularity ensures there will always be new ways to tell these stories. Re-evaluating the foundational marriage plots can provide readers with new ways of looking at the possibilities for women within these marriages, and more importantly, how the independent development of sympathy and knowledge has implications not only for marriage, but also for politics and community engagement. Adaptations of these stories bring greater attention to the ways in which novel heroines reshape their communities as well as themselves.

Further studies could be conducted on the connection between sympathy, education, and marriage to expand our understanding of nineteenth-century domestic and political structures. For example, my thesis focuses on the effects these changing roles had on women, but an adjacent study of the effects on male characters could provide further insight into the ways changing domestic roles influenced marital partners. My novelists represent male characters not only as traditional breadwinners and patriarchs, but also as emotional fathers and community members. When novelists romantically pair a man with a young woman who has developed her sympathetic abilities and participates in activities outside the home, the possibilities for male sympathetic development inside and outside the home expand as well. These representations also have repercussions on the traditional male education system, which does not have as much focus on domestic duties or caregiving. Studying this subject in the hands of male authors as well could provide another perspective on the effects of the women's rights movement and conduct discourse on the lives of men in the nineteenth century. With the Industrial Revolution and shift

in work culture, along with the growing reliance on middle-class values, men carried different burdens within the family structure. An analysis of sympathy and equal marriages as depicted in fiction would shed further light on these changes to men's lives as well as highlight other areas where the sympathetic exchange affects male relationships.

Furthermore, this study has focused almost exclusively on white, middle-class female characters and novelists. The connections between education, sympathy, and marriage would play out very differently in fiction about working-class families or racialized communities living under nineteenth-century British rule. My limited analysis of Bertha Mason in *Jane Eyre* shows that these ideas of independence and agency do not apply to women who are excluded from the middle-class white female identity. A study of how these concepts play out in fiction that is not centred on the middle-class white female experience would provide greater depth and understanding to the ways my three central concepts are used and understood by a wide variety of authors and audiences. For now, it is good to know that these nineteenth-century authors were able to write stories where women could begin to create their own possibilities in life and find a partner with whom they can "always say what [they] like to one another" (Austen 59).

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