

2012

# Language of Control and the Marriage Plot in Emma and Jane Eyre

Anne Marie Preston  
*Iowa State University*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/etd>

 Part of the [Rhetoric Commons](#), and the [Women's Studies Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Preston, Anne Marie, "Language of Control and the Marriage Plot in Emma and Jane Eyre" (2012). *Graduate Theses and Dissertations*. 12440.

<https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/etd/12440>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Iowa State University Capstones, Theses and Dissertations at Iowa State University Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Graduate Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Iowa State University Digital Repository. For more information, please contact [digirep@iastate.edu](mailto:digirep@iastate.edu).

**Language of control and the marriage plot in *Emma* and *Jane Eyre***

by

**Anne Marie Preston**

A thesis submitted to the graduate faculty  
in partial fulfillment for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Major: English

Program of Study Committee:  
Kathy Hickok, Major Professor

Dometa Brothers

Donna Niday

Iowa State University

Ames, Iowa

2012

Copyright © Anne Marie Preston, 2012. All rights reserved.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1. Introduction	1
CHAPTER 2. “An Endeavour to Improve Her:” Marriage and Control through Language in <i>Emma</i>	8
CHAPTER 3. “I Summon You as My Wife:” Manipulation and Marriage in <i>Jane Eyre</i>	26
CHAPTER 4. Conclusion	46
WORKS CITED	50

## CHAPTER 1

### Introduction

For modern readers, both Jane Austen's *Emma* (1815) and Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847) often stand as examples of strong, feminist novels. Each novel focuses closely on a young woman making her way in the world and standing up for her personal rights. Wendy Moffat, an English professor at Dickinson College, writes that her students easily identify with Emma Woodhouse. Moffat writes, "Emma's independence, her self-absorption, and her romantic sensibilities make her especially approachable to modern readers" (46). Emma's wealth and her indulgent father allow her a sense of independence few nineteenth-century women had, and as Moffat notes, modern readers easily identify with the sense of self she has because of this independence. Devony Looser, an English professor at the University of Missouri, writes that she asks students to consider Austen's feminism or lack of it when discussing *Emma*. Although the word "feminism" was not widely used until the 1880s, the issue of feminism has been a focus in literary criticism of Austen for the last few decades (Looser 100). Whether or not *Emma* is a feminist novel, at a surface level, Emma appears to be fully in control of her life as she manages her father's household, rules over Harriet, and argues with Mr. Knightley.

Although Jane Eyre's social class and situation do not allow her the same amount of freedom as Emma, Jane still desires to take control in her life at any possible opportunity, which we see as she advertises to be a governess or when she flees Thornfield. The novel opens with Jane standing up to John Reed, and we see her assert her personal rights over and over again as the novel continues. Kate Ellis and E. Ann Kaplan write:

But it is the intense ambivalence toward male domination on the part of Brontë and her heroine that speaks so strongly to present day feminists who have claimed Brontë as one of the foremothers of the contemporary women's movement. (192)

Barbara Z. Thaden agrees with this feminist reading, calling the novel "a manifesto of a woman's right to the pursuit of happiness" (160). Furthermore, the close first-person narration lets readers dive deeply into Jane's every thought, which encourages readers to strongly identify with Jane as she carves out her place in the world.

The heroines in each novel do follow along a feminist path in several ways. For example, both Emma and Jane wish to live their lives solely on their own terms. For Emma, this means never to marry and instead to focus on family, friends, and her own happiness. In Jane's case, for most of the novel her strongest desire is to establish a life for herself apart from the Reeds' influence and the drudgery of Lowood. Despite the common desire for freedom, both Emma and Jane fall under the influence of male characters.

I do not wish to dismiss the feminist readings of *Emma* and *Jane Eyre*; however, it is important to consider the role of male domination in the novels to get a more complete idea of the characters of Emma and Jane. Scholars writing about *Emma* disagree about whether Mr. Knightley has a positive or negative influence in Emma's life. One interpretation of the relationship shows Mr. Knightley dominating over Emma and stifling her lively spirit. Moffat writes, "One doesn't have to be a feminist to resent *Emma's* ending. ... Knightley's suitability as a lover is an open question throughout *Emma*, and his sudden shift from mentor to lover is itself a comic turn" (53). Other scholars, such as Theresa Kenney, view Mr. Knightley in a more positive light. Kenney argues that as Mr. Knightley helps Emma mature, he changes into a better man, and the resulting marriage will benefit both. However, as I explain in my chapter on *Emma*, whether or not Emma needs to grow and change is

irrelevant. More importantly, Mr. Knightley takes advantage of the influence he has in Emma's life in order to mold her into a more desirable wife for himself.

Similarly, scholars differ in their interpretations of the relationship between Jane and Mr. Rochester. Scholars such as Nancy Jane Tyson and Esther Godfrey write about Mr. Rochester's domination over Jane. Tyson writes that the novel has a subtheme of "the victimization of women by men, condoned by the system" (97). Tyson includes both Jane and Bertha as Mr. Rochester's victims. However, other scholars see Mr. Rochester more favorably because of his deep love for Jane. James Phillips writes, "Jane and Rochester come together in conversation, inventing each other for themselves, and reinventing marriage as the social form of such freedom" (203). Despite Mr. Rochester's love for Jane, his attempts to control her and manipulate her in order to gain her love and establish a life together are troubling.

Although scholars have written about Mr. Knightley and Mr. Rochester as controlling figures, I am interested in taking that idea further to find exactly where and how they exert their control. This allows for a clearer picture of the romantic relationships. In my two chapters, I conduct rhetorical analysis of dialogue between Emma and Mr. Knightley and between Jane and Mr. Rochester in order to pinpoint exact moments of domination. Along with highlighting specific moments of control, I connect these moments of domination to find patterns of control in the male characters' language. In Mr. Knightley's language, I examine instances when he speaks for Emma, expressing his own thoughts as hers, when he uses silence to abruptly end conversations, and when he dismisses what she says. In Mr. Rochester's language, I examine moments where he speaks to Jane as an employer even when discussing personal matters and when he expresses his own desires as more important

than hers. The reactions to the dominating language are just as important, and so I analyze the ways Emma and Jane respond to the control through language.

I chose to look at conversations in the novels because dialogue figures so prominently in both *Emma* and *Jane Eyre*. Jane Austen's novels are known for their witty dialogue and word play, and *Emma* is no exception as the relationship between Emma and Mr. Knightley develops through conversation. Because of Austen's reputation for engaging dialogue, several scholars, including June Sturrock, Janine Barchas, and Phyllis Ferguson Bottomer, analyze the speech of characters such as Miss Bates, Mr. Woodhouse, Mrs. Elton, and Emma. Sturrock writes, "*Emma*, more than any other of Austen's novels, emphasizes the significance of speech, not only through its brilliant dialogue, but also through an intense consciousness of speech habits and their implications" (n.p.). Considering the importance of language in the novel, I examine the way Mr. Knightley speaks to Emma, her responses, and how their exchanges lead to their marriage. Scholarship on speech in *Emma* tends to focus on Mr. Woodhouse and Miss Bates because their speech habits are so unusual. Bottomer analyzes the speech in *Emma* from the perspective of a speech language pathologist and applies modern ideas to each individual's unique patterns of speech, and Sturrock writes about speech and silence in conversations among members of Highbury society. The importance of dialogue in *Emma* is reflected in the attention paid to speech patterns of the novel. However, less scholarship has been written about specific arguments and conversations between Emma and Mr. Knightley.

Because the relationship between Jane and Mr. Rochester develops through witty bantering, teasing, and conversations, the language of *Jane Eyre* holds just as much importance to the marriage plot. Although not as much rhetorical analysis has been applied to

*Jane Eyre*, language has not been ignored. Susan V. Scaff uses Aristotle's rhetorical appeals to analyze Mr. Rochester's failure to persuade Jane to stay with him. Janet H. Freeman also examines language in *Jane Eyre*. In her article "Speech and Silence in *Jane Eyre*," she writes about the way Jane uses language at different moments in her life. Freeman writes, "Words have power in *Jane Eyre*. They also bestow power. They are the instrument by which Jane Eyre learns to understand and master the world" (690). Freeman's article focuses on the role speech plays in Jane's growth and maturity, and so the article does not go in depth into conversations between Jane and Mr. Rochester. Because I am interested in the romantic relationship at the center of *Jane Eyre*, I closely analyze conversations that relate to the personal relationship rather than looking at how speech works in the novel as a whole. Although rhetorical analysis reveals the true nature of these two romantic relationships, the courtship and marriage in the novels cannot be understood without considering the historical context.

Both *Emma* (1815) and *Jane Eyre* (1847) follow a nineteenth-century pattern of marriage as a major theme in fiction. Versions of the marriage plot appear in all of Austen's novels, Brontë's novels *Shirley* and *Villette*, and various other nineteenth-century novels such as *Middlemarch* and *North and South*. Scholar Kathy Alexis Psomiades simply writes, "Marriage is the material of nineteenth-century British fiction" (53). Although both *Emma* and *Jane Eyre* contain themes such as growth, independence, and a woman's place in the world, each novel transitions into a story of courtship and ends with a marriage. The intense focus on marriage in nineteenth-century fiction aligns with the importance placed on it during the time period. Marriage was a huge part of nineteenth-century women's lives. For

example, by 1851, 71 percent of women over 20 years old were married (Cooper 18). Several factors contributed to the importance placed on marriage during the time period.

For women living in nineteenth-century England, marriage was the best way to secure a stable future. Although married women had few rights in terms of property ownership, money, and even their own children, a husband was legally obligated to provide for his wife (Perkin 19). For many women, especially those without wealth, marriage was a way to ensure financial stability for life. This scenario plays out in novels such as *Pride and Prejudice*, where marriage is the only option to ensure all five Bennet daughters will be provided for after Mr. Bennet's death.

Both single and married working-class women often earned money during the nineteenth century, performing such tasks as manual labor in factories and on farms and domestic work in homes (Steinbach 9). However, working for a living was viewed as a last resort for middle- and upper-class women (Poovey 45). Characters in *Emma* react to Jane Fairfax's plan to work as a governess with concern and pity. In *Jane Eyre*, Jane becomes a governess because she has no family or money to lead her toward any other kind of life. Another option unmarried women fell into in order to earn a living was prostitution. Rough estimates guess that by the mid 1850s, anywhere from 50,000 to 220,000 women worked as prostitutes in London. Exact figures are hard to come by because so many women cycled in and out of prostitution throughout their lives (Steinbach 126). Whatever the exact number is, women without any other option could turn to prostitution as a means of support. With so few options for women to support themselves, many turned to marriage as a necessity. However, the focus on marriage for many nineteenth-century women had to do with more than financial security.

Societal pressure and romantic love also pushed nineteenth-century women toward marriage. For example, even most wealthy and aristocratic women spent most of their lives as wives and mothers (Steinbach 80). For upper-class and aristocratic families, marriage and children were the only way to continue the line and pass on titles and property. Scholar Susie Steinbach writes, “Women who were unable to produce healthy live children were considered disappointments to their families” (81). Even women from less wealthy families felt pressure to marry in order to fulfill roles as wives and mothers (Cooper 14). During the nineteenth century, there was a gradual shift toward romantic love as a legitimate reason for marriage. Similar social and religious backgrounds, shared values, and financial security were still important factors in a match; however, love began to factor into the decision (Yalom 176-177). After Queen Victoria married Prince Albert in 1840, she shone as an example of the ideal wife and mother. In her letters and diaries, Queen Victoria freely described her deep love for Albert, and the couple had nine children together (Cooper 14).

Both *Emma* and *Jane Eyre* stand out from other nineteenth-century novels in that the focus on the main characters’ marriages does not come until later in the novels. The traditional marriage plot in *Emma* does not begin until chapter 11, and the novel finally ends with a marriage between Emma and Mr. Knightley in chapter 19. In *Jane Eyre*, the first mention of marriage is in chapter 10 and the actual marriage plot does not begin until chapter 16. However, as the romantic relationships develop, the novels both transition into marriage plots. To clarify the focus on romantic relationships and marriage in *Emma* and *Jane Eyre*, I conduct rhetorical analysis in the next two chapters in order to gain more complete pictures of the relationships.

## CHAPTER 2

### “An Endeavour to Improve Her:” Marriage and Control through Language in *Emma*

Unlike other Austen characters, Emma Woodhouse does not actually need to marry. Beautiful, witty, and wealthy, Emma leads a charmed life surrounded by a father and friends who adore her. She rules over her widower father and easily manages her home of Hartfield. Although wealthy women in the nineteenth century often married even though they had no need for financial support, Emma has no desire for marriage. She tells Harriet:

I have none of the usual inducements of women to marry ... Fortune I do not want; employment I do not want; consequence I do not want: I believe few married women are half as much mistress of their husband's house as I am of Hartfield; and never, never could I expect to be so truly beloved and important; so always first and always right in any man's eyes as I am in my father's. (76)

With this declaration, Emma knocks down any reason for marrying. Her repetition of the phrase “I do not want” emphasizes just how wonderful a life Emma has in that she lacks nothing. In the book *Women in England 1760-1914: A Social History*, Susie Steinbach writes that although middle- and lower-class women often had no option but marriage to gain financial security, aristocratic women inherited wealth (79). As Emma explains to Harriet, she has fortune enough to support herself for the rest of her life; thus she need not seek financial gain from marriage. Furthermore, this wealth allows her the luxury of spending her days reading, visiting friends, and walking in the gardens, the perfect employment for an upper-class nineteenth-century woman. As far as love goes, Emma realizes that her relationship with her father is rare, and the entire second half of Emma's statement reflects upon their relationship. First, Emma explains that in her relationship with her father, she has independence in that she is a true mistress of Hartfield. Second, she explains that she has love

and respect with her father; she is always beloved and important. Emma understands what a wonderful life she lives and believes that marriage could never improve her situation.

Emma's close relationship with her father reveals another reason she does not plan to marry. Mr. Woodhouse detests change and grows nervous at the thought of marriage. He peppers his statements with references to "Poor Isabella" and "Poor Miss Taylor." The two earn the titles simply through the act of marrying, which took them away from Hartfield. Emma could not bear to add to her father's sorrows and become "Poor Emma" by marrying and leaving him. Mr. Woodhouse never speaks of marriage with anything but negative connotations. He says of marriages, "They are silly things, and break up one's family circle grievously" (10). Mr. Woodhouse is Emma's most constant companion, and the way he speaks about marriage must color her views. Mr. Woodhouse uses this passive-aggressive language to exert his control over Emma as he wants to keep her as his companion. Because Emma has no reason she must marry and hears plenty of reasons not to marry from her father, something must push her toward marriage to Mr. Knightley.

Throughout the novel, Mr. Knightley and Emma have several disagreements and their relationship is defined by verbal debates and bantering. Mr. Knightley and Emma disagree over Harriet's rejection of Robert Martin, Emma's opinion of Jane Fairfax, and Mr. Knightley's dismissal of Frank Churchill. Each argument leaves Emma with seeds of doubt about her own opinion, and by the end of the novel, she has firmly moved over to Mr. Knightley's thinking in each case. Emma's changing opinions throughout the novel demonstrate the intensity of Mr. Knightley's influence in Emma's life. The mutual love between Emma and Mr. Knightley cannot be ignored; however, with the strong role conversation plays in their relationship, the control Mr. Knightley exerts over Emma with his

language factors into *Emma* ending with a marriage. As a guiding figure in Emma's life, Mr. Knightley influences Emma by speaking for her and leading her to his side in their disagreements, and the pattern of persuasion he establishes leads to their marriage.

Mr. Knightley's control through language emerges early in the novel as he and Emma discuss her beloved governess's recent marriage. Emma, of course, feels sadness at the loss of a woman who has taken on the role of her mother. However, Mr. Knightley says of Emma, "But she knows how much the marriage is to Miss Taylor's advantage; she knows how very acceptable it must be at Miss Taylor's time of life to be settled in a house of her own" (8-9). Rather than allowing Emma to express her own feelings, which may or may not be that the marriage really is beneficial to Miss Taylor, Mr. Knightley inserts his own views of the situation, and by using the word "she," presents them as Emma's feelings. Although Emma is in the room as he speaks, he does not address the remark to her by using the word "you." Instead, he trivializes her presence by speaking about her in the third person even while she is present. Furthermore, his repetition of the word "knows" does not allow Emma to make her own judgment of the situation. It implies that Emma's opinions are solidly formed without room for wavering. Mr. Knightley also uses this sentence to set up his own personal goal, to marry Emma. Mr. Knightley knows that Emma has no desire to ever marry, so he phrases a positive sentence about marriage as her own view, rather than his own. In this first interaction, Mr. Knightley's confidence that he knows what is best for Emma sets the tone for the development of their relationship.

When Mr. Knightley speaks for Emma here and in later conversations, the interactions follow a pattern Deborah Tannen describes as "a conversation that has mysteriously turned into a lecture" (*You* 125). Tannen links this pattern to domination in a

conversation because the conversation moves from an exchange to just one perspective. By speaking for Emma, Mr. Knightley eliminates opportunities for her to express her thoughts. Although Emma does not stay silent for long here or in other instances when Mr. Knightley speaks for her, in the moment she loses the chance to engage in an exchange of ideas. After Mr. Knightley's remarks, the conversation immediately shifts to Emma's role in the matchmaking. Because of her role in bringing the couple together, Emma obviously approves of the match between Miss Taylor and Mr. Weston; however, Emma does not have an opportunity to express joy or sadness or any other emotion she feels. Instead, Mr. Knightley turns the moment into a brief lecture on Emma's feelings and reactions.

Although Mr. Knightley's controlling behavior pushes Emma toward marriage, the match comes about partly out of mutual love. He has loved her for most of his life, and she grows to realize her love for him through the course of the novel. Deanna K. Kreisel writes that *Emma* is not actually a novel of falling in love because the main characters love each other from the beginning. However, the plot of *Emma* is not as simple as two characters revealing their mutual love and agreeing to marry. Through their conversations and arguments, Mr. Knightley employs techniques to establish himself as the most important figure in Emma's life. Mr. Knightley's strong influence in Emma's life becomes especially obvious by the novel's end, as Emma backs down from many of her original stances in their previous arguments.

As a result of Emma's charmed upbringing and devoted father, several scholars, including John Dussinger and Linda Bree, note Emma's snobbishness, which extends to her views on marriage. However, this snobbishness has historical grounding. In a book on nineteenth-century marriages, Joan Perkin writes, "A marriage between partners of very

different social rank disrupted social life, and unless the family was exceedingly rich, it cared greatly what other people thought of their alliances” (61). Emma especially sees the importance of similar social backgrounds. She reacts with indignation and embarrassment when Mr. Elton proposes to her because he comes from a slightly lower social class. Emma puts a strong emphasis on her family’s history in Highbury, and as a minister and newcomer to the area, Mr. Elton cannot compare with the Woodhouse family in Emma’s eyes. Emma rejects Mr. Elton for several reasons, but her family’s rank holds special importance to her.

Similar backgrounds in marriage are so important to Emma, that even before she meets Frank Churchill she thinks, “If she *were* to marry, he was the very person to suit her in age, character, and condition” (106). With this thought to herself, Emma firmly establishes her criteria for a successful marriage with similarity to herself as the chief factor. She does not mention love, although on other occasions she states that she would never marry without love. Despite Mr. Knightley’s similar social background and close ties to her family, Emma does not consider him as a suitor until the end of the novel because he has thoroughly established himself as a mentor, which does not easily allow for romance. As a mentor, Mr. Knightley is associated with respect and guidance rather than passionate romance, so he must find another way to move his relationship with Emma into a marriage.

As Emma defends her desire never to marry, she tells Harriet that she will never be a silly old maid like Miss Bates because of her wealth. Emma says, “A single woman of good fortune is always respectable, and may be as sensible and pleasant as anybody else” (77). The statement again shows Emma’s obsession with social class, but it also shows that Emma realizes the power she will have as a wealthy single woman. With money and status, she need not rely on the charity of distant relatives or feel pitied by her friends. Although a woman

could gain social status through her husband, by marrying, nineteenth-century women gave up many other rights. Husbands had legal control over almost every aspect of their wives' lives (Perkin 2-3). For example, everything a woman owned became the legal property of her husband, as married women could not own property until 1870 (Steinbach 80). Through the act of marrying, Emma gives Mr. Knightley an even stronger authority over her than the one he already has through his family ties.

Mr. Knightley has known Emma her entire life, and she has an obvious affection and respect for him. As a witness to Mr. Woodhouse and Miss Taylor's indulgences of Emma, Mr. Knightley takes on a different role in her life. Austen writes, "Mr. Knightley, in fact, was one of the few people who could see faults in Emma Woodhouse, and the only one who ever told her of them" (8). This statement establishes Emma as a woman who has always been loved and adored by those around her and also shows Mr. Knightley's role as a mentor in Emma's life. Her confidence throughout the novel reflects her upbringing as Emma never hesitates to speak her mind or put forth her own opinions. Deborah Cameron writes that historically femininity is linked with silence, especially in public settings (5). Yet under the influence of an indulgent father, Emma thoroughly defies societal conventions and speaks her mind, even in public. During her arguments with Mr. Knightley, Emma does not follow the traditional female role of bowing down to the man's authority. Moreover, during social events such as the Box Hill outing and the ball at the Crown, Emma often finds herself at the center of attention because of her engaging conversation. Emma seems to have control during conversations; however, Mr. Knightley subtly guides the conversations to his own advantage.

I have chosen three arguments between Emma and Mr. Knightley to illustrate his control over Emma through speech. In the arguments about Harriet's rejection of Robert

Martin, Emma's opinion of Jane Fairfax, and Mr. Knightley's disapproval of Frank Churchill, Mr. Knightley uses techniques such as speaking for Emma, using silence to end the conversation abruptly, and dismissing Emma's opinions as worthless. The arguments highlight the different ways Emma and Mr. Knightley judge those around them. For example, despite Emma's strict adherence to social classes, her love for Harriet colors her views, so that she truly believes Harriet is too good for Robert Martin and is a perfect companion for herself. Similarly, Emma's boredom with Jane and her delight in Frank's playfulness and humor shape her judgment. While Emma's emotional responses influence her judgment, Mr. Knightley makes his judgments based strictly on facts.

Early in the novel, Mr. Knightley uses a disagreement with Emma as an attempt to control her actions and her speech. As Mr. Knightley begins to tell Emma the news he has heard about Harriet and Robert Martin, she laughs in his face because she already knows and has encouraged Harriet to reject Robert's proposal. Throughout the scene, Emma laughs and jokes as Mr. Knightley remains serious. She holds the power of the situation because she has knowledge of what has actually occurred and Mr. Knightley remains ignorant. However, the scene soon turns. After laying out his argument for the match, Mr. Knightley says, "Emma, your infatuation about that girl blinds you" (58). In this sentence, Mr. Knightley knocks down the closest friendship Emma has. By calling the friendship an "infatuation," he demeans the bond between Emma and Harriet, while the word "blind" implies that Emma's judgment is so lacking that she should instead turn to Mr. Knightley to interpret situations for her.

Throughout the argument, Mr. Knightley and Emma exchange quick retorts and for every argument he makes, she has a response of her own. Unable to control her speech, Mr.

Knightley seizes control through his own actions and silence. In the middle of the argument, Mr. Knightley says to Emma, “Good morning to you” and Austen describes him “rising and walking off abruptly” (58). When his words cannot persuade Emma, he uses his silence as an act of domination. Tannen writes that although silence is typically associated with weakness, men often use silence as a way to show power (*Gender* 176). Indeed, Mr. Knightley takes control of the situation as he ends the argument without any kind of resolution. Emma remains behind and has no final say.

Although Mr. Knightley’s insults and condescension set off Emma’s temper during the argument, rather than remaining angry, Mr. Knightley’s comments cause Emma to doubt her judgment. At the end of the scene, Austen writes, “Emma remained in a state of vexation too; but there was more indistinctness in the cause of hers than in his” (58). The vexation is more than distress over an argument with a friend. The indistinctness represents the seeds of doubt that maybe her action was wrong. The doubt only emerges under Mr. Knightley’s persistence in asserting his own rightness. Whether Robert and Harriet are a good match is irrelevant. Critic Mary Waldron writes, “The argument is partly based on theory and partly on their ongoing personal conflict” (225). The argument represents a power struggle as Mr. Knightley attempts to exert his control over Emma’s thoughts and actions. He fails in controlling her in the moment; however, the state of vexation she falls into shows that Mr. Knightley actually has succeeded in causing Emma to doubt herself.

Soon after the disagreement, Mr. Knightley and Emma make up. In defending his position, Mr. Knightley says, “I have still the advantage of you by sixteen years’ experience, and by not being a pretty young woman and a spoiled child” (89). Although the statement hints at the teasing nature of their relationship, Mr. Knightley truly does seem to believe that

because of his age and gender, he has better judgment than Emma. By noting his advantage in years and calling Emma a “child,” Mr. Knightley reverts to his usual argument that he knows what is best for Emma. He pairs this with a comment on her gender, insinuating that as a man, he obviously has better judgment. An argument about age and gender should not work on Emma, a woman who stands as a voice of reason for her hypochondriac father. However, Mr. Knightley has such a strong hold over Emma because of his long-standing role as a mentor in her life that the condescending comment does not offend Emma at all and the two shake hands and make up. Eugene Goodheart writes of the relationship, “the much older Knightley finds himself mostly in the role of admonisher of Emma’s behavior” (603). In this scene, Emma willingly accepts Mr. Knightley as a voice of reason in her life. However, the peace does not last long, and another disagreement erupts when Mr. Knightley and Emma discuss Jane Fairfax.

Mr. Knightley voices strong support of a friendship between Emma and Jane in order to influence Emma’s choice in friendships. Similar to the discussion of Miss Taylor’s marriage, Mr. Knightley takes the liberty of speaking for Emma when he speaks about Jane. In this instance, he speaks directly to her rather than about her in the third-person. However, he still phrases his own interpretation of the situation as more correct than whatever Emma feels. He says, “But you will soon overcome all that part of her reserve which ought to be overcome, all that has its foundation in diffidence” (155). Rather than expressing a hope or a speculation that Emma will become friends with Jane, his statement shows that once again, he feels he knows the best course for Emma’s life. By choosing the words “you will,” the sentence rings with Mr. Knightley’s confidence in his own views over Emma’s views. He could have stated that she “might” or “may” develop a friendship with Jane, but the word

“will” shows a deeper level of control. Furthermore, Mr. Knightley completely ignores the open qualities that Emma finds desirable in a friend by assuming that Emma will simply overcome Jane’s reserve. This statement shows the complete confidence he has that he knows what is best for Emma.

During the conversation with Mr. Knightley, Emma asserts her authority by contradicting Mr. Knightley’s hopes and expressing her boredom with Jane. She says of the evening, “I was pleased with my own perseverance in asking questions, and amused to think how little information I obtained” (155). With this statement, Emma sums up her annoyance with Jane. Emma, who is lively and witty, wants a companion who matches her, not someone as quiet and subdued as Jane. However, this explanation does not satisfy Mr. Knightley, and he simply replies, “I am disappointed” (155). Once again, Mr. Knightley uses silence to gain control of the conversation as his terse reply differs from his usual fluent speech. The statement of fatherly disapproval affects Emma so deeply that she moves back from her prior statement and compliments Jane. She says, “She is a sort of elegant creature that one cannot keep one’s eyes from” (155). With three words from Mr. Knightley, Emma softens her previous statements about Jane and finds something in her to compliment.

Mr. Knightley’s remarks in the scene contain no ill will as he truly believes Jane would make a good friend for Emma; however, Mr. Knightley’s language still has an element of control. Tannen writes, “The effect of dominance is not always the result of an intention to dominate” (*You* 18). Indeed, even if Mr. Knightley acts only with the intention to guide Emma into a better friendship, he still uses his persuasive techniques to gain control over Emma’s actions, and his persuasion is successful. Although Emma’s small compliment does not yet indicate any large change in Emma’s opinion of Jane, it does cause Emma to

reconsider her previous judgment. Emma eventually pursues a friendship with Jane, partly because of Mr. Knightley's high opinion of her.

In a similar conversation, when Emma and Mr. Knightley discuss Frank Churchill, Mr. Knightley takes the dominant role as he ignores her attempts to draw the conversation to an amicable conclusion. In this act, he takes full control of the conversation as he is the one to guide it and determine the ending. During the conversation, Emma first says, "We shall never agree about him" (133). Then, "I will say no more about him. ... We are both prejudiced" (134). Both statements reflect an understanding that the argument will never go anywhere as both have such strong opinions. However, Mr. Knightley ignores her conversational cues and continues with lengthy arguments against Frank. By ignoring Emma's attempts to end the conversation, Mr. Knightley ensures that he has the final say about Frank Churchill because the conversation does not end until he brings it to a close.

The ongoing argument over Frank also demonstrates how strong an influence Mr. Knightley has over Emma. She feels drawn to Frank long before she ever meets him, and they form a friendship once he finally arrives in Highbury. However, a quick comment from Mr. Knightley casts doubt in Emma's mind. Mr. Knightley writes Frank off as a "trifling, silly fellow (187)." A few days later, Emma muses over that comment and argues with Mr. Knightley in her mind. She thinks, "Wickedness is always wickedness, but folly is not always folly. ... Mr. Knightley, he is *not* a trifling, silly young man" (192). Emma's overly defensive musing demonstrates how strong a presence Mr. Knightley's opinions are in her own mind. Although Austen hints at Mrs. Weston's disapproval of Frank's behavior, it does not touch Emma the way Mr. Knightley's words touch her. His description of Frank stays with Emma and she uses Mr. Knightley's own words in her mind. On other occasions, Mr.

Knightley has attached Emma's name to his own words, but on this occasion, Mr. Knightley's words are so solidly lodged in Emma's mind that her own good opinion of Frank begins to disintegrate.

The ongoing argument about Frank Churchill touches on the personal relationship between Emma and Mr. Knightley more closely than the previous arguments about Harriet and Jane. Emma develops a flirtatious friendship with Frank, which brings out Mr. Knightley's jealous side. Theresa Kenney writes, "If he is in danger of losing his place as first in Emma's life, he will react bitterly, and he continues to do so" (114). Indeed, Mr. Knightley does little to hide his loathing for Frank. After Emma and Frank plan a ball together, Mr. Knightley says to Emma, "Pleasure in seeing dancing! – not I, indeed, – I never look at it – I do not know who does" (231). The statement reflects the jealousy Mr. Knightley feels at Emma's growing friendship with Frank. However, it also shows distaste for an activity that, much like matchmaking, Emma enjoys. Despite Mr. Knightley's statement that he would rather "be at home, looking over William Larkins's week's account," he says he cannot refuse the invitation. Mr. Knightley accepts the invitation because staying at home would leave Emma with Frank for the evening.

Another strategy Mr. Knightley uses to control Emma through her speech is dismissing her thoughts and ideas as nothing of importance. In a discussion of nineteenth-century courtship, Marilyn Yalom writes that a woman could not speak her feelings until the man had declared his feelings first (177). This expectation for a woman to stay silent until the man had spoken first reflects a larger idea of women letting men guide their conversations and speak first. However, Emma frequently defies this societal custom. Mr. Knightley cannot keep Emma silent, and so he attempts to take control by minimizing what she has to say.

During the fight over Harriet's dismissal of Robert Martin, Mr. Knightley bursts out, "Nonsense, arrant nonsense, as ever was talked" (57). By calling her argument "nonsense," he dismisses it as nothing of worth or value. His anger, although a result of the heat of the argument, reflects his outrage at his inability to make Emma see her wrongness. Similarly, in the discussions about Miss Taylor's marriage and Jane Fairfax's visit, Mr. Knightley dismisses whatever Emma has to say as he voices his opinions as her own and ignores her side of the argument.

The ongoing arguments between Emma and Mr. Knightley culminate after an outing at Box Hill when Mr. Knightley scolds Emma because of her speech. Bored and encouraged by Frank, Emma insults Miss Bates during a word game. Emma and other characters find Miss Bates wearisome and dull, but until this point, Emma has always treated her with respect and kindness. After witnessing Emma's behavior, Mr. Knightley pulls her aside. He says, "I cannot see you acting wrong, without a remonstrance. How could you be so unfeeling to Miss Bates? How could you be so insolent in your wit to a woman of her character, age, and situation?" (340). Mr. Knightley scolds Emma like a father-figure, and his repetition of the phrase "how could you" shows disbelief at her behavior. His speech rings with a sense of authority over Emma as he says he cannot let her behavior go without notice.

Although Mr. Knightley's anger surfaces because of Emma's insult to Miss Bates, his statement reflects unhappiness at Emma's behavior during the entire day. Emma spends the day flirting with Frank and offering witty remarks during the word games and conversations. Susan Rogers argues that even though Emma realizes she does not love Frank, she continues her flirtation because of the attention she gets from Highbury society. She finds herself the center of attention during the outing to Box Hill as she laughs and banters with the group

assembled, and her behavior makes Mr. Knightley uncomfortable. Cameron writes, “Speaking out in public is persistently represented as something that both unsexes and de-classes women” (15). Even though Mr. Knightley loves an open temper and enjoys his verbal debates with Emma, her behavior during the Box Hill outing, including her public speech, taints her in his eyes. He responds as a mentor rather than a suitor as he seeks to regulate Emma’s behavior.

In response to Mr. Knightley’s scolding, Austen writes of Emma, “Never had she felt so agitated, mortified, grieved, at any circumstance in her life” (341). This statement fully sums up the influence Mr. Knightley has achieved over her in the range of negative emotions Austen lists. After previous arguments with Mr. Knightley, Emma leaves feeling “vexed” or “confused.” Now that he has explicitly stated his unhappiness with her behavior, Emma’s unhappy emotions intensify as she feels “agitated,” “mortified,” and “grieved.” Furthermore, with the word “never,” Emma describes the incident as the event in her life that touches her most deeply. The intensity of Emma’s shame over her remark shows the power of Mr. Knightley’s words.

Because of her upbringing and social awareness, Emma must realize that her comment toward Miss Bates was cruel, and it does not fit her usual behavior. However, the negative feelings do not emerge until after Mr. Knightley’s scolding. Following Emma’s remark, the guests move quickly past it and return to the game. Austen describes the party for several more pages, and Emma gives no indication of embarrassment or regret. She even laughs with Frank Churchill and jokes about finding him a wife. However, once Mr. Knightley pulls Emma aside to discuss her remark, Emma feels so ashamed she becomes almost physically ill. Austen writes, “She had not been able to speak; and, on entering the

carriage, sunk back for a moment overcome” (341). Emma’s realization that she has truly disappointed Mr. Knightley seems to weigh as heavily on her as the insult to Miss Bates. After feeling Mr. Knightley’s disappointment, Emma vows to make changes in her life.

The Box Hill incident marks a turning point in Emma’s life and in the novel. The very night she arrives home, Emma spends the evening playing backgammon with her father simply because she knows it will make him happy. Austen writes, “*There*, indeed, lay real pleasure, for there she was giving up the sweetest hours of the twenty-four to his comfort” (342). Although Emma’s earlier actions reflect a deep love for her father and concern for his well-being, she also often seems to defy societal norms for nineteenth-century women as she strongly voices her own opinions, takes charge of the household, and has no desire to marry. However, this statement reflects a more traditional woman, acting selflessly for the comfort of a father or husband. Emma continues down her new path the day after the Box Hill outing as she pays a visit to the Bates family, vowing to begin “a regular, equal, kindly intercourse” (342). Emma’s new behavior evokes Virginia Woolf’s *Angel in the House*, a woman intensely unselfish, sympathetic, and fully devoted to the needs of others (141). Mr. Knightley’s scolding pushes Emma toward this more traditional pattern of behavior.

As Mr. Knightley and Emma realize their mutual love, Mr. Knightley faces the reality that he has acted too much like a mentor in her life. He says, “I have blamed you, and lectured you, and you have borne it as no other woman in England would have borne it” (389). Mr. Knightley’s realization of his own faults shows a shift in his character. Mr. Knightley says he has loved Emma since she was 13, and Austen hints at his feelings from early on in the novel. However, he frequently acts as a teacher rather than a suitor. When Mr. Knightley fears that Emma loves Frank, he realizes that he may have lost her because of his

arrogance. Kenney writes, “He is humbled by his realization of his dependence on Emma for all his happiness and by his recognition of his earlier arrogance toward her” (118). Once Mr. Knightley fears that he may lose Emma, he gains an awareness of his past wrongness toward her.

However, even though Mr. Knightley realizes he has not behaved fairly toward Emma, Emma takes a different view of their history. She thinks, “She had often been negligent or perverse, slighting his advice, or even willfully opposing him, insensible of half his merits, and quarrelling with him” (376). Although the relationship between Emma and Mr. Knightley develops through their verbal debates, Emma reflects on her behavior in these conversations in a negative light. Her word choices of “opposing” and “quarrelling” show Emma conforming to a traditional female role as she suggests that she should have acted more obediently toward Mr. Knightley by agreeing with his opinions and following his suggestions. Her sentence also reflects on the role of speech in their relationship as Emma thinks that she should have listened more rather than arguing with him. Emma’s self-reflection on the relationship shows her transformation into a more traditional wifely figure.

Austen shows the new side of Emma during Mr. Knightley’s marriage proposal. After Mr. Knightley proposes, Austen does not allow her readers to hear Emma’s actual response. Austen writes, “She spoke then, on being so entreated. What did she say? Just what she ought, of course. A lady always does” (390). Although *Emma* is known for its witty conversations, Austen chooses to eliminate Emma’s dialogue in this key moment. Instead, the narrator gives the response for Emma. Along with masking Emma’s response, the idea that Emma replies to the proposal by saying just what she ought to further shows the change in her. In the first part of the novel, Emma rarely says just what she should. Instead, she

speaks her mind and loudly asserts her own opinions. Earlier in the novel, Emma speaks out at will, but this reply to Mr. Knightley's marriage proposal shows a new side to Emma.

With Emma's changing behavior, her old arguments with Mr. Knightley disintegrate, again representing the influence he has over her. While discussing Robert Martin's engagement to Harriet, Mr. Knightley notices that Emma has changed her opinion of the matter. Emma simply says, "I hope so – for at that time I was a fool" (429). With this short statement, Emma casually dismisses everything she was previously so sure about. Furthermore, by calling herself a fool, Emma paints her past self as a frivolous person lacking in judgment, which aligns with Mr. Knightley's dismissal of many of Emma's statements. Along with this change of opinion, Emma also changes in the way she views Frank Churchill and Jane Fairfax. In all three instances, Emma moves toward Mr. Knightley's way of thinking.

An important note to these disagreements is that when examining the arguments objectively, Mr. Knightley appears to be the rational one. For example, Harriet and Robert truly are a good match and Emma grows to enjoy Jane's company. Waldron writes of the disagreement over Robert Martin's proposal to Harriet, "We cannot but feel in double harness with him [Mr. Knightley], for we too feel wiser than Emma and are, moreover, in on the secret of her delusions about Mr. Elton" (223). However, as stated before, all these arguments go deeper than the surface issues. The arguments represent opportunities for Mr. Knightley to exert his control over Emma with his language. He never fully controls her during the actual arguments, but Emma eventually moves to his way of thinking in each instance. Goodheart writes that a marriage with Mr. Knightley cannot thrive unless Emma

outgrows her willful nature, which may not be the best outcome for Emma. Whatever the desired outcome, Emma realizes her love for Mr. Knightley during her transformation period.

One reading of the novel is that Mr. Knightley has a positive influence over Emma in that she changes into a better, more mature woman under his guidance. Emma herself says she acted foolishly by encouraging Harriet to reject Robert Martin's proposal. After realizing her love for Mr. Knightley, Emma appreciates that he had "watched over her from a girl, with an endeavor to improve her, and an anxiety for her doing right" (376). This statement once again establishes Mr. Knightley as a mentor in Emma's life rather than a suitor. The word "improve" reflects upon his behavior during their arguments. To "improve" something, there must be an element of control. In each of their arguments, Mr. Knightley grows frustrated in his inability to persuade Emma to his way of thinking. Even if Emma needed to grow and change, the issue remains that Mr. Knightley uses the influence he has over Emma to his own advantage. He freely admits that he has loved Emma since she was 13, and so he uses his role as a mentor in her life to shape her into his idea of a desirable wife.

### CHAPTER 3

#### **“I Summon You as My Wife:” Manipulation and Marriage in *Jane Eyre***

The love story at the center of *Jane Eyre* between the poor, plain governess and her brooding master draws readers in and is a large reason for the novel’s continued popularity. Jane and Mr. Rochester have a sexual attraction, an intellectual bond, and a love that endures even after separation. However, the relationship is not as simple as two characters falling in love and marrying. As several scholars note, Mr. Rochester exerts control over his young governess from the moment they meet. Because of Jane’s love for Mr. Rochester and her role as a governess in his household, Jane has a strong desire to please Mr. Rochester, which emerges as a deferential manner in many of their interactions. From society’s standards, Jane is unlikely ever to marry because she is a poor, plain orphan, and Jane herself has no plans for marriage in her life. The unlikely marriage comes about in part because of Mr. Rochester’s control over Jane. He uses his authority over Jane to his advantage by commanding her like an employer even on personal matters and putting his own desires ahead of hers. Mr. Rochester’s commanding language and Jane’s obedient responses to his control play an important role in the development of their romantic relationship.

*Jane Eyre* opens with a young Jane who longs for travel and adventure. While reading *Gulliver’s Travels* she thinks, “I doubted not that I might one day, by taking a long voyage, see with my own eyes the little fields, houses and trees, the diminutive people, the tiny cows, sheep, and birds ...” (28). Jane dreamily imagines the wonderful, adventurous life she will someday live. Although a little girl’s imaginings are not indicative of what she will want as an adult, Jane lacks a mother to push her in the direction of marriage. In novels such as *Middlemarch* and *Pride and Prejudice*, mothers work as matchmakers as they push their

daughters toward suitable husbands. Jane has no one in her life to guide her toward marriage, and so even as she becomes an adult, marriage does not figure into her plan for life.

After eight years at Lowood, Jane longs for a change, but marriage does not factor at all into Jane's ideas for a change. She says, "I desired liberty; for liberty I gasped; for liberty I uttered a prayer" (101). Jane's repetition of the word "liberty" indicates how trapped she feels at Lowood. At this moment, what Jane wants most out of life is freedom. When Jane realizes that liberty is impossible, she cries out, "Grant me, at least, a new servitude!" (101). With this statement, Jane takes a realistic view of what she must expect out of life as a poor orphan; however, she still has hope that she can somehow make a new kind of life for herself. As Jane becomes a governess at Thornfield, the novel slowly transitions into a marriage plot.

During the first meeting between Mr. Rochester and Jane, power dynamics are established that last for the rest of the novel. In Mr. Rochester's first words to Jane, he commands her and she obeys. He says, "You must just stand on one side" (134). The word "must" is a strong directive that establishes Mr. Rochester as a man used to controlling the world around him. Rather than asking Jane to stand aside, Mr. Rochester orders with the word "must," and although Jane's first instincts were to help Mr. Rochester up after he has fallen, she moves to the side. During this first interaction, Jane instinctively realizes that Mr. Rochester belongs to a high social class and calls him "sir," but Mr. Rochester cannot quite place where Jane belongs.

As the conversation continues, Mr. Rochester discovers that Jane is the new governess, but Jane has no idea that she is speaking to her new employer. Mr. Rochester takes control of the situation by asking Jane who Thornfield belongs to and if she knows Mr.

Rochester. With these questions, he manipulatively gains information about Jane without giving her any information about himself. Because he has knowledge and she remains ignorant, he seizes control of the scene, which foreshadows their future relationship when he keeps control over Jane by hiding Bertha's existence.

Confusion over Jane's status as a governess is a key aspect to the power dynamic in their relationship. Esther Godfrey writes of governesses, "They were feminine and yet they were not feminine; they were sexual objects and gender subjects; they occupied a place simultaneously within and outside middle-class society" (859). As Godfrey explains, governesses had no firm role in the household. Because of this confusion, Mr. Rochester feels free to give Jane orders, tease her for his own enjoyment, and generally speak to her in a way he could never speak to a woman of his own social class, such as Blanche Ingram. However, as a governess, Jane's social class is ambiguous enough that she can sit with Mr. Rochester in the evenings and develop a personal relationship with him, which could not happen if she was a servant. The role of governess allowed a sense of familiarity. As Mary Poovey writes, a governess was "almost the only occupation considered sufficiently 'genteel' enough for middle-class women, because this form of work most closely approximated that of the wife and mother" (43). Governesses were both paid subordinates and members of the family, a confusing and problematic combination.

During one evening at Thornfield, this confusion comes into play as Mr. Rochester veers back and forth between treating Jane as an employee and as a woman he finds charming. As for Jane, she has moments of both anxiety and pleasure during the conversation. Mr. Rochester says, "Miss Eyre, draw your chair still a little further forward. ... I cannot see you without disturbing my position in this comfortable chair, which I have no

mind to do” (156). Although Mr. Rochester addresses Jane respectfully, he phrases his statement as a direct order rather than asking Jane to move her chair forward. Furthermore, Mr. Rochester asserts his higher class position by stating that his comfort matters more than hers. However, Mr. Rochester’s sole purpose behind the statement is that after just a few brief interactions with Jane, he feels intrigued and would like to sit near her and learn more about her. Jane thinks, “I did as I was bid, though I would much rather have remained somewhat in the shade; but Mr. Rochester had such a direct way of giving orders, it seemed a matter of course to obey him promptly” (156). Jane does not yet find herself drawn to Mr. Rochester in the way he feels drawn to her. She does, however, find his behavior, especially his interest in her, odd. As his employee, she does not feel that she can disobey the order to draw her chair near his. Although the issue of whether Jane moves her chair forward matters little, this small interaction shows the power dynamics that remain even when the relationship becomes romantic.

As this conversation continues, Mr. Rochester highlights his higher social class in that he feels no need to indulge in polite conversation that he finds boring. Mr. Rochester finds the well-groomed Blanche Ingram tiresome, but Jane, despite her solemnity, amuses him. Mr. Rochester asks Jane, “Do you think me handsome?” to which she replies with a straightforward “No, sir” (156). The overly familiar question reflects the confusion of a governess’s role. However, Jane’s straightforward answer and honesty delight Mr. Rochester so much so that he plays off her answer by teasing her and pressing her to continue speaking. Despite Jane’s blunt answer, she remains aware of Mr. Rochester’s higher position and tries to apologize and soften her answer. Jane finds the conversation so odd that she thinks to herself, “Decidedly he has had too much wine” (158). From this thought, Jane shows that she

has not yet been charmed by Mr. Rochester. Instead, she finds the situation confusing and blames it on too much wine. Mr. Rochester, however, thoroughly enjoys Jane's honesty, solemnity, and especially her puzzlement at his behavior, and so she remains an object of his amusement.

Jane moves deeper into annoyance before finally finding pleasure from the evening. Mr. Rochester continues in his control of the conversation when he bluntly orders her, "Speak" (159). When she remains quiet, he uncomfortably highlights her silence by saying, "You are dumb, Miss Eyre" (159). In these two statements, Mr. Rochester makes no effort to make Jane comfortable. Instead, the conversation revolves around his own interests in that he wants Jane to entertain him. However, because of the strong interest Mr. Rochester has in Jane, once he realizes her annoyance, he softens his statements so that she will participate in the conversation. The interaction now changes in that Jane freely speaks her mind and even stands up for herself. She says, "I don't think, sir, you have a right to command me, merely because you are older than I, or because you have seen more of the world" (160). Jane continues with quick responses and witty replies to Mr. Rochester's teasing. As an orphan who has rarely been regarded as someone special or interesting, Jane happily absorbs the playful conversation. The relationship between Mr. Rochester and Jane, which leads to marriage, develops from this type of banter. By the end of the conversation, a stronger familiarity between the pair has been established. However, the interaction only came about through Mr. Rochester's commands and assertions of his higher social class.

In this interaction and many later ones, Mr. Rochester follows a common male conversational pattern. Daniel N. Maltz and Ruth A. Borker write, "Men use more mechanisms for controlling the topic of conversation, including both topic development and

the introduction of new topics, than do women” (198). Indeed, as Mr. Rochester asks Jane familiar questions and aggressively demands her to speak, he leads the conversation in the direction he wants rather than allowing for a mutual exchange of ideas. Deborah Tannen cautions that although topic raising is often linked to domination, this is not always the case (*Gender* 179). However, once again, class dynamics come into play. As seen in the fireside conversation, Jane cannot easily refuse Mr. Rochester’s requests, even when his requests are personal.

The same type of commands and power differences because of social class come through again and again as the relationship between Jane and Mr. Rochester develops. During the party at Thornfield, Mr. Rochester orders Jane to sit with the ladies in the evening even though he knows it will make her uncomfortable. He tells Mrs. Fairfax, “If she objects, tell her it is my particular wish; and if she resists, say I shall come and fetch her in case of contumacy” (201). With this statement, Mr. Rochester gives orders like an employer, but the order he gives reflects a personal wish. He uses his power over Jane to his own advantage. Furthermore, the word “fetch” objectifies Jane in that Mr. Rochester implies he can easily force her into the sitting room as if she were a piece of furniture he will just grab and set down in the middle of the room. At this point, a relationship between Jane and Mr. Rochester has begun to develop, so he knows her well enough to understand how uneasy a large party of wealthy people will make her, yet he orders her to attend simply for his own enjoyment.

During the party, Jane sits alone while Mr. Rochester cruelly flaunts his friendship with Blanche. Yet when he sees Jane slipping away, he demands to know why she did not speak to him. As Jane’s eyes fill with tears, he takes no time to comfort her and instead makes another demand. He says, “So long as my visitors stay, I expect you to appear in the

drawing-room every evening” (214). Once again, he orders Jane as an employer even though the demand he makes is a personal one. Because of her role as the governess, Jane cannot say no to the request, even though it causes her pain. Nancy Jane Tyson writes of the relationship, “He dominates the young governess in conversation, demanding that she entertain and divert him. He spies on her and orders her from room to room with a personal interest more intense than that of employer for employee” (97). Even though Mr. Rochester seems to have romantic feelings for Jane, he continues to order her around like an employer so that he can control her actions.

Mr. Rochester uses his authority as Jane’s employer to his advantage when she asks permission to visit Mrs. Reed. After giving Jane her wages to use on the trip, he asks for nine pounds back to ensure that she will return. Jane has almost no money in the world, so she refuses. Mr. Rochester replies, “Little niggard! Refusing me a pecuniary request! Give me five pounds, Jane!” (264). Although there is an element of playfulness in his words, the action the words suggest give him greater control over Jane. If Mr. Rochester does not give Jane her full wages, she will have to return to Thornfield. He teasingly insults Jane while making a burdensome demand because he wants to control her actions while she is away from Thornfield. When Jane refuses to give back the much-needed salary, Mr. Rochester makes another request. He asks her “Not to advertise; but to trust this quest of a situation to me. I’ll find you one in time” (265). Although this request could be a caring employer assuring his employee that he will help her find a new position, in Mr. Rochester’s case, it also allows him to take control of Jane’s future. By agreeing not to advertise for a new position, Jane agrees to passively go wherever Mr. Rochester chooses.

Despite the pain Mr. Rochester causes Jane and the control he exerts over her, Jane falls firmly in love with him during her first few months at Thornfield. Within his controlling language, there is also love, attraction, and interest, and Jane delights in his attention. She thinks, "Gratitude, and many associations, all pleasurable and genial, made his face the object I best liked to see" (175). Whatever faults Jane sees in Mr. Rochester, she writes off as "some cruel cross of fate" (175). These statements demonstrate the intense love and attraction Jane feels toward Mr. Rochester. Her feelings are so strong that she feels he is blameless for any of his negative qualities. The love Jane feels, coupled with her awareness of her social class, account for her deferential manner in many of her interactions with him because she has such a strong desire to please him.

During both the fire at Thornfield and Bertha's attack on Mr. Mason, Jane calmly follows Mr. Rochester's orders and keeps his secrets. After Bertha's attack, Mr. Rochester tells Jane, "You will sponge the blood as I do when it returns; if he feels faint, you will put the glass of water on that stand to his lips, and your salts to his nose. You will not speak to him on any pretext" (247). Mr. Rochester's repetition of the phrase "you will" reflects the authority he has over Jane, even though this demand goes so far beyond a governess's duties. By involving Jane in the mess, he owes her some kind of an explanation, but instead, he withholds it and orders her to stay silent. Although Jane feels fearful, she follows Mr. Rochester's orders exactly, without asking any questions, because of a sense of duty and her love for him.

Even when Mr. Rochester cruelly toys with Jane's emotions by asking her to sit up with him the night before his wedding, Jane replies with a simple, "Yes, sir" (258). Jane's repetition of "sir" and "my master" demonstrate the strangeness of the relationship that

develops at Thornfield. The pattern of address begins during their first meeting when Jane recognizes Mr. Rochester's higher class and addresses him as "sir." As her employer, Jane's use of the word "sir" is fitting; however, as the relationship becomes more personal, Mr. Rochester switches from the formal "Miss Eyre" to the familiar "Jane." Jane does not switch her language, even after their engagement. In fact, even in the last section of the novel, when Jane no longer works for Mr. Rochester and has inherited money, she still refers to Mr. Rochester as "my master" and addresses him as "sir." The class differences that define their early relationship are so ingrained in Jane's mind that she uses the words "sir" and "my master" as her own personal terms of endearment.

Jane shows her love through her unwavering devotion to Mr. Rochester and these terms of endearment because she cannot show her love in any other way. As a woman and as Adèle's governess, Jane cannot reveal her love for Mr. Rochester. Marilyn Yalom writes of Victorian courtship, "Caution was the order of the day, especially for the woman, who was not supposed to indicate her true feelings until the man had declared his" (177). A woman such as Blanche Ingram would never reveal her true romantic feelings, and for a governess, caution had even higher importance because she could not expect any return of a declaration of love. Jane understands this and berates herself for thinking he might love her, "*You* a favorite with Mr. Rochester? *You* gifted with the power of pleasing him? *You* of importance to him in any way?" (190). The idea of a future with Mr. Rochester is so unlikely in Jane's mind that she angrily scolds herself for even dreaming of it. Her repetition of the word "you" puts an emphasis on herself and her unworthiness of Mr. Rochester. Victorian society would agree with Jane that Blanche would be a better match for Mr. Rochester. Although there was a growing trend toward marriage for love in the nineteenth century, social class and financial

issues still factored into the matches (Yalom 177). Mr. Rochester, however, provokes Jane into declaring her love for him before he has admitted his own feelings.

Mr. Rochester finally admits his own love for Jane with a bizarre proposal. Mr. Rochester has full control in this scene because Jane believes he is engaged to Blanche. This allows him to speak about Jane while masking it as speaking about Blanche. Jane continues in her deferential manner by asking, “Must I move on sir? Must I leave Thornfield?” (293) These questions show a completely different Jane than the young woman who bravely left Lowood without consulting anyone for help. Mr. Rochester responds in a fatherly manner by saying, “I believe you must, Jane. I am sorry, Janet; but I believe, indeed, you must” (293). Both Jane and Mr. Rochester repeat the word “must” in their sentences, showing that whatever decision Mr. Rochester makes will stand. The word leaves no room for disobedience. Their speech continues with military language, reflecting the controlling force Mr. Rochester has over Jane. She tells him, “Well, sir, I shall be ready when the order to march comes” (293). Jane speaks as if Mr. Rochester were her commanding officer and she will blindly follow his decree, wherever it may lead her. Mr. Rochester picks up on her military theme and replies, “It is come now – I must give it to-night” (293). By now, the relationship has moved so far past an employee-employer relationship, and yet, they cling to their familiar order of Mr. Rochester giving the orders and Jane passively following.

Throughout this scene, Mr. Rochester cruelly manipulates and teases Jane by allowing her to believe that he will soon marry Blanche. He refers to “my beautiful Blanche,” although he has no feelings at all for her. He also tells Jane, “In about a month I hope to be a bridegroom” (294). He actually means that he hopes to marry Jane in a month, but he allows Jane to believe that he plans to marry Blanche. With these mean tricks, Mr. Rochester keeps

firm control over the situation unfolding. Even as he proposes to Jane, Mr. Rochester reverts to his usual tactic for controlling the conversation as he raises topics and gives commands in order to steer the conversation in the direction he wishes. The scene echoes back to their first meeting when Mr. Rochester knew that Jane was the new governess while she remained ignorant, which allowed him to manipulate the conversation. Mr. Rochester's most cruel act comes when he tells Jane he has found a new position for her in Ireland. The news devastates Jane because she finds the thought of separation from Mr. Rochester unbearable. However, he allows her to feel that pain and humiliation simply for his own benefit.

By this final cruel trick, Mr. Rochester gets the reaction he wants as Jane explodes with emotion and confesses her love. She says, "Do you think I can stay to become nothing to you? Do you think I am an automaton? A machine without feelings?" (296). Jane's indignant response reflects all the pent up anger at Mr. Rochester's manipulations. By comparing herself to a machine, she realizes how little regard Mr. Rochester often seems to have for her own feelings. For the first time in their relationship, Jane responds to Mr. Rochester's cruelty with fury rather than with slight annoyance or sadness. However, he stops her from taking her anger too far by gathering her in his arms and kissing her. Jane struggles to get away and asserts her authority, saying, "I am a free human being, with an independent will; which I now exert to leave you" (297). Jane indignantly asserts her own self-worth with these strong statements of independence. She uses the word "I" twice in the statement, emphasizing that she is just as much of a person as Mr. Rochester, not a machine to be ordered around. Jane's anger snaps her out of her passivity in regards to Mr. Rochester, so he reverts back to commanding her using the language of an employer. He says, "But Jane, I summon you as my wife" (297). The word "summon" leaves no room for Jane to give

an answer. A few sentences later, Mr. Rochester does ask, “Jane, will you marry me?” (298). However, before Mr. Rochester asks the question, he gives a command.

An important footnote to this scene is, of course, that Mr. Rochester cannot legally marry Jane, which he hints at in his murmurings. He says, “I know my Maker sanctions what I do. For the world’s judgment – I wash my hands thereof. For man’s opinion – I defy it” (299). Mr. Rochester wants Jane as his wife so badly that he justifies the false marriage to himself, despite his legal obligation to Bertha. In this justification, Mr. Rochester considers God, the world, and society; however, he does not consider what the “marriage” could do to Jane. Mr. Rochester attempts the sham marriage because he loves Jane so deeply that he cannot imagine life without her; however, his love does not make his action any less selfish. Critic James Phillips argues, “Rochester wishes to marry Jane because it is through marriage that they will be able to enter a relationship of equals; he wishes to marry her precisely because he does not want to take advantage of her” (203). However, this argument does not take into account the devastating consequences Jane will suffer if the prior marriage to Bertha comes out, and as the novel shows, it is unlikely the first marriage could be hidden for long. Rather, by proposing to Jane while hiding his marriage to Bertha, Mr. Rochester once again puts his own desires ahead of Jane.

In Victorian England, bigamy was a felony punishable by imprisonment or penal servitude (Perkin 12). Mr. Rochester takes a personal risk by proposing to Jane, but he puts Jane at risk without her consent. Though Jane would not be charged with a crime if the marriage to Bertha came out, Jane’s marriage to Mr. Rochester would be void and she would be a ruined woman. As a ruined woman, Jane would be shunned by society. She could not easily obtain another position as a governess and would have no way to support herself.

Furthermore, with Jane's religious beliefs and strong sense of morality, a sham marriage would devastate her. Mr. Rochester takes none of this into account when he proposes to Jane.

As an engaged couple, the dynamics between Jane and Mr. Rochester shift, but the overarching power differences remain. As Mr. Rochester's fiancée, Jane freely teases and banters with him, and he enjoys her playful side. However, while shopping for new gowns, Jane grows weary from Mr. Rochester's attempts to buy her extravagant clothes and jewelry. She thinks, "The more he bought me, the more my cheek burned with a sense of annoyance and degradation" (313). Jane's agitation over Mr. Rochester's behavior reflects her awareness that once again he is treating her like a "machine without feelings." Her protests and embarrassment mean nothing to him because he only wants what he thinks is best. Rather than treating Jane like an individual with personal wants and tastes, he treats her like a generic mistress whom he can exert his will over. Kate Washington observes, "Jane's refusal of fine new clothes is particularly significant in that 'fancy dress' was one of the primary social markers of the Victorian prostitutes" (5). With the link to mistresses and prostitution, the dresses symbolize Mr. Rochester's desire to continue his control over Jane through financial means.

When Jane protests Mr. Rochester's actions, he simply laughs and says, "Oh, it is rich to see and hear her! Is she original? Is she piquant? I would not exchange this one little English girl for the Grand Turk's whole seraglio, gazelle eyes, houriforms and all!" (314). Mr. Rochester responds to Jane's distress by mocking her and speaking about her in the third-person. Rather than addressing the remarks to Jane, he speaks about her, showing that her concerns are not important to him. Furthermore, he depersonalizes Jane by using "she," "her," and "little English girl" rather than her name. Her embarrassment means nothing to

him because during the interaction, he views her as a generic woman. His reference to the seraglio highlights how closely the whole encounter resembles a financial-sexual exchange. In this exchange, Mr. Rochester laughs off Jane's concerns because of the long established pattern of control. However, because of Jane's perception of her security as Mr. Rochester's future wife, she responds to his controlling language with more freedom than she responds to him earlier in the novel.

During the engagement period, Jane has power over Mr. Rochester as she controls his romantic urges with teasing and provoking. Janet H. Freeman writes, "Jane's happiness during the weeks before her intended marriage is exemplified by her nightly conversations with Rochester, in which she adroitly cools his passion and, like Scheherazade, uses her skill at speech to keep herself safe" (695). And Jane does have power over Rochester during these conversations. Jane's wit and intelligence shine as she keeps Mr. Rochester's tenderness in check. She teases him and distracts him after he lovingly serenades her, asking whom he plans to marry because, "*I had no intention of dying with him – he might depend on that*" (319). The mocking way Jane responds is completely out of her character, but it works. Mr. Rochester's romantic words and caresses turn into teasing insults and pinches, her desired result. However, an important note to the engagement period is, of course, the secret of Bertha. The reality of their situation lessens the power Jane holds over Mr. Rochester. As the scene by the piano unfolds, Jane is being tricked into a sham marriage with Mr. Rochester. No matter what kind of effect her language has on him, he still holds power over her with his secret.

When the secret finally comes out, Mr. Rochester begs Jane not to leave him. Mr. Rochester finally fails at controlling Jane because her sense of morality looms more

important than her love and desire to please Mr. Rochester. After explaining his history with Bertha, he first tries to control Jane by invoking her sense of pity. He says, “Give one glance to my horrible life when you are gone. All happiness will be torn away with you. What then is left? For a wife I have but the maniac up stairs. . . . What shall I do, Jane?” (368). The statements focus solely on how Jane’s departure will affect him. He uses the phrase “my horrible life” without even acknowledging what Jane’s life will be. With the revelation of Bertha, Jane not only loses her chance to marry the man she loves, she loses her employment and financial security. Yet rather than phrasing the statement to include the grief both will suffer, Mr. Rochester focuses on his own sadness. He then trivializes Jane’s decision to leave by saying, “when you are gone.” Jane agonizes over her decision to leave, yet Mr. Rochester phrases it so casually that it seems as if she leaves only to be cruel. The focus on his own unhappiness continues as he accuses Jane of leaving him with Bertha, never acknowledging that Jane will be left with no one. He finishes by putting the burden of his unhappiness on Jane as he asks her what to do.

Along the same lines as pity, Mr. Rochester also tries to control Jane by laying guilt upon her. Susan V. Scaff writes that Rochester “invokes two potent stereotypes, the woman who redeems the man, the Virgin Mary; and the woman who satisfies the man’s desires in the fallen world, the biblical Eve” (113). Indeed, even while asking Jane to go against her morals and live as his mistress, he paints her as the only one who can save him from his sins. He asks her, “Then you condemn me to live wretched, and to die accursed?” (308). The word “condemn” has biblical connotations and he uses it to paint a picture of Jane as a Christ figure with the power to save him from sin. However, his version of Jane cruelly leaves him to descend into sinfulness. He ignores the reality of the situation in that he is the one

attempting to corrupt Jane. As before, he puts the entire burden of the situation in Jane's hands. He takes no responsibility for his future, implying that whether he lives sinless is entirely dependent on Jane staying with him. He uses the statement to fill Jane with guilt in an attempt to control her actions. Finally, by referencing his own death, he tries to invoke Jane's sense of pity once again.

Mr. Rochester moves on to violence as a last attempt to control Jane. He has never before threatened Jane with violence because he has always been able to control her with his words. As his attempts to control her through language fail, Mr. Rochester grows wild with the fear of losing her. He grabs Jane and says, "A mere reed she feels in my hand! ... I could bend her with my finger and thumb, and what good would it do if I bent, if I upstare, if I crushed her?" (370). Mr. Rochester speaks about Jane rather than to her by using the word "her." By depersonalizing Jane, the threat of violence grows because he does not see her as his beloved but as a woman he has tried and failed to control. He lists the ways he could hurt her – bend, tear, crush – as in a fantasy about the damage he could do to Jane's body. His statement shows the temptation he faces at this moment as he could so easily control Jane physically. He continues, "Conqueror I might be of the house, but the inmate would escape to heaven before I could call myself possessor of its clay dwelling-place" (370). His word choices of "conqueror," "inmate," "escape," and "possessor" reflect his view of the situation in that he is up against Jane in a fight for control. He also talks himself out of violence with this statement as he realizes that physical violence against Jane would only give him control of her body, not her soul, and he wants control over both.

Although Jane ultimately leaves despite Mr. Rochester's attempts at control through pity, guilt, and violence, his words deeply touch her because of her unwavering love for him

and because of the power dynamics that have shaped their relationship since its beginning. As Jane leaves Thornfield, she thinks, “In the midst of my pain of heart, and frantic effort of principle, I abhorred myself. ... I had injured, wounded, left my master. I was hateful in my own eyes” (374). Even as Jane recognizes the intense pain she feels at leaving Thornfield, she paints Mr. Rochester as the most injured party. This echoes Mr. Rochester’s pattern of putting his own happiness and desires ahead of Jane’s. Although Mr. Rochester fails at convincing Jane to stay with him, he succeeds in persuading her to his view of the situation. Jane’s statement reflects an immense guilt at leaving Mr. Rochester without showing any anger at his betrayal. Instead, Jane’s anger focuses solely on herself. Although Jane ultimately follows her own moral compass in leaving Thornfield, the pattern of control set up from her first meeting with Mr. Rochester colors her view of his betrayal so that she sees it as her betrayal in leaving him.

As Jane establishes a new life for herself, St. John offers her what Talia Schaffer calls familiar marriage, marriage for companionship rather than romantic love or financial gain. Like Mr. Rochester, St. John attempts to control Jane through his language as he proposes to her. However, without Mr. Rochester’s ethos, St. John’s proposal falls flat and Jane unhesitatingly refuses, never wavering in her answer. St. John attempts to persuade Jane by painting their union as God’s will. He says, “You shall be mine; I claim you – not for my pleasure, but for my Sovereign’s service” (466). Mr. Rochester summoned Jane as his wife, and now St. John claims Jane as his wife. Both men use direct orders to persuade Jane in personal matters; however, in response to St. John’s demands, Jane exerts her will and offers her own response. She says, “I freely consent to go with you as your fellow missionary, but not as your wife; I cannot marry you and become a part of you” (472). Jane’s straightforward

response leaves no room for misinterpretation, reflecting how firm she is in her answer. Her use of the word “consent” shows her awareness of her own independence. St. John cannot control Jane because she will not let him. Even St. John’s spiritual pleas have no effect over Jane. After Mr. Rochester’s offer of love, St. John’s assertion of spiritual duty feels cold.

The issue of why and how Jane finally returns to Mr. Rochester remains confusing. Scholars, including Millicent Bell and Ruth Bernard Yeazell, note that Jane must grow as her own person before she can return. Jane’s mysterious summons comes after she has had a chance to develop a life of her own. She finds happiness in her new life as she gains a family, financial independence, and a chance at intellectual growth. Yeazell writes of the summons, “Midnight conversations between lovers many miles apart and mad wives who conveniently perish in great conflagrations are scarcely the stuff of which a realistic novel is made” (128). The voice Jane hears calling her name probably cannot be anything more than a voice in her head, despite the eerie coincidence of Mr. Rochester calling her name at the exact moment of the summons. However, Mr. Rochester’s voice in Jane’s head reflects the effect he has on her. Despite the happiness Jane finds in her new life, her love for Mr. Rochester never wavers. She thinks, “The craving to know what had become of him followed me everywhere” (462). Jane fights off this craving for as long as possible. When her emotional self has been beaten down by St. John’s proposal, she cannot stand the separation a moment longer. At that moment, Jane hears Mr. Rochester calling her name. His influence over Jane is so deeply ingrained that her mind creates his voice in her head, which allows her to return to him. She does not return until she hears his call.

One interpretation of Jane’s return is that Mr. Rochester’s disabilities and Jane’s financial independence put the pair on equal social levels, which makes their marriage one of

equals. Washington calls Jane's financial independence "a dramatic turning point in the novel's gender relations" (1). However, an important consideration is that under marriage laws of the time, everything Jane owns, including her inheritance, becomes Mr. Rochester's legal property (Perkin 16). While this does not lower Jane's social class, it does not put her on an equal level with Mr. Rochester. For a woman as concerned with financial independence as Jane, giving up her inheritance so soon after she gains it gives Mr. Rochester an element of control over her. As far as Mr. Rochester's disabilities, Phillips writes, "His blindness is not indispensable to the equality they are to experience in marriage" (209). Mr. Rochester's injuries change the dynamics between Jane and Mr. Rochester, but his blindness does not equalize them. Although Jane becomes her husband's eyes, which suggests a level of control over him, she is in fact simply taking on the role of nurse along with the role of wife. Nurse suggests a subservient role as Jane must care for Mr. Rochester's physical needs.

However, the dynamics between Jane and Mr. Rochester shift in the novel's final chapters. The loss of Jane, the loss of Thornfield, and the loss of his vision all humble Mr. Rochester. As for Jane, now that she has established a life beyond Thornfield and a role beyond that of Mr. Rochester's governess, she speaks with confidence. During the first few days of her return, Jane decides when she will sit with Mr. Rochester and when she will go upstairs, when they will walk together and when they will go inside. Mr. Rochester, so overjoyed and surprised at her return, asks her questions rather than giving her commands. Even his jealousy over St. John does not bring out controlling language. When Jane offers her friendship, Mr. Rochester replies that he wants a wife and asks Jane to choose. Jane says, "Choose then, sir – *her who loves you best*" (515). Mr. Rochester replies, "I will at least

choose – *her I love best*. Jane, will you marry me?” (515). Unlike the first proposal scene, this proposal shows honesty and mutual love. Instead of tricking Jane into confessing her feelings, Mr. Rochester openly declares his love for Jane. He does not throw his arms around her so that she cannot get away or summon her as his wife. Instead, he simply asks Jane to marry him.

Language figures prominently in the relationship between Mr. Rochester and Jane, and they fall in love partly because of the intellectual bond that develops through their teasing conversations. However, because of the strong role language plays in the novel, the commanding way Mr. Rochester speaks to Jane and her response to his control should not be ignored. Power dynamics established in their first meeting persist as Mr. Rochester orders Jane around and puts his desires first. Mr. Rochester’s powerful position and Jane’s role as the governess in his household allow for some element of authority, but he extends that authority past the role of an employer. The pattern of control established almost leads Jane into a sham marriage, but her sense of morality trumps her love and desire to please Mr. Rochester. Although Jane’s return to Mr. Rochester does not signal an automatic power equalization, the sense of independence she gains from her time away from Thornfield and the humbling effect her departure has on Mr. Rochester lessen the power differences, and their dialogue in the last few chapters reflects this change. Although Mr. Rochester and Jane ultimately marry because of love, it is the level of control he has over her, reflected in his language, that brings them to the marriage in the novel’s final chapter.

## CHAPTER 4

### Conclusion

Through the last two chapters, I have tied *Emma* and *Jane Eyre* together due to the many similarities between the two main characters. Both characters have a strong desire to live life on their own terms, both characters wish to be treated fairly and as individuals, and both characters fall under the influence of an older man. And of course, the novels follow similar structures with a focus on the characters' maturation and end with a marriage.

However, Charlotte Brontë might not have enjoyed the comparison. In an 1848 letter to G.H. Lewes she writes, "Why do you like Miss Austen so very much? I am puzzled on that point" (*Letters* 10). Then after reading *Emma* in 1850, Brontë gives the novel a lukewarm review in a letter to W.S. Williams. She writes:

I have likewise read one of Miss Austen's works "Emma" ... Her business is not half so much with the human heart as with the human eyes, mouth, hands and feet; what sees keenly, speaks aptly, moves flexibly, it suits her to study, but what throbs fast and full, though hidden, what the blood rushes through, what is the unseen seat of Life and the sentient target of Death – this Miss Austen ignores. (*Letters* 383)

As Brontë points out, *Emma* does not convey the same passion and drama as *Jane Eyre* or her sister Emily's novel *Wuthering Heights*. Despite the different styles, both *Emma* and *Jane Eyre* follow a young woman's maturation and transition into a wife.

One other important difference that affects my analysis of the two novels is social class. Jane's status as a governess has huge implications for her relationship with Mr. Rochester and the outcome of their conversations. When Mr. Rochester orders Jane to speak while they are sitting by the fire together, she cannot simply say no and leave the room, because he is her employer. Similarly, when Mr. Rochester flaunts his relationship with

Blanche in Jane's face, Jane cannot point out his cruelty or even stand up for herself because of the difference in social class. When Jane angrily accuses Mr. Rochester of treating her like a machine without feelings, it is only because he has pushed and prodded her toward this outburst.

Because Emma and Mr. Knightley are of the same social class, the issues in *Jane Eyre* do not apply. Emma speaks her mind and argues with Mr. Knightley on all sorts of matters. According to social customs, Emma should not speak so freely because of her gender. However, as explained in my chapter, Emma does not follow social conventions of letting a man guide the conversation, and because of their equality in social class, they have a freer exchange of ideas than Jane and Mr. Rochester. For example, when Mr. Knightley argues that Harriet should have accepted Robert Martin, Emma obviously disagrees and voices her opinions in response to Mr. Knightley's statements. Similarly, during a conversation about Frank Churchill, Emma eagerly proclaims her delight with him despite Mr. Knightley's disapproval. On the other hand, Jane often stays silent when she disagrees with Mr. Rochester and allows him to guide their conversations.

Social class issues are important to consider when analyzing each relationship because social class, along with gender, creates automatic power differences. Because of the employer-employee nature of the relationship between Jane and Mr. Rochester, a power structure is already established before the relationship develops into a romance. Emma and Mr. Knightley come into the relationship on an equal level as far as social class. Despite this, Mr. Knightley manages to establish influence over Emma and modifies her behavior through his language. Taking social class, gender, and other factors into account creates an awareness

of domination within both relationships, and using rhetorical analysis of conversations highlights exactly where and how the domination occurs in each.

Using this method could reveal new insight into Austen's other texts. For example, analyzing conversations between Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy in *Pride and Prejudice* or Marianne Dashwood and Colonel Brandon in *Sense and Sensibility* could give new readings of those relationships. It would also be interesting to use rhetorical analysis of dialogue on other novels of the time period because most nineteenth-century novels feature some version of the marriage plot. Issues of power dynamics and control in relationships would certainly be clarified in novels such as *Wuthering Heights* and *Middlemarch* through rhetorical analysis of conversations between Catherine and Heathcliff or Dorothea and Mr. Casaubon.

In *Emma* and *Jane Eyre*, highlighting the control Mr. Knightley and Mr. Rochester exert through their language is important because both novels hold so much appeal to readers and stand as examples of strong, female characters. Multiple film versions and new editions have been released since the first publications. Both novels also hold places in the literary canon and are taught in high school and university courses. With the novels' continued presence in society, an awareness of how the male characters use language to gain control over the female characters is needed.

Because of each novel's narration and close focus on Emma and Jane, the texts encourage readers to strongly identify with the main characters. The close narration also allows for feminist readings of the text. Both Emma and Jane do stand as strong, female characters at different moments in the novels. My favorite moment of *Jane Eyre* comes when Jane leaves Mr. Rochester after learning his secret. In this scene, Jane places her own self-worth and personal beliefs above anything else, even her love for Mr. Rochester. Similarly,

Emma often stands up for herself and her place in the world. Early in the novel, as Emma explains why she never wants to marry, she speaks about the independent life she will lead, which is extremely unusual for the time period. Despite these moments of independence, the heroines' control by male characters in the novels cannot be ignored

Understanding how and when the male suitors in *Emma* and *Jane Eyre* use language to gain control and influence over the female heroines allows for more complete readings of the novels. The feminist readings and moments in the novels can still be appreciated and admired. However, a better understanding of the relationships at the center of these novels allows readers to look beyond a romanticized view of the marriages.

## WORKS CITED

- Austen, Jane. *Emma*. New York: Barnes & Noble Classics, 2004. Print.
- Barchas, Janine. "Very Austen: Account for the Language of *Emma*." *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 62.3 (2007): 303-38. *JSTOR*. Web. 24 Oct. 2011.
- Bell, Millicent. "Jane Eyre: The Tale of the Governess." *Classics Revisited* 65.2 (1996): 263-69. *EBSCOhost*. Web. 12 Oct. 2011.
- Bottomer, Phyllis Ferguson. "A Speech Language Pathologist Journeys to Highbury." *Persuasions: The Jane Austen Journal* 29 (2007): 155-66. *Gale Group*. Web. 24 Oct. 2012.
- Bree, Linda. "Emma: Word Games and Secret Histories." *A Companion to Jane Austen*. Ed. Claudia L. Johnson and Clara Tuite. West Sussex: Blackwell Publishing, 2009. 133-42. Print.
- Brontë, Charlotte. *Jane Eyre*. New York: Barnes & Noble Classics, 2003. Print.
- Cameron, Deborah. "Theorising the Female Voice in Public Contexts." *Speaking Out: The Female Voice in Public Contexts*. Ed. Judith Baxter. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006. 3-20. Print.
- Cooper, Suzanne Fagence. *The Victorian Woman*. London: V & A Publications, 2001. Print.
- Dussinger, John. "Desire: Emma in Love." *Jane Austen's Emma: A Casebook*. Ed. Fiona Stafford. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2007. 169-88. Print.
- Ellis, Kate and E. Ann Kaplan. "Feminism in Brontë's *Jane Eyre* and its Film Versions." *Nineteenth-Century Women at the Movies: Adapting Classic Women's Fiction to Film*. Ed. Barbara Tupa Lupack. Bowling Green: Bowling Green State UP, 1999. 192-206. Print.
- Freeman, Janet H. "Speech and Silence in *Jane Eyre*." *Studies in English Literature* 24.4 (1984): 683-700. *JSTOR*. Web. 12 Oct. 2011.
- Godfrey, Esther. "Jane Eyre, from Governess to Girl Bride." *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 45.4 (2005): 853-71. *JSTOR*. Web. 12 Oct. 2011.
- Goodheart, Eugene. "Emma: Jane Austen's Errant Heroine." *Sewanee Review* 116.4 (2008): 589-604. *EBSCOhost*. Web. 7 June 2011.

- Kenney, Theresa. " 'And I am Changed Also:' Mr. Knightley's Conversion to Amiability." *Persuasions: The Jane Austen Journal* 29 (2007): 110-20. Print.
- Kreisel, Deanna K. "Where Does the Pleasure Come From? The Marriage Plot and its Discontents in Jane Austen's *Emma*." *Persuasions: The Jane Austen Journal* 29 (2007): 217-26. Gale Group. Web. 12 Oct. 2011.
- Looser, Devoney. " 'A Very Kind Undertaking:' *Emma* and Eighteenth-Century Feminism." *Approaches to Teaching Austen's Emma*. Ed. Marcia McClintock Folsom. New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 2004. 100-109. Print.
- Maltz, Daniel N. and Ruth A. Borker. "A Cultural Approach to Male-Female Miscommunication." *Language and Social Identity*. Ed. John J. Gumperz. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1982. 195-217. Print.
- Moffat, Wendy. "Identifying with *Emma*: Some Problems for the Feminist Reader." *College English* 53.1 (1991): 45-58. JSTOR. Web. 13 Feb. 2012.
- Perkin, Joan. *Women and Marriage in Nineteenth-Century England*. London: Routledge, 1989. Print.
- Phillips, James. "Marriage in *Jane Eyre*: From Contract to Conversation." *Brontë Studies* 33 (2008): 203-17. EBSCOhost. Web. 3 Aug. 2011.
- Poovey, Mary. "*Jane Eyre* and the Governess of Nineteenth-Century Britain." *Approaches to Teaching Jane Eyre*. Ed. Diane Long Hoeveler and Beth Lau. New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 1993. 43-48. Print.
- Psomiades, Kathy Alexis. "The Marriage Plot in Theory." *Novel* 43.1 (2010): 53-59. EBSCOhost. Web. 2 Feb. 2012.
- Rogers, Susan. "Emma at Box Hill: A Very Questionable Day of Pleasure." *Persuasions On-Line* 25.1 (2004): n. pag. Web. 24 Oct. 2011.
- Scaff, Susan V. "Echoes of Aristotle: Rochester's Rhetorical Ploys in *Jane Eyre*." *Brontë Studies* 27 (2002): 113-20. Web. 19 Oct. 2011.
- Schaffer, Talia. "Refamiliarizing Victorian Marriage." *Australasian Journal of Victorian Studies* 15.2 (2010): n. pag. Web. 16 Oct. 2011.
- Smith, Margaret, ed. *The Letters of Charlotte Brontë: Volume Two 1848-1851*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000. Print.

- Steinbach, Susie. *Women in England 1760-1914: A Social History*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004. Print.
- Sturrock, June. " 'I am Rather a Talker:' Speech and Silence in *Emma*." *Persuasions On-Line* 28.1 (2007): n. pag. Web. 24 Oct. 2011.
- Tannen, Deborah. "The Relativity of Linguistic Strategies: Rethinking Power and Solidarity in Gender and Dominance." *Gender and Conversational Interaction*. Ed. Deborah Tannen. New York: Oxford UP, 1993. 165-85. Print.
- Tannen, Deborah. *You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation*. New York: William Morrow and Company Inc., 1990. Print.
- Thaden, Barbara Z. "Be True to Yourself: Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*." *Women in Literature: Reading Through the Lens of Gender*. Ed. Jerilyn Fisher and Ellen S. Silber. Westport: Greenwood Press, 2003. 61-63. Print.
- Tyson, Nancy Jane. "Altars to Attics: The State of Matrimony in Brontë's *Jane Eyre*." *The Aching Hearth*. Ed. Sara Munson Deats and Lagretta Tallent Lenker. New York: Plenum Press, 1991. 95-104. Print.
- Waldron, Mary. "Men of Sense and Silly Wives: The Confusions of Mr. Knightley." *Jane Austen's Emma: A Casebook*. Ed. Fiona Stafford. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2007. 215-37. Print.
- Washington, Kate. "Rochester's Mistresses: Marriage, Sex, and Economic Exchange in *Jane Eyre*." *Michigan Feminist Studies* 12 (1998): n. pag. Web. 19 Oct. 2011.
- Woolf, Virginia. "Professions for Women." *Selected Essays*. Ed. David Bradshaw. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008. 140-45. Web.
- Yalom, Marilyn. *A History of the Wife*. New York: HarperCollins, 2001. Print.
- Yeazell, Ruth Bernard. "More True Than Real: Jane Eyre's 'Mysterious Summons.'" *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 29.2 (1974): 127-43. *JSTOR*. Web. 10 Dec. 2011.