4-18-2023

Love, Austen, and Lewis: How the Successful and Unsuccessful Romances in Jane Austen's Novels Correspond to C.S. Lewis The Four Loves

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SENIOR THESIS APPROVAL

This Honors thesis entitled

"Love, Austen, and Lewis: How the Successful and Unsuccessful Romances in Jane Austen's Novels Correspond to C.S. Lewis *The Four Loves*"

written by

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and submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for completion of
the Carl Goodson Honors Program
meets the criteria for acceptance
and has been approved by the undersigned readers.

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April 19, 2023

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For Austen, whose novels played a vital part in my own character development.

For my parents, whose love for the Lord, reading, and love for others taught me all I needed to know.

As any Jane Austen lover can confirm, the romances in Austen's books feel closer to life than any romance in other novels, even if the relationships and some of the settings are fictional. Of all the books in which romance plays a key role, why do hers rise above the mocking that most receive?[1] Though she never married, she grasps the concept of love in all its complexity through plot, how her characters relate to one another, as well as these characters' development. Another author who sets out to deal with the complexity of love, albeit in more of a textbook fashion, is C.S. Lewis, in his radio lecture series turned book, *The Four Loves*. In it, he explores the differences between loves, the progressions from one love to another, the perversions and perfections of these loves that culminate in the perfect love of *Agape*, or unconditional love. Though these portrayals and definitions of love come from authors writing in different centuries, both Austen and Lewis comprehend and effectively communicate what love is in their writings. Without examining her works specifically, Lewis reveals why Austen's romances work so well by defining the perfections and perversions of Eros. The romantic relationships in her six novels that succeed and fail correspond to these perfections and perversions of love expounded upon in Lewis's work.

LADY SUSAN

In Austen's epistolary novel *Lady Susan,* the relationship between Frederica Vernon and Reginald De Courcy is the perfect one. Though it is not a confirmed relationship until the end of the story, and even then, most of the relationship happens off

[1] Of course, there are those who mock her books, but often these people have yet to read her and perhaps, have simply seen the film adaptations, which, though notable, cannot encapsulate the brilliance of Austen's writing.

the page, it is the only romantic pursuit[2] in this novel that is pure and not alloyed with selfish motives. The first signs of this relationship's legitimacy appear in Reginald's sister Catherine's[3] epistolary account to her mother on his behavior when he intends to depart after an argument with Lady Susan. Catherine writes that "with great emotion" and in the "eager manner…when his mind is interested" he tells her "'do not let Frederica Vernon be made unhappy by that Martin….she cannot endure the idea of it….Frederica…is a sweet girl, and deserves a better fate. Send him away immediately'" (204). His anger towards Lady Susan's forcing Frederica to marry ridiculous Sir James Martin may appear to an outsider like righteous anger for a friend. To his sister, however, it is proof of love that even he does not know of. Without having made friends with Frederica,[4] his actions reveal that he believes it worth his time to secure her happiness with the influence he has. Though this act is not the most dramatic act of love, it was not done out of obligation, but out of concern. Indeed, as Lewis puts it, "one of the first things Eros does is to obliterate the distinction between giving and receiving" (123). Reginald may believe he helps Frederica out of a platonic concern for another's well-being, but his emotional presentation of the case betrays his thoughts—that he cares more deeply for Frederica than he realizes. He does not think of how this situation will affect him; he does not think about nor fear Lady Susan's potential wrath. He merely sees what ought to be done for Frederica. Reginald's relationship to Frederica serves as the

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[2] I say pursuit, because Lady Susan's brother and Catherine Vernon seem to be happily married, but their romance is not involved in the plot.

[3] Catherine is at once a sister, a sister-in-law, a daughter, a wife, and an aunt, and therefore is the one who has the most and deepest ties to all the characters.

[4] Indeed, he is rude and standoffish to her because he fervently believes in Lady Susan's account of her being a spoiled girl.

successful romance of the book, while his relationship to Lady Susan is quite a different tale.

Lady Susan's grasp on Reginald and the immediate change between them once Reginald's eyes open reveal the façade of this relationship. Lady Susan remarks in a letter to her friend Mrs. Johnson that it is "delightful…to watch the variations of [Reginald's] countenance….There is something agreeable in feelings so easily worked on;…they are very convenient when one wishes to influence the passions of another" (211). Lady Susan lives selfishly, perceiving how others' personalities and demeanors can be manipulated to serve her, instead of viewing other people with compassion and selfless curiosity. Indeed, she "binds Reginald to her by means of extended conversations during their walks about the grounds of Churchill, playing especially on his emotions….such manipulation is one of Lady Susan's most essential techniques for social control" (McClelland 236). Lady Susan develops these skills in order to survive socially and financially so that she can trick an easily manipulated and rich man into marrying her. But Lewis argues that pure Eros does not seek to manipulate—only a perverted Eros does. Lady Susan performs every calculated action for personal gain, in contrast to the way Reginald stands up for Frederica, without thinking twice about what may happen to him. Reginald ignores this selfishness longer than other characters do, until he gains concrete evidence of Lady Susan's unashamed coquetry. Instead of proposing to Lady Susan in Bath as the letters hint at, he pens to Lady Susan, "I write only to bid you farewell, the spell is removed: I see you as you are" (219). Indeed, Reginald wakes from quite a spell; previously, the fog hung so thick around Reginald that he argued with his sister, who knew Lady Susan's character better than he does because

she has known her longer. When he admits this to himself and Lady Susan, Reginald sees with clear eyes that he has fallen into a love built on the shaky foundation of infatuation and lust.

Lewis takes pains to distinguish between Eros and carnal Venus. The "sexual desire, without Eros, wants it, the *thing* in itself; Eros wants the Beloved" (120-1). Though Reginald falls for Lady Susan's looks and manipulation, he believes he has fallen in love with something true, the Beloved. He feels compassion for her and believes her lies that she is the victim of the story. He believes he is experiencing Eros, because he has fallen in love with a lie. Lady Susan, meanwhile, loves acting as the puppeteer while the men in love with her hang themselves on marionette strings. She wants "the thing" itself, though Austen refrains from making direct references to sexual matters. Lady Susan boldly flirts with married and nearly engaged men, only a few months after her husband's death; Lady Susan seeks more than money. It is not enough for her to marry again; she must beat other women who have already won the game. This perverted relationship is one of the few unsuccessful romances between main characters in an Austen novel. But because theirs is the center of the story, Austen allows readers to see the perversions up close, and ideals from far away.

SENSE AND SENSIBILITY

In her second novel, *Sense and Sensibility*, Austen continues to hold the readers at arm's length as readers see the perfection of Elinor Dashwood and Edward Ferrars' relationship only in glimpses, and in stolen moments at the beginning and end. At the beginning of the novel, Marianne deems Edward unattractive in a private conversation

with Elinor, partly out of honesty, and partly to tease her sister. Elinor responds to Marianne:

> Of his sense and goodness…no one can, I think be in doubt…The excellence of his understanding and his principles can be concealed only by that shyness which too often keeps him silent….I have…studied his sentiments and heard his opinions…I venture to pronounce that his mind is well-informed, his enjoyment of books exceedingly great. (22)

Though Elinor mentions a few of his physical qualities later, it is not the primary category for her. She finds his personal values and opinions as the most important and attractive part about him. She refuses to enter the daydream world that Marianne finds so necessary to falling in love, and yet still, Elinor has a "delighted pre-occupation with the Beloved–a general, unspecified pre-occupation with [him] in [his] totality" (Lewis 119). Indeed, Elinor is "far too busy thinking of a person," rather than the romantic heroes Marianne dreams up (119). She has fallen in love with Edward as Edward is, not with who she wishes him to be. Marianne continues to push the conversation toward a daydreamlike route, wanting Elinor to rhetorically turn Edward into a grand hero, but Elinor steadily follows the realistic path. Edward Shoben, Jr. agrees, stating that "Elinor's 'sense' results in a less demonstrative but more authentic warmth and a more genuinely appreciative tolerance of individual differences than do the attitudes of any other character in *Sense and Sensibility*" (535). This sense allows her to love the reality in front of her, which grants her access to real love, a pure Eros. By appreciating a person's uniqueness, and not how her or she compares to the people she reads about, Elinor makes an effort to love people as they are. This effort allows her to participate in a true Eros that

loves the person, not the feeling. Her feelings for him are oriented around who he is, not on her preferences. She wants to see their relationship for what it is, rather than what it could be, or what she wants it to be.

Unluckily, her commitment to realistic love keeps her from Edward for the majority of the novel, but this commitment makes her character—and therefore, their love—steadfast. At the end of the novel, when Edward is at last free to pursue Elinor, he seeks to redeem his character first and foremost—because that is what she had fallen in love with. She listens to the story from his point of view, as he explains that he has been "honorably released from his former engagement" and "[profits] by the release" and has "an affection as tender, as constant as she had ever supposed it to be" (Austen 338). The relationship is perfect because they each love each other purely; they center their love for one another around who the other person is, not around themselves, their own situations, or their character. As Lewis says, they have "delighted [pre-occupations] with [their Beloveds]" (119). This delight reveals their pure Eros for each other. The perfection of their Eros is rewarded through their unification at the end. Though both Elinor and Marianne experience love with a person who is unavailable, Elinor's turns out to be perfect, whilst Marianne's is perverted love.

Marianne Dashwood and Willoughby's relationship serves as the perverted romance in *Sense and Sensibility*. Marianne falls fast and hard for him, and blatantly disregards reality and propriety by justifying that she is in love. Willoughby's "society became gradually her most exquisite enjoyment. They read, they talked, they sang together; his musical talents were considerable; and he read with all…sensibility and spirit" (Austen 50). For women in this society, pastimes were part of a woman's identity

and personality; Willoughby becomes a part of Marianne by serving as a pastime. Of all the numerous hobbies that Marianne has, spending time with Willoughby is now her primary one. In spending so much time together, they become part of one another, without the security of an engagement or marriage. Indeed, "to a considerable extent, he is a creation of her imagination rather than a human being seen" for who he is (Shoben 530). In other words, Marianne is obsessed with him, and they become so enamored with each other that she loses sight of what it is like to be without him. As Shoben aptly puts it: "in short, Marianne makes Willoughby into an extension of herself" (531). Marianne's preventing of Willoughby from being a separate person from her turns a pure selfless Eros into a perverted self-centered love. Her world is consumed with thinking of him. It is no wonder Marianne's heart shatters when Willoughby subtly but brutally rejects her. Perhaps Marianne would have found melancholy solace in Lewis's position that "[Eros] creates for [lovers]…in a few weeks or months, a joint past which seems to them immemorial. They recur to it continually with wonder and reverence, as the Psalmists recur to the history of Israel" (144). In other words, Lewis suggests that the building of a reverent past is not only necessary for Eros, but inevitable. Though Marianne and Willoughby build a past together, it is later ignored and rejected. For a sixteen-year-old, this past is her present. Marianne throws her whole self into the pastime she is engaged in. Initially, Willoughby honors this past by obtaining gifts for their supposed future together: he asks for a lock of Marianne's hair and attempts to give her a horse. Yet he deserts this sacred past because he has other pasts that tie him down more tightly than the one he created with her. Marianne's obsession with him reveals a perverted Eros, but even more so does Willoughby's committed acts of love while not being available to

make that commitment. Indeed, when Marianne sees him in London, he pretends as though she does not exist. Without knowing it, both Marianne and Elinor fall for men who are unavailable, but only one continues to lead them on, and the other clears his name. By comparing the sisters' relationships, it is clear to see how the perversions and perfections of Eros manifest. Marianne's perverted Eros consists of empty and broken promises, while Elinor's consists of genuine apologies and a delighted love. The progressions and events of both relationships reveal how Austen rewards a pure Eros and dissolves the relationship of a perverted Eros.

PRIDE AND PREJUDICE

The perfection of Eros of Elizabeth and Darcy in *Pride and Prejudice* outshines all former couples of the previous novels as the reader watches both characters humble each other and grow because of it. After Elizabeth rejects Darcy's initial proposal, the novel slows down only to accelerate the growth of both characters. Austen provides countless examples of Darcy's and Elizabeth's changed characters, especially as the two meet at Pemberley, and when he visits her at the Derbyshire Inn. But nothing stands out quite like Darcy's management and investment of Lydia and Wickham's affair. Elizabeth does not find out his deeds from Darcy or even from general gossip, but from an accidental slip of Lydia's tongue; she pursues learning the rest of the secret from her aunt and is baffled and humbled once she learns his efforts in full. Austen intentionally has Elizabeth learn this information accidentally. As Darcy makes others promise to keep it a secret, his character rises; he could use this action as a way to remedy Elizabeth's opinion of him, but he doesn't.[5] As aforementioned in the perfection of *Lady Susan's* Reginald

[5] Opposingly, Wickham immediately tells her of Darcy's supposed unkindness which he would "never…expose" on only their second encounter, which he does to elevate her opinion of him (67).

and Frederica's relationship, "one of the first things Eros does is to obliterate the distinction between giving and receiving" (Lewis 123). Darcy refuses to make this moment of character redemption about him, or even about revenge on Wickham, but instead makes it about Elizabeth. Indeed, when Elizabeth thanks him, he tells her, "'If you will thank me…let it be for yourself alone…your family owe me nothing. Much as I respect them, I believe I thought only of you'" (Austen 298). He has reformed, and is now able to love her from pure Eros instead of selfish Venus. This greatly opposes his first proposal to her, where he states his lack of respect for her family because of their economic status and behavior and proposes because his "'feelings will not be repressed'" (154-5). He proposes with the perversions of Eros, thinking only of himself. Indeed, "without Eros, sexual desire, like every desire, is a fact about ourselves" (Lewis 122). Now, he respects her family for who they are, despite Lydia's disgraceful behavior, and takes this action for her, not for himself. Once he places Elizabeth first, and works to change his own perception of others, he can propose out of true Eros. Similarly, Elizabeth responds out of true Eros by confronting her own prejudice and thanking him for what he has done for her family. When she admits to herself and others that she has misjudged him, her character changes for the better. Only then can she fall into a pure Eros, too. Elizabeth and Darcy's relationship is the perfection of the novel, whilst Lydia and Wickham's is a different story.

Many relationships of *Pride and Prejudice* easily demonstrate the perversion of Eros: Charlotte Lucas and Mr. Collins's romance finds its foundation on a desperation to get married; Mr. and Mrs. Bennet seem to feel nothing but resentment towards each other; Elizabeth and Wickham's brief relationship is built only on a mutual hatred for

Darcy. However, no relationship better fits this description than that of Wickham and Lydia Bennet's scandalous elopement. One may argue that, since the reader sees only the aftermath of the scandal, there are not enough details to support the perversion of Eros. But, as Lewis states, "how much" a man seeking Venus "cares about the woman…may be gauged by his attitude to her five minutes after fruition (one does not keep the carton after one has smoked the cigarettes)" (121). When a person seeks perverted Eros, or is looking only for Venus, he or she reveals the perverseness of their Eros after their Need, or desire has been met. If a perverted Eros, the person's actions show that he or she does not genuinely care for the other person and are only focused on themselves. This can be found in the way Wickham treats Lydia in London. Indeed, as Mrs. Gardiner reports in her letter, when Darcy finds Lydia and Wickham in London, Lydia was "sure they should be married some time or other" but marriage "had never been [Wickham's] design" (262-3). Wickham never explicitly states that he refuses to marry her, but neither does he state that he will; Darcy knows his shifty character too well to trust he will carry out his "hope of more effectually making his fortune by marriage in some other country" (263). When Wickham explains to Darcy that he was "obliged to leave the regiment, on account of some debts of honour," Lydia is revealed to be an afterthought of Wickham's, a dessert after the main course of running away (263). Though Lydia is quite thoughtless, Wickham's reducing her to an accessory in his escape reveals that his love for her is selfish. One critic goes so far as to deem his "total lack of concern for the practicalities, the morality, and the propriety of his relationship with Lydia…an evil" (Leithart 56). This lack of concern reveals that Wickham and Lydia did not even take part in the traditional infatuation stage. Perhaps Lydia did, but Wickham's main concern is what

Lydia does for him: someone to glorify him in the midst of his shame. Certainly, this evil contributes to the perversion of Eros within their relationship. He displays the perversion of Eros through his selfishness in ruining Lydia's honor by getting her to come along with him. He does not run away with her for the two of them, but rather he lets her run away with him out of selfishness. Both he and Lydia well know the risk of society's disapproval, but neither of them cares because their love is selfish. Wickham's fault is allowing her to run away with him when he does not love her, but even Lydia has her faults as she "reduces her marriage, even a scandalous marriage causing grief to her whole family, to a joke" (Leithart 56). Lydia's perverted Eros not only has no room for Wickham, but it also has no room for concern for her family. Though lovers are meant to find solace in the seclusion of one another, love does not justify or promote damaging each other's, and thus their family's reputation. Indeed, Lydia shows the perversion of Eros by giving into her own desire and ignoring the dishonor she brings not only to herself, but to her family. A selfish lover is not a lover at all.

MANSFIELD PARK

The perfection of Eros in *Mansfield Park* is the relationship between Fanny Price and Edmund Bertram. Their love differs from other Austen novels as the romantic pursuit starts only as the book ends. However, their love develops from the moment Edmund helps Fanny write a letter to William; their relationship begins in *Storge*, or Affection, and develops into Eros at the end. Indeed, until Fanny leaves for Portsmouth, Edmund makes every effort to take care of her while her uncle, aunts, and other cousins ignore her needs and wants. He makes sure she has a horse for exercise, asks if she's feeling well, and stands up to others as they try to pressure her into taking part in the play. All these

acts display the works of Affection. Lewis details that Affection "has its own criteria. Its objects have to be familiar" and doubts "if we can ever catch Affection beginning" (43). Edmund performs all these actions out of Storge to Fanny. Edmund performs the utmost attentive care to Fanny whilst his eyes overlook her as a romantic pursuit because she is familiar.

While it is difficult to pinpoint where Fanny's Eros for Edmund begins, it is quite easy to pinpoint where Edmund's Affection ends. Lewis states that "affection has a very homely face"[6] and that those who have affectionate love for each other "take [each other] for granted…which is an outrage in erotic love" but is "proper" in Affection. Indeed, Edmund takes Fanny's presence, willingness to listen, and advice for granted repeatedly throughout the novel. However, when Mary Crawford brushes his sister and her brother's behavior aside, the scales fall off his eyes, and he sees Mary, and then Fanny, for who they truly are, not who they are to him:

> Scarcely had he done regretting Mary Crawford, observing to Fanny how impossible it was that he should ever meet with such another woman, before it began to strike him whether a very different kind of woman might not do just as well, or a great deal better; whether Fanny herself were not growing as dear, as important to him in all her smiles and all her ways…and whether it might not be a possible, an hopeful undertaking to persuade her that her warm and sisterly regard for him would be foundation enough for wedded love. (484)

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[6] Fanny is repeatedly described as having this homely face and figure until Sir Thomas notes it on his return from his trip. It is almost as if once his character, being very poor at noticing anything around him, notes this change, all other characters are silenced on the matter, and Fanny is now a beauty. Even Edmund tells Fanny that she must accept she is worth being looked at, while looking right past her.

Here Edmund moves from Affection–taking Fanny's ever-listening ear for granted–to Eros– noticing her attentions to him as something he may not deserve. Once he humbles himself, and promotes her in his mind, Eros takes place. Once "those soft light eyes…[obtain] the pre-eminence," he has finished with Affection's being the solitary mode of his love for Fanny (Austen 485). Lewis states that "the kiss of Affection differs from the kiss of Eros. Yes; but not all kisses between lovers are lovers' kisses…different sorts of tenderness are both tenderness, and the language of the earliest tenderness we have ever known is recalled to do duty for the new sort" (46). Indeed, Edmund's language of Affection is one of services: from the letter-writing when she was young, to obtaining a chain for William's cross pendant when she is eighteen. He has always had Affection for her. But only when he finally notices her eyes, her smiles, and her ways can he perform these services out of Eros. What an Eros it is. Whilst Edmund repeatedly is forced to justify Mary's character, when he notices, he realizes that her "mind, disposition, opinions and habits, wanted no half concealment…no reliance on future improvement. Even in the midst of his late infatuation, he had acknowledged Fanny's mental superiority" (485). Fanny is perfect to him, as she is. Edmund refuses to settle for Mary, and instead pursues a woman who is lovely in every way and uncorrupted by others' influence. Truly "Eros wants the beloved" (Lewis 120). Nothing else will satisfy. This satisfaction with who the other person is, without wanting to change them sets up the relationship for a pure Eros. As Charles Hinnant points out, "Whether or not the other…responds favorably, the love of a…Fanny Price…or Edmund Bertram is a passion that gives without return, without recognition, a passion that cannot count on full reciprocity, nor calculate an assured, immediate, or full comprehension" (305). Both

people in this relationship live selflessly and do not perform services to gain certain results, or to manipulate the other person into a relationship. Though Henry also finds ways to serve Fanny, such as helping her brother gain a promotion, he does so to manipulate her. But Edmund's acts of service always come from a genuine concern for Fanny. Likewise, when Fanny listens to his laments about Mary Crawford, though it pains her, she listens without expecting thanks or reciprocated love. Both genuinely serve one another out of selfless love. This affection-fueled service paves the way for them to have a pure Eros, which puts the other person first. Edmund and Fanny's love, though subtle, is perfection, but other subtle loves in *Mansfield Park* are perverted.

Once again, many relationships in *Mansfield Park* demonstrate the perversion of Eros. Edmund Bertram loves the idea of Mary Crawford and makes excuses for her beliefs and behavior; the senior adults, Sir Thomas and Lady Russell and Dr. and Mrs. Grant, routinely talk so poorly of their spouses and of marriage that one can hardly argue that they love each other. But the chief perverted relationship of *Mansfield Park* belongs to Maria Bertram and Henry Crawford.[7] Maria and Henry begin flirting during Maria's engagement to Mr. Rushworth, but once they marry, she cuts all ties with Henry. In the meantime, Henry pursues a disinclined Fanny. However, later on, they meet at a party in Richmond. After Henry was "received by her with a coldness…he was mortified" and "could not bear to be thrown off by the woman whose smiles had been so wholly at his command" (482). The narrator reveals Henry's motives and subsequent actions as he attempts to win back Maria:

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[7] One may say that the relationship between Maria and Mr. Rushworth is also a perversion of Eros. However, since Mr. Rushworth does not explicitly wrong Maria, for my purposes, the faults lie on her side only in that relationship.

In this spirit he began the attack, and by animated perseverance had soon reestablished

> the sort of familiar intercourse, of gallantry, of flirtation, which bounded his views; but in triumphing over the discretion which, though beginning in anger, might have saved them both, he had put himself in the power of feelings on her side more strong than he had supposed. She loved him; there was no withdrawing attentions avowedly dear to her. He was entangled by his own vanity, with as little excuse of love as possible, and without the smallest inconstancy of mind towards her cousin. (482)

Henry has love only for himself. In mind, he may be faithful to Fanny, who has not accepted his proposal, but in deed, he acts unconnected and makes advances toward a married woman. Henry confuses Maria and himself by acting differently externally from the way he feels internally. He commits this deception without second thought. As one critic puts it, "Henry had become so taken with his own self-indulgences that he couldn't imagine being refused *any* of his whims" (Grenberg 660). This "self-absorption motivates an act that insults morally sanctioned values inherent in the shared purposes of society. Henry has engaged in [an]…evil act" (Grenberg 660). In other words, because Henry cannot imagine being refused, he must pursue Maria (in the same way he has pursued an unwilling Fanny) to "revise" his reality to the way he believes it should be. Henry has no way of loving others because he is consumed with loving himself. Such a person cannot take part in a pure Eros. While Maria has the love that Henry does not have, in a similar fashion to Henry, her cold exterior differs from the intense love she feels internally, which Henry purposefully reignites. Yet both do wrong. Lewis expounds on this idea as

he writes "when lovers say of some act that we might blame, 'Love made us do it,' notice the tone" (143). He continues:

> Notice how tremulously, almost how devoutly, they say the word *love*, not so much pleading an 'extenuating circumstance' as appealing to an authority. The confession can be almost a boast. There can be a shade of defiance in it. They 'feel like martyrs'. In extreme cases what their words really express is a demure yet unshakeable allegiance to the god of love. (143-4)

Though Henry and Maria's scandal largely occurs off the page as others expose it to Fanny, the narration makes it possible to hear Maria's voice pleading the excuse of love. Henry pleads that his pride was hurt and that he has love for Fanny, which is an alloyed, impure excuse. Yet both give a poor explanation for their unfaithful behavior. Both allow Venus and the pain of their rejected Egos to consume them and their actions, instead of responding to a pure Eros's call. While Henry allows his self-love to indulge Maria in her inappropriate attentions to him, Maria allows Eros to consume her rationality. Indeed, even weeks after the initial scandal,

> She was not to be prevailed on to leave Mr. Crawford. She hoped to marry him, and they continued together till she was obliged to be convinced that such hope was vain, and till the disappointment and wretchedness arising from the conviction rendered her temper so bad, and her feelings for him so like hatred, as to make them for a while each other's punishment, and then induce a voluntary separation. (478)

Maria defies society, family, and morality for what she believes is love. She rejects her father's persuasions for her to give it up as she has an unshakeable allegiance. Yet this

allegiance is to Eros, not to Henry. Lewis states, "votaries may even come to feel a particular merit in such sacrifices; what costlier offering can be laid on love's altar than one's conscience?" (145). Maria sacrifices her conscience, for a time, but it returns roaring and forcing her to recognize what she has done. Since her escape with Henry is selfish, as she rejects thinking of her husband, she blames his actions, not her own, and thus leaves him. Meanwhile, the satisfaction Henry receives from winning the unavailable and uninterested Maria fades. Ultimately, both reject the idea that it would be "better to be miserable with…than happy without" and thus their love proves to be a perversion of Eros (Lewis 137). They voluntarily separate because they cannot bear to be with each other, even on love's account. They fail their self-imposed martyrdom.

NORTHANGER ABBEY

Austen's earliest novel, *Northanger Abbey*, contains the relationship of Catherine Morland and Henry Tilney, which is the most lighthearted of all the perfect romances of Austen's novels.[8] While the genre of Austen's works is not relevant to my thesis, it is worth noting *Northanger* is a mock-Gothic, which affects the dramatics of the plot and this relationship. Yet the love interest of this book is pointedly anti-Gothic. Though Tilney is of a higher economic status than Catherine, he is far from mysterious or otherworldly, and always presents himself as lively and playful. For instance, after he sees Catherine at a ball, their conversation is light:

> "What are you thinking of so earnestly?" said he, as they walked back to the ball-room;--

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[8] The placement of *Northanger Abbey* may confuse the reader, as I've been following Austen's works chronologically. However, I'm following the order of the publishing dates, and this work was published fifteen years after its completion.

> "not of your partner, I hope, for, by that shake of your head, your meditations are not satisfactory."
>
> Catherine coloured, and said, "I was not thinking of any thing."
>
> "That is artful and deep, to be sure; but I had rather be told at once that you will not tell me."
>
> "Well, then, I will not."
>
> "Thank you; for now we shall soon be acquainted, as I am authorized to tease you on this subject whenever we meet, and nothing in the world advances intimacy so much." (23)

Tilney shows his curiosity and playfulness, yet also grants Catherine the respect and privacy of her mind. Though he is able to take advantage of her eagerness to please, he instead offers her a choice to refrain from sharing, and then makes it into a joke, instead of choosing to act hurt or make it awkward. And though Tilney hints that he intends to bring it up again, the reader never hears of it, further proving his respect, and Eros, for Catherine. Lewis would agree with this playful pursuit of Catherine, as he points out that "sensible lovers laugh. It is all part of the game; a game of catch-as-catch can, and the escapes and tumbles and head-on collisions are to be treated as a romp" (128). Tilney refuses to take love too seriously, and instead treats it like the friendly game it is. He allows himself to get to know Catherine slowly, without any mention of love, marriage, or money until the final few pages of the book. Most fools in love rush to declare their love and devotion, but Tilney loves Catherine purely, so he takes his time. Tilney is the antithesis of the somber Gothic hero that fills the books Catherine reads, which makes him the perfection of Eros.

Despite not being a Gothic hero, Tilney does have his heroic moment in the book. When Tilney returns to Northanger Abbey to find that his father, General Tilney, has abruptly and rudely sent Catherine away after finding out her lower economic status, Henry insists on making things right. Despite his father's iron will, "he steadily refused to accompany his father into Herefordshire, an engagement formed almost at the moment, to promote the dismissal of Catherine, and as steadily declared his intention of offering her his hand" (232). Despite his father's anger, "Henry, in an agitation of mind which many solitary hours were required to compose, had returned almost instantly to Woodston; and, on the afternoon of the following day, had begun his journey to Fullerton" (232). Henry's insistence on making things right and then following through with his original intentions towards Catherine shows his Eros-fueled devotion for her. He dares to disagree with his father, and, in doing so, takes a considerable financial and emotional risk. While others may call this act unnecessarily dramatic,[9] Lewis poses that "eros is in a sense right to make this promise" (146). He continues, "in one high bound it has overleaped the massive wall of our selfhood; it has made appetite itself altruistic, tossed personal happiness aside as a triviality, and planted the interests of another in the centre of our being" (Lewis 146). Henry's Eros has tossed his personal happiness aside. Henry is one of the most logical characters of the book, and thus this choice is out-of-character for him. Yet it is in-line with his character with the added circumstance of his being in love. Henry's Eros has transcended the self. His pure Eros allows him to pursue Catherine, despite the risk he is taking. Austen honors this selfless love. Indeed, "the plot exposes" characters of "deceit while rewarding the honest though quiet love of Catherine Morland

[9] As are most actions of the Gothic hero, or in this case, the anti-Gothic hero.

and Henry Tilney" (Magee 204). The narrator honors Henry's patience in getting to know Catherine. Because Henry's love is not rushed, he is rewarded with a happy ending. This commitment to creating a genuine connection where both people are valued regardless of their backgrounds allows for a pure Eros. Catherine and Henry's relationship is of pure Eros because they are purely themselves with each other and are selflessly devoted.

Many relationships between young people in *Northanger* are perverted, but Catherine and John Thorpe's relationship best suits my thesis. It is worth noting, however, that all new relationships that surround them are perverted as well. Catherine's brother James Morland and Isabella Thorpe's relationship proves perverted, as well as Isabella's relationship with Captain Tilney, Henry's older brother. Such is the web of relations; and it is one that Catherine finds herself trapped in. Being John's sister, and Isabella's "most particular friend," Catherine is forced to be a part of their social group and their social excursions (Austen 91). Since Isabella chases after Catherine's brother because she incorrectly believes he's heir to the Allen's fortune, Catherine finds herself riding with John Thorpe on most of these outings. On one of their outings, the narrator notes that "all…the conversation, or rather talk, began and ended with himself and his own concerns" (61). John is more interested in bragging to Catherine than he is in getting to know her; hardly does this qualify as Eros, even as a perversion. Austen's heroine notes that she finds him repulsive. The narrator remarks that she felt "extreme weariness of his company, which crept over her before they had been out an hour, and which continued unceasingly to increase till they stopped in Pulteney-street again" (61). Catherine does not have Eros for John. Yet he falls for her, because he believes, like Isabella, that she is heiress to the Allen's fortune. Though Catherine and John's

relationship does not have much substance for examining because John is a static character, there is something perverted to examine about their Eros. Lewis points out:

> The reader will notice that Eros thus wonderfully transforms what is *par excellence* a Need-pleasure into the most Appreciative of all pleasures. It is the nature of a Need-pleasure to show us the object solely in relation to our need, even our momentary need. But in Eros, a Need, at its most intense, sees the object most intensely as a thing admirable in herself, important far beyond her relation to the lover's need. (122)

John starves for Catherine's attention; though the narrator never implies that John wants her to satisfy a physical need, he does use her presence to satisfy an emotional one.[10] While an ordinary hunger for attention is normal and right within a perfect Eros, John does not want Catherine's attention because he loves her; he wants attention in general; anyone would do for it, and Catherine happens to be around. He asks her for her opinion only when it relates to himself on subjects she knows little about (50-60). He wants to know what she thinks of him, not find out what he thinks about her. He is so desperate for her attention that in one instance, he lies to her to prevent her from going to see the Tilneys (87). On a second occasion, he tells the Tilneys for her that she cannot see them so that she'll come on an outing with them (91-93). As John K. Mathison points out, "Catherine learns much…from…John: there are evil motives she could never have suspected" and that "though Catherine is subsequently able to explain her action to the Tilneys" what is "of more immediate importance is her…realization that there are

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[10] Though his subtle proposal to her would say otherwise (Austen 116). Regardless, it is never stated that the proposal is solely motivated by Venus, though he severely lacks enough interest in her personhood to qualify for Eros.

people—John Thorpe—who derive pleasure from promoting general ill will among friends" (144, 145). Catherine does not immediately perceive these evil motives, but she does know that something is wrong when John refuses to listen to her. Catherine never falls for him in the first place because he only talks about himself, and though she does not recognize this as a sign of perverted love, she does recognize that it's unattractive. Catherine cannot fall in love with John because of his selfishness. He cares only about his needs being met, not hers. Perhaps John also falls for Catherine because she is sixteen and rich (his misperception); he can take advantage of her naivety and gain wealth easily. Again, it is difficult to examine the motives of such a thoughtless one-dimensional static character; but through Catherine's limited naïve perspective, the narrator communicates that he is not much worth thinking of. Though Catherine's attention is everything to John, John hardly stands out in Catherine's story. Catherine feels no Eros for John, and though John may feel a Need-pleasure for Catherine, he has a perverted Eros for her.

EMMA

Emma, Austen's next novel, contains several perverted relationships, but Emma Woodhouse and John Knightley's relationship consists of and exemplifies a perfect Eros. In the same way that Fanny and Edmund of *Mansfield Park* develop their Eros from a former Storge, Emma and Knightley develop their Eros out of a strong Philia. Encouraged by the security and principles of their friendship, Knightley rebukes Emma repeatedly throughout the novel, intending to make her a better person, into the person she wants to be. Emma initially dismisses these remarks but sees, after each event comes to its conclusion, that he was right. At the climax of the novel, Emma makes a hurtful joke about and in front of an annoying, but a socially unaware and innocent, Miss Bates.

Afterwards in private, Knightley reprimands her saying, "'This is not pleasant to you, Emma—and it is very far from pleasant to me; but I must, I will, —I will tell you truths while I can; satisfied with proving myself your friend by very faithful counsel, and trusting that you will some time or other do me greater justice than you can do now'" (340).

This rebuke provokes a moment of intense self-reflection for Emma. Indeed, "as she reflected more, she seemed but to feel it more" and "felt the tears running down her cheeks almost all the way home, without being at any trouble to check them, extraordinary as they were" (341). Emma feels this strongly because she values Mr. Knightley's opinion; for a self-righteous character who manages the lives of others, this speaks volumes. Though Emma does not realize it, in this moment Austen subtly contrasts Mr. Knightley to the rest of Emma's friends. With others, she easily dismisses and overrules their opinions of her, but she trusts and accepts his critique, even when it hurts. This moment reveals the strength and depth of the Philia Knightley and Emma have for each other. Lewis validates Emma's feelings of deep shame when he points out that "we all wish to be judged by our peers, by the men 'after our own heart'. Only they really know our mind and only they can judge it by standards we fully acknowledge. Theirs is the praise we really covet and the blame we really dread" (101).

Dread, indeed. This dread of Knightley's ill opinion provokes her to not only self-reflect but take action to change. She visits Miss Bates to make amends, without Mr. Knightley's knowing. When she returns home and finds Mr. Knightley standing in their living room, her father tells him where she has been. In this moment:

> He looked at her with a glow of regard. She was warmly gratified—and in another moment still more so, by a little movement of more than common friendliness on his part. He took her hand; —and whether she had not herself made the first motion, she could not say—she might, perhaps, have rather offered it—but he took her hand, pressed it, and certainly was on the point of carrying it to his lips—when, from some fancy or other, he suddenly let it go. (350)

Of course, this is more than common friendliness. For the first time, Knightley unintentionally reveals that he sees her as more than a friend to hold to a higher standard, but a woman who is admirable. Earlier in the novel, they joke about their brother-sister dynamic, but a brother does not wish to kiss his sister's hand. Edgar F. Shannon agrees, noting "she is grateful for his mute commendation of her penitent act and…is pleased by unusual gallantry from him. This gesture signals the beginning of tenderness between them" (641). Though he later recounts that he had feelings for her earlier than this moment, this is the first moment Austen reveals how he perceives Emma, to both the audience and Emma herself. For Emma, this is one of the first times she recognizes how much Knightley's good opinion means to her. Knightley and Emma have a pure Eros because it develops out of a pure, strong, and deep Philia. Once Knightley recognizes that Emma is more than a younger sister to correct, and Emma recognizes that Knightley is more than an older brother who admonishes, they are free to fall deeply into the freefall of Eros. The Eros lies underneath a veneer of Philia, whilst a simple Philia lies underneath the veneer of Eros in *Emma's* perverted relationship.

The perverted relationship in *Emma* involves Emma Woodhouse and Frank Churchill. Though the perversion of their relationship is a little less serious than the other

perversions, as there are no elopements or unreciprocated declarations, it still is serious because Frank makes himself seem available, and desirous to be with Emma, when he and Jane Fairfax are secretly engaged. One of the finest tests of love is absence; when Frank leaves the social circle at Hartfield for two months after building a substantial flirtatious dynamic with Emma, Austen describes Emma's ponderings on his absence. At first, "Emma continued to entertain no doubt of her being in love" but "on the other hand, she could not admit herself to be unhappy" (235, 237). And "though thinking of him so much," she realizes:

> The conclusion of every imaginary declaration on his side was that she *refused him.* Their affection was always to subside in a friendship. Every thing tender and charming was to mark their parting; but still they were to part. When she became sensible of this, it struck her that she could not be very much in love; for in spite of her previous and fixed determination never to quit her father, never to marry, a strong attachment certainly must produce more of a struggle than she could foresee in her own feelings. (237)

Though Emma feels the pull of some attraction, she recognizes herself that she does not feel Eros. She pulls herself out of falling for him by self-reflecting that, though their relationship has a playful dynamic, there is not much substance to the rest of their relationship, or to him. Only once Emma has space from Frank can she be freed from the perverted Eros. How strongly this circumstance opposes Lewis's opinion that "Eros never hesitates to say, 'Better this than parting. Better to be miserable with her than happy without her. Let our hearts break provided they break together'" (137). Though she feels Frank's absence, it is only momentary pain, soon done away with by realistically

analyzing their relationship. She does not feel the strong pull to be "miserable with" him, whatever that looks like.

Thank goodness, because Frank is not hers to be "miserable with," however much he gives off that impression. When Frank's secret engagement to Jane Fairfax is revealed, Emma depicts the perversion of Eros perfectly to Mrs. Weston:

> I have escaped; and that I should escape, may be a matter of grateful wonder to you and myself. But this does not acquit him, Mrs. Weston; and I must say, that I think him greatly to blame. What right had he to come among us with affection and faith engaged, and with manners so *very* disengaged? What right had he to endeavour to please, as he certainly did, while he really belonged to another? How could he tell what mischief he might be doing?—How could he tell that he might not be making me in love with him? Very wrong, very wrong indeed. (360)

Though the perversion of Eros on Emma's side is light and fizzles out quickly, the misdemeanors on Frank's side are heavy. Frank acts one way towards Emma and does feel some friendliness towards her, but he does not feel the Eros that his actions imply. Eros is perverted here because Frank acts as though he has the space to be in love when he does not. Though Emma's vice is her self-righteousness, which repeatedly blinds her to what is the truth of reality, here she is right to chastise him. This is one of the least substantial perversions of Eros, but Frank still makes serious mistakes. Emma has the maturity to self-reflect and recognize that she is not in love with Frank, and so stops encouraging him, whilst Frank is engaged all the while but initiates and remains flirting with Emma. Frank cannot stop thinking about himself and the pleasure he wants to have at Emma's expense. Therefore their relationship is of a perverted Eros.

PERSUASION

Persuasion, Austen's final novel, contains a perfect version of Eros in Anne Elliot and Captain Frederick Wentworth. Though Anne and Wentworth barely properly converse until the middle of the novel at Lyme, their relationship is one worth analyzing the perfection of Eros. At Lyme, Anne steps out of the background of her own story into the foreground; though Wentworth has previously noted her, he does not re-acknowledge how much she means to him until this point. Indeed, after Anne reads his hastily written letter, Wentworth explains to Anne that "her character was now fixed on his mind as perfection itself, maintaining the loveliest medium of fortitude and gentleness; but he was obliged to acknowledge that only at Uppercross had he learnt to do her justice, and only at Lyme had he begun to understand himself" (161). Despite eight-and-a-half years, and all the other women he had interacted with since their broken engagement, Wentworth realizes that he wants no one else but Anne. Anne learns to use her voice at Lyme, whilst Wentworth learns to let go of anger and sheds the ever-tightening skin of stubbornness. Both let go of their eagerness to protect themselves so they can fall in love again and permanently. Wentworth can see Anne for who she is because of the changes they both have gone through. Anne as "perfection itself" proves Lewis's conclusion that "Eros makes a man really want, not a woman, but one particular woman. In some mysterious but quite indisputable fashion the lover desires the beloved herself, not the pleasure she can give" (121). For Wentworth, Luisa will not do, nor Henrietta. For Anne, Charles Musgrove, Captain Benwick, nor Mr. Elliot will qualify. Only the particular person is the right one. Indeed, "Anne waits…for the man who appreciates her and loves her as a person" and "matures…by rejecting socially desirable matches in favor of one based

firmly on reciprocal and durable love" (Magee 203, 207). Anne holds out for a reciprocated love, which creates room for a deep and pure Eros to take root. She knows that the men she meets and rejects—Charles Musgrove, Captain Benwick, Mr. Elliot—are not men who could love her equally. Anne does what is right in waiting for Wentworth. When they finally reunite, the two are never happier. Though it takes a while for them to realize, both are deeply in a perfect Eros because they are not satisfied with anyone else but each other. Even after eight-and-a-half years, only Anne will do for Wentworth, and only Wentworth for Anne.

Though a wide range of perverted loves exists in *Persuasion,* there is more substantial evidence of perverted Eros to analyze in the relationship between Anne and her cousin, Mr. Elliot. On Anne's side at least, she has little feelings of attraction, though she does "acknowledge within herself such a possibility of having been induced to marry him" (140). On Mr. Elliot's side, however, there are grave mistakes. Deeming him unfaithful is false, since his first wife died, but a few people around him, Anne included, believe him to be pursuing a new wife too quickly for someone who was truly in love. But she knows something is not right. Though Anne does not have feelings towards Walter, there are strong social reasons she could marry him. One critic points out that "through William Walter Elliot, Anne could revive her dear mother's title of Lady Elliot in her own person, but she senses that [he]…toadies to the loveless social goals of class status and wealth in marriage" (Magee 203). Anne faces this temptation as she thinks about marriage with Mr. Elliot. The potential to fill her mother's role, and be at home again, not to mention away from her family, all play a part in this decision. At this point in the novel, a proposal from him is more certain than a second proposal from

Wentworth, so she also takes a risk of never marrying in potentially rejecting him. Because of Anne's insight, however, she recognizes that a marriage with Mr. Elliot would be a loveless one, and thus one not worth pursuing. Her conclusion turns out to be true, as the readers find out that Mr. Elliot's interest in Anne is for her connections, and not for her character or personhood. This shallow interest reveals a perverted Eros. One may think he possesses Eros for the true Anne, since he tells her at the play in Bath, "'I knew you by report long before you came to Bath. I had heard you described by those who knew you intimately. I have been acquainted with you by character many years. Your person, your disposition, accomplishments, manner—they were all described, they were all present to me'" (124). But this is secondhand knowledge; how worthless is it in contrast to the hard-won firsthand knowledge that Wentworth has of Anne. Mr. Elliot does comment on her character, but it is nothing more than flattery. Though these words are true, he intends to marry her for personal gain, not for selfless love. Anne finds his motives out through Mrs. Smith, who tells her of his "'resolution of coming back to Bath as soon as possible, and of fixing himself here for a time, with the view of renewing his former acquaintance and recovering such a footing in his family'" (137). Anne is merely a convenient connection for Mr. Elliot. Though he knows her character, his Eros for her is perverted. Indeed, Lewis points out that "no lover in the world ever sought the embraces of the woman he loved as the result of a calculation, however unconscious, that they would be more pleasurable than those of any other woman" (121). Yet Mr. Elliot only calculates as he pursues Anne. She is a cog in the machine, not a person with a "disposition, accomplishments, and manner." Though the narrator does not touch on Mr. Elliot's sexual attraction to Anne, the fact that secondhand knowledge is enough for him

and that he makes no effort to get to know her personally reveals that he does not care to know her. If he did have pure Eros for her, he would refuse to rely only on others' knowledge of her. In pursuing her, he practices business, not love. A perverted Eros, indeed.

CONCLUSION

A current of morality runs beneath all the characters and events of Austen's novels. Characters consider whether a seemingly amoral choice is the correct one. When it comes to love, Austen not only wants to capture it right, but for it to be right. Looking through the lens of Lewis's theory of loves it is easy to see how perverted and pure Eros manifests through the successful and unsuccessful romances of each work. A pure Eros loves selflessly and genuinely, while a perverted Eros focuses on getting one person's desires met. In *Lady Susan*, Reginald selflessly argues for Frederica, without fearing censure from Lady Susan, because he cares for Frederica's happiness. Lady Susan and Reginald's relationship, meanwhile, represents the perverted Eros because Lady Susan's sole desire is control over multiple men. She wants to pick the easily manipulated man, and keeps her options open, all the while causing pain to the people around her without remorse. In *Sense and Sensibility,* Elinor Dashwood and Edward Ferrars have a pure Eros for each other because they delight in the other person. Marianne Dashwood and Willoughby, however, create a perverted Eros through the building of a joint past that is disrupted. Though both sisters experience connections with men who are unavailable, Edward proves his Eros to be true by apologizing, while Willoughby returns Marianne's affections without thinking of her personhood. In *Pride and Prejudice,* Elizabeth and Darcy foster a pure Eros through Darcy's selfless acts and Elizabeth's repentant and

grateful heart. Their love is selfless. On the other hand, Wickham selfishly treats Lydia as an afterthought to get his needs met. In *Mansfield Park,* Fanny Price's and Edmund Bertram's Storge develops into Eros after Edmund ceases taking Fanny for granted. Because the two love each other for the person they are, not the person they desire them to be, they have a pure connection. Contrastingly, Henry Crawford and Maria (Bertram) Rushworth's Eros is perverted because the only thought they have is about their personal happiness, and not how their scandal may affect others. Unlike the somber *Mansfield Park*, *Northanger Abbey*'s relationship between Catherine and Mr. Tilney is one of lighthearted laughter and of noble sacrifices. This is pure Eros. Catherine and John Thorpe's perverted Eros, however, is unbalanced, with Catherine's disinterest and Thorpe's selfish treatment of Catherine's time. In Austen's next novel, *Emma*, Emma and Mr. Knightley develop a pure Eros from the foundations of Philia. Emma cares about Knightley's good opinion, and once he sees that he values her devotion, their Eros for each other is pure. Emma and Frank Churchill's relationship, however, is a perverted Eros because both create an attachment that neither of them want or can have. Finally, *Persuasion* reveals a pure Eros through Anne and Wentworth's particular desire of the person, not the pleasure. Contrastingly, Anne and Mr. Elliot's relationship develops out of calculation of certain factors, which proves a perverse Eros. All these relationships participate in the analysis of pure and perverted Eros in Austen's novels.

Using the theories developed by Lewis to analyze these relationships demonstrates that there is a moral way to be in love, and to love. The characters who are rewarded with happy matrimony (as opposed to unhappy matrimony or no matrimony at all) are rewarded because they have committed, at some point in their development, to

selflessness and delight in the other person. They follow the path of pure Eros with devoted hearts. Those who are punished with unhappy matrimony or broken attachments are punished because their Eros is perverse with self-centered thoughts and actions by one or more of the parties in the relationship. Though Austen and Lewis present love in different forms of writing, Austen's care for the morality of love, along with Lewis's care to expound upon the qualifications for a pure Eros, creates a beautiful synthesis of why pure love succeeds and perverse love fails. By putting these authors from different centuries in conversation with each other, allowing Austen to show and Lewis to tell, we find that a moral way to love exists.

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