

In Praise of Mr. Woodhouse: Duty and Desire in *Emma*

JOEL C. WEINSHEIMER

THAT Mr. Knightley and his bride reside at Hartfield with Mr. Woodhouse after their marriage has given little satisfaction to some of the readers of *Emma*. Though otherwise unwilling to allow Mrs. Elton to speak for us, we may be apt to agree that it is a "Shocking plan, living together. It would never do. She knew a family near Maple Grove who had tried it, and been obliged to separate before the end of the first quarter" (p. 469).¹ Critical objections to the couple's decision center in the fact that Mr. Woodhouse does not embody any value sufficiently important to justify this final twist of the plot. According to Marvin Mudrick, he is "an idiot," "a *tour de force* . . . nothing else."² And for Mark Schorer Mr. Woodhouse ranks lowest in the novel's scale of selflessness; he is "the destructive (though comic, of course) malingering egotist." With Mrs. Elton, Schorer wonders, "And how 'happy' is this marriage, with Knightley having to move into old Mr. Woodhouse's establishment? Isn't it all, perhaps, a little superficial — not the writing but the self-avowals of the characters?"³

But Mr. Woodhouse is not an idiot; nor, as a character perceived in the context of the novel, is he superficially conceived or structurally insignificant. Indeed, an important aspect of the novel's intention is to prevent a simplistic rejection of Mr. Woodhouse by educating the reader in a moral awareness that will validate his worth. If we acknowledge the real merits of Mr. Woodhouse, consider his relationship to Emma within the context of the novel's other parents and children, and examine his role in the process of her self-awakening, the decision of Emma

and Knightley to live at Hartfield becomes both credible and meaningful.

The parents (or guardians) of Jane Austen's heroines always receive careful attention. E. M. Forster assigns this fact no more weight than it deserves when he asserts that the "accidents of birth and relationship were more sacred to her than anything else in the world, and she introduced this faith as the groundwork of her novels."⁴ The sanctity of this bond appears in the novels as active love, the mutual responsibility of both parent and child. Particularly in the essential matter of the heroine's marriage the strength and intelligence of this love are thoroughly tested, since both parent and daughter can veto the other's choice of a husband for her. In *Mansfield Park* and *Persuasion*, the two novels that flank *Emma* in Jane Austen's canon, the exercise of this prerogative magnifies the complexity of familial responsibility and focuses our attention upon the heroine's performance of her filial duty as a measure of her ethical status. Fanny Price conclusively demonstrates her allegiance to Sir Thomas by refusing to participate in the rehearsals; yet she declines his advice to marry Henry Crawford. And although Sir Thomas accuses her of ingratitude, we come to realize that only by refusing Henry can Fanny show a just respect for her uncle. In *Persuasion* Lady Russell rejects Wentworth as a suitor for Anne, and sorrowfully but firmly Anne submits, trusting the integrity of one who was "in the place of a parent" over that of her own heart. At the novel's close Anne justifies her acquiescence by observing that "a strong sense of duty is no bad part of a woman's portion,"⁵ and this is a sentiment with which Emma is in perfect agreement. Emma loves her father deeply, and she embraces him even with his faults. Further, her love generates a sense of duty that makes the question of Mr. Woodhouse's inanity tangential at best, for Emma (like her creator) acknowledges what is due to a parent regardless of his defects. In *Emma*, as in *Mansfield Park* and *Persuasion*,

Jane Austen's estimate of how far her heroine's duty extends is unavoidably, even painfully, explicit.

This is not to say that the faults of Mr. Woodhouse are irrelevant or inconsequential; Jane Austen never allows us to forget them. Although he is an egotist, as Schorer points out, his is a "gentle selfishness" produced by the inability "to suppose that other people could feel differently from himself" (p. 8). His habit of projecting himself on others ("Poor Miss Taylor") is the foundation of an extensive sympathy, and his errors are not those of moribund inertia but rather of a hyperactive charity. Judged by the kindness of his intentions, Mr. Woodhouse is flawless; but, by his exclusive concern with the body, his intentions are frequently misdirected. Thus the paradoxical character of his thoughts: "his care for their health made him grieve that they would eat" (p. 24). Mr. Woodhouse's most prominent virtues are those of the heart. "Warmth and tenderness of heart, with an affectionate open manner, will beat all the clearness of head in the world, for attraction [Emma tells us]. I am sure it will. It is tenderness of heart which makes my dear father so generally beloved. . . . I have it not — but I know how to respect it" (p. 269).⁶ Mr. Woodhouse's tenderness of head should not blind us to his unassailable tenderness of heart, for without this quality of emotion no character in the novel receives any approbation.

The opening chapter of the novel clearly implies that Emma's misfortunes will result from her complacency and lack of self-command caused by the absence of parental authority in enforcing moral discipline. Each of Emma's distresses recalls her father's culpability in over-indulging his daughter, and for this indolence Mr. Woodhouse is never wholly excused. But, though infrequently, he does occasionally venture to correct her. When Emma proposes to select a wife for Mr. Elton, her father reminds her, "Mr. Elton is a very pretty young man to be sure, and a very good young man, and I have a great regard for him. But if you want to show him any attention, my dear,

ask him to come and dine with us some day. That will be a much better thing" (p. 14). And when Emma attempts to persuade her father to snub the newly-wed Mrs. Elton by insinuating that attention to a bride inspires others to marry, he contradicts her: "My dear, you do not understand me. This is a matter of mere common politeness and good-breeding, and has nothing to do with any encouragement of people to marry" (p. 280). Such corrections are rare and ineffectual. But their presence serves to remind us that Emma bears the responsibility for her own mistakes and that they cannot be excused by appeal to her father's defects. Mr. Woodhouse clearly recognizes the appropriate responses to these social situations, even though he lacks the authority to enforce his will. That he is not entirely imperceptive is made most conspicuous in his discovery, second only to Mr. Knightley's, that Frank Churchill "is very thoughtless [T]hat young man is not quite the thing" (p. 249).

Even Mr. Woodhouse's negative virtues, those that result from his weakness of body and mind, contribute to our understanding of the novel. Jane Austen makes the filter of his mind a definite asset, not only to her readers, but also to the characters themselves, were they capable of hearing him. One such asset is his capacity for meaningful confusions. In the early pages of the novel he mistakes Emma's description of herself for one of him: "I believe it is very true, my dear. . . . I am afraid I am sometimes very fanciful and troublesome" (p. 10). By means of this apparently simple miscue Jane Austen is able to make a delicately complex observation on Mr. Woodhouse, his daughter, and their similarity to each other. Again, when Emma reads him Mr. Elton's charade, he replies, "Nobody could have written so prettily, but you, Emma" (p. 78). And we come to see that, by misapplying it to Harriet rather than herself, Emma does in effect "write" the charade. So also after the arrival of Frank Churchill's first letter, Mr. Woodhouse recalls only those parts of it that have meaning: "I remember it was written

from Weymouth, and dated Sept. 28th — and began 'My dear Madam,' but I forget how it went on: and it was signed 'F. C. Weston Churchill.' I remember that perfectly" (p. 96). Just as the copious Miss Bates relays to the reader essential facts of the plot, the apparently empty mumblings of Mr. Woodhouse disclose, however unconsciously, real moral perceptions.

The knowledge that Mr. Woodhouse, besides requiring the obligations due to a father, is not entirely without merit should dispose us more kindly toward the Knightleys' choice to live with him. And if we examine the structure of filial attitudes in which their decision operates, their choice becomes credible as well as laudable. The danger of subverting or dissolving family ties is everywhere apparent in *Emma*. Indeed, the novel is populated largely with orphans and semi-orphans.⁷ Emma, Harriet, Frank, Jane and even Miss Augusta Hawkins all lack either one parent or both.⁸ In one shape or another the relationship of the child to his parents (or guardians) is determined and assessed for virtually all the major characters, and when filial or parental responsibility is neglected, the failure is pointed up for pity or scorn. The promiscuity and negligence of Harriet's parents, for example, force her to find a surrogate mother in Emma, and Emma's inadequacy in performing this function nearly destroys Harriet. In the actions of Frank and Jane filial accountability is given extended examination. Structurally considered, they embody the novel's two essential attitudes toward one's parents and as such form the context of Emma's choice to remain with Mr. Woodhouse.

As his name signifies, Frank Weston Churchill is somewhat uncertain to whom he owes fidelity. Although Mr. Weston initiated the process, Frank is an orphan as much by choice as by circumstance, for he has allowed his allegiances to the Westons and to the Churchills to cancel each other out, and the indeterminacy of his loyalties has uprooted him. His double parentage prepares us for his duplicity to Emma, Jane, and Highbury in general, since

performing his duty to either set of parents depends on what best suits his immediate desires. As soon as Mrs. Churchill dies, Frank contradicts what he knows would be her wishes and pressures the mourning Mr. Churchill for his consent to marry Jane. Frank's attitude toward the Westons is no more praiseworthy. By neglecting to pay his respects personally to his father and new step-mother until Jane's arrival provides a reason for coming to Highbury, Frank irrevocably brands himself as an undutiful son. This crucial omission confirms Mr. Knightley's suspicions about Frank's character: "There is one thing, Emma, which a man can always do if he chooses, and that is, his duty; not by manoeuvring and finessing, but by vigor and resolution. It is Frank Churchill's duty to pay this attention to his father. He knows it to be so by his promises and messages; but if he wished to do it, it might be done" (p. 146). Nor does Frank seek parental advice in his choice of a wife; indeed, he is forced to keep it secret from them. And since what makes an engagement is the publication of mutual love, Frank's request of a private engagement manifests not only his lack of responsibility to his parents but also to society in general.

Jane, on the other hand, feels much more strongly than her fiancé that their private engagement is a transgression of public and familial accountability, and this sense of guilt is based in large part on her recognition of what is due to her guardians. Like that of Frank, Jane's duty is split between two families — the Campbells and the Bateses. But Jane manages to balance and fulfill the two claims on her. By leaving the Campbells' home after their daughter's marriage, she acknowledges their inability to support her indefinitely and their rectitude in educating her to be self-supporting. Her departure expresses gratitude. While waiting until Frank is able to marry her, Jane lives at her second home. Since "on losing her mother, she became the property, the charge, the consolation, the fondling of her grandmother and aunt" (p. 163), Jane owes a considerable debt of gratitude to Mrs. and Miss Bates. And

she admits this debt by her presence in Highbury. In Miss Bates Jane has her own Mr. Woodhouse to humor and to honor. But Emma misdoubts the piety of Jane's attention to the Bateses, notwithstanding their similarity of situation. She skeptically asks Miss Bates, "In spite of all her friend's urgency, and her own wish of seeing Ireland, Miss Fairfax prefers devoting the time to you and Mrs. Bates?" (p. 161). So incredible does Emma find this preference that she formulates the imaginary affair with Dixon to explain it. It may seem that Emma misinterprets Jane's intention because Emma (unlike her father) believes everyone different from herself; but this is not the case. Emma knows half-consciously that her present motives for living with her father are mixed and perhaps not entirely laudable. Although she certainly loves him, Emma also loves the independence, the social power and prestige, and the safety of emotional uninvolvedness that Hartfield affords her. And since Jane enjoys none of these benefits at the Bateses, Emma projects herself on Jane by postulating an ulterior motive; for a motive beyond the love of one's parents there must undoubtedly be.

We come to suspect that (until Mr. Knightley's proposal) Emma's affection for her father is not wholly disinterested. Like Frank, she contrives to gratify her desires while fulfilling her duty. And when her desires conflict with her duty, Mr. Woodhouse becomes quite "bothersome" and tedious, a dead weight on her schemes of felicity. One effect of the novel's action is to purify Emma's filial tenderness by enlarging her perspective on her father and on Highbury in general. By reviewing the process of that purification we can best understand Jane Austen's final assessment of Mr. Woodhouse.

For the Emma of the opening sections of the novel Highbury is an exceedingly dull place. Its atmosphere is close and stifling from overheated drawing-rooms full of bores and fools. Her elitism combined with a restricted social and geographical environment generates in Emma a sensation of constriction and even imprisonment, which the

loss of Miss Taylor makes all the more unendurable. And when she attempts to free herself, she seems only to exchange one trap for another. Hoping to escape Harriet's self-pity and indirect recrimination after the Elton debacle, Emma seeks "safety in numbers" at the Bates home. But finding herself snared in Miss Bates' labyrinthine repetition of Jane's letter, Emma immediately wishes herself out, and "not all that could be urged to detain her succeeded. She regained the street . . ." (p. 162). Emma must not linger too long at the Bateses lest she should be swallowed up and assimilated into Highbury. Jane Austen continually forces Emma into traps with her "inferiors" and observes the results with grim delight. We recall the snowy trip home from Randalls: "Emma found, on being escorted and followed into the second carriage by Mr. Elton, that the door was to be lawfully shut on them, and that they were to have a tête-à-tête drive" (p. 129). And Mr. Elton is not so easily eluded as Miss Bates. Even after Emma rejects his suit and Harriet acquiesces to her misfortune, "Their being fixed, so absolutely fixed, in the same place, was bad for each, for all three. Not one of them had the power of removal, or of effecting any material change of society. They must encounter each other and make the best of it" (p. 143). In *Emma* there can be no escape from society, however unpleasant.⁹

One of the less pleasant members of Highbury society is Mr. Woodhouse himself. In the novel in general he does little to relieve the other characters of the tedium of inexorable stasis. Ceaselessly fretting over imaginary calamities, safety becomes his first concern, and for Mr. Woodhouse safety requires that things be controllable, deliberate, slow, and little.¹⁰ Since all change involves danger, he hates change of every kind, and "Matrimony, as the origin of change, was always disagreeable" (p. 7). Perhaps Samuel Johnson can best explain this fear: "An even and unvaried tenour of life always hides from our apprehension the approach of its end. Succession is not perceived but by variation; he that lives today as he lived yesterday, and ex-

pects that as the present day is such will be the morrow, easily conceives time as running in a circle and returning to itself. The uncertainty of our duration is impressed commonly by dissimilitude of condition; it is only by finding life changeable that we are reminded of its shortness."¹¹ Attempting to minimize the consciousness of his imminent end, Mr. Woodhouse maintains this monotonous uniformity as far as possible. He consistently deters or prevents the variety and vitality that could alleviate the tedium for Emma, and thus he embodies all the maddening dullness of Highbury. It can raise no wonder that, with so little to feed her voracious imagination, Emma creates illusions to fill the vacuity of her mind, nor that she provides her own amusement when the boredom becomes intolerable.¹² At Box Hill "it was downright dullness to Emma. She had never seen Frank Churchill so silent and stupid While he was so dull, it was no wonder that Harriet should be dull likewise, and they were both insufferable" (p. 367). Thus when an opportunity for amusement arises, "Emma could not resist" (p. 370). Clearly the enclosure and stasis of Highbury tests the endurance of one's civility, and Emma fails this test.

If uncontrolled imagination is Emma's initial response to the tedium of Highbury and, by extension, to her father, Mrs. Elton's reaction is bustle, "for, let a woman have ever so many resources [she announces], it is not possible for her to be always shut up at home . . ." (p. 356). When the Box Hill excursion is delayed, she seizes on Mr. Knightley's proposal that "they had better explore to Donwell." "Donwell was famous for its strawberry beds, which seemed a plea for the invitation: but no plea was necessary; cabbage-beds would have been enough to tempt the lady, who only wanted to be going somewhere" (p. 354). Mr. Weston, on the other hand, requires continual company to prevent boredom. He depends, in John Knightley's words, "much more upon what is called *society* for his comforts, that is, upon the power of eating and drinking, and playing

whist with his neighbors five times a week, then upon family affection, or anything that home affords" (p. 96).

While Mr. Weston depends on socialibility for happiness, Frank relies on movement alone to escape himself, and is thus explicitly contrasted to the static Mr. Woodhouse.¹³ Frank is always coming or going, always riding in or out of Highbury, visiting here or there, and this mobility lends him an aura of adventure and energy that is almost Byronic in its combination of gusto and listlessness. Frank's life (recalling George Herbert's poem) is "free; free as the road, / Loose as the wind, as large as store."¹⁴ His independence seems to offer Emma a release from the provincial tedium of Highbury, and she is eager to love him for his freedom and liveliness.

But we soon come to agree with Mr. Woodhouse that Frank is not quite the thing. There is about him a nervousness, a "restlessness, which showed a mind not at ease" (p. 320). The jaunt to London to buy a piano manifests not so much his affection for Jane as his "vanity, extravagance, love of change, restlessness of temper, which must be doing something, good, or bad . . ." (p. 205). When Frank returns to Hartfield (in Volume III) and Emma attempts to determine the extent of his affection for her, she notices that "he was not without agitation. It was not in his calmness that she read his comparative indifference. He was not calm; his spirits were evidently fluttered; there was a restlessness about him. Lively as he was, it seemed a liveliness that did not satisfy himself . . ." (p. 316). And after the heat and the tiff with Jane have reduced him to uncontrolled irritability, Frank prescribes the remedy for his frustration: "I feel a strong persuasion this morning, that I shall soon be abroad. I ought to travel. I am tired of doing nothing. I want a change" (p. 369). We see further that listlessness, Frank's disease of the imagination, is communicable, since it infects Emma when she thinks herself most in love with him: "This sensation of listlessness, weariness, stupidity, this disinclination to employ myself, this feeling of everything's

being dull and insipid about the house! — I must be in love . . .” (p. 262). Believing that she must be in love with Frank reinforces Emma’s disdain of the monotonous sameness of Hartfield.

But such change as Frank wishes cannot release him, or Emma, from the bonds of Highbury or Hartfield, for neither freedom and happiness nor constriction and ennui consist ultimately in place. In *Emma* all entrapment occurs within the confines of one’s own self-limitations, and no amount of listless roving (as Rasselas also learns) can supply the defects of the self or discover a region of freedom and felicity. On the contrary, restlessness signifies not liberation but bondage. Drifting with the current of desire, Frank is lulled into a moral indolence that unconsciously betrays him into the slavery of gypsy rootlessness.¹⁵ His irresponsibility and lack of commitment make all change undirected, meaningless, and thus illusory. For without engagement and self-knowledge, we come to realize, no change is possible. When the irony of Frank’s character is made explicit, the role of Mr. Woodhouse in the novel also becomes clear. Though Frank had seemed to represent all the youth and vitality that are lacking in the valetudinary Mr. Woodhouse, the two are actually mirror images of each other. Mr. Woodhouse attempts to prevent change and preserve fixity, Frank to avoid fixity by continual change. Both are equally futile ideals.

Yet in the end both Frank and Mr. Woodhouse are exonerated and welcomed into the final society of the novel. Unlike the excommunication of Henry Crawford in *Mansfield Park* or the half-hearted embrace of Wickham at the close of *Pride and Prejudice*, all the characters of *Emma*, even Mr. Knightley, are ultimately willing to deem Frank Churchill at least a “very good sort of fellow” (p. 433). And that Emma and Mr. Knightley move into Hartfield after their marriage validates the claims of Mr. Woodhouse beyond doubt. Emma’s problem (and the problem of the novel) is to reconcile what appear to be two mutually contradictory evils — the ceaseless change of Frank and

the eternal fixity of her father.¹⁶ But both characters embody values that are "evil" only by their extremity and misdirection. In psychological terms Emma must balance Frank's liveliness with her father's quiescence, for a "mind lively and at ease, can do with nothing, and see nothing that does not answer" (p. 233). This is the state of mind Emma must achieve if Hartfield is to satisfy her imagination, and its accomplishment requires a crucial change in her psychological constitution — one that cannot be produced by the temporary gratification of visiting the Coles or Randalls, or "exploring" Box Hill.

The change comes with Mr. Knightley's proposal: "Within half an hour he had passed from a thoroughly distressed state of mind, to something so like perfect happiness, that it could bear no other name. *Her* change was equal — This one half hour had given to each the precious certainty of being beloved . . ." (p. 432). The advent of this "precious certainty" is the change that conserves Highbury, and that reconciles the opposing forces in Emma by realigning duty with desire. With this new consciousness and commitment appears a new mode of perception by which the sameness of her surroundings is revitalized: "They sat down to tea — the same party round the same table — how often it had been collected! — and how often had her eyes fallen on the same shrubs in the lawn, and observed the same beautiful effect of the western sun! — But never in such a state of spirits, never in anything like it . . ." (p. 434). This new perspective which draws novelty from the familiar and revalues what had seemed trivial and insipid is verified by Mr. Knightley's suggestion that "so long as her father's happiness — in other words his life — required Hartfield to continue her home, it should be his likewise" (p. 449). Recognizing Emma's duty to and affection for her father, Mr. Knightley assumes on himself the same filial duty and affection for his father-in-law. And though residing at Hartfield involves a sacrifice of independence, it is one that he has always been ready to make. By his continual presence at Hartfield throughout

the novel, he has proved himself "ever willing to change his own home for their's" (p. 422). This willingness allows Emma to reconcile the conflicting loyalties to her father and her husband, and thereby to heal her self-divisions.

If we perceive him in the structure I have outlined above, it becomes clear that Mr. Woodhouse embodies one of the polar values of *Emma* — the necessity of order and stability in achieving the peace that is both the prerequisite and the end of moral endeavor. That he is polar — that is to say, inflexible in his stability, relinquishing growth in the hope of preventing decay — explains and justifies the unremitting irony directed at him. But this irony does not require the reader to reject Mr. Woodhouse as merely an idiot or egotist. Jane Austen controls our disapprobation by balancing it with an admission of his unfailing benevolence. She never allows our awareness of Mr. Woodhouse's faults to obscure his claims as a parent and concomitantly as a representative of the stability of the family, the society, and the moral order.

Emma's consistent devotion to her father secures the reader's imaginative sympathies and prevents a facile condemnation of her by giving promise that she will ultimately expand her filial affection to a wider circle. But until Frank's duplicity, the conscious guilt of her actions toward Harriet, Jane, and Miss Bates, and the knowledge that she loves Mr. Knightley have introduced Emma to herself as a social being; only then can she enlarge the circumference of her affection beyond her father and thereby elevate this affection from a peculiarity of disposition to a genuine moral value. With Emma we come to see that what is due to a parent is a special case of what is due to others in general. Before she acknowledges her accountability to the community as a whole, Emma's devotion to her father is a benevolent idiosyncrasy. The very uniqueness of this tenderness indicates that it is fragmental, that it has not been fully integrated in her personality and is therefore ethically immature. But after

she has achieved self-consciousness and its correlate, the consciousness of others, Emma's refusal to leave Mr. Woodhouse deserves the highest praise, for it epitomizes the novel's central truth, that only within the community is self-realization possible.

NOTES

- ¹All references to *Emma* are from *The Novels of Jane Austen*, ed. R. W. Chapman, 3rd ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), vol. IV.
- ²*Jane Austen: Irony as Defense and Discovery* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1952), pp. 192 and 196.
- ³"The Humiliation of Emma Woodhouse," *The Literary Review* (1959), rpt. in ed. Ian Watt, *Jane Austen: A Collection of Critical Essays* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1963), pp. 108-09.
- ⁴E. M. Forster, *Abinger Harvest* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1936), p. 164.
- ⁵*The Novels of Jane Austen*, ed. R. W. Chapman, 3rd ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), V. 246.
- ⁶We realize, of course, the necessity of "clearness of head" in moral action or any action. The irony in the lines I have quoted does not depreciate tenderness itself; rather it undercuts Emma's presumption of her ability to recognize and value tenderness.
- ⁷For the romantic and sentimental associations of orphans in *Emma*, see Mary Lascelles, *Jane Austen and Her Art* (London: Oxford University Press, 1939), pp. 69-70 and Kenneth L. Moler, *Jane Austen's Art of Allusion* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1968), pp. 166-81.
- ⁸We might also include in this list Mr. Elton, Miss Bates, and especially Miss Taylor, who has already undergone the fate that Jane Fairfax anticipates with so much dread.
- ⁹That this is true suggests an essential difference between the social attitudes of *Pride and Prejudice* and *Emma*. At the close of *Pride and Prejudice* Elizabeth and Darcy are enabled to escape the Longbourn-Meryton world by fleeing to the haven of Pemberley.
- ¹⁰The word "little" almost forms a verbal backdrop of *Emma*, since (besides "slight," "minute," "trifle," "small," "short," "brief," and "few") "little" recurs some three hundred times. Moreover "littleness" (i.e., selfishness or illiberality) describes the central fault of Mr. Elton and Frank (330, 397).
- ¹¹*Idler* No. 103, eds W. J. Bate, John M. Bullitt, and L. F. Powell, *The Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1963), II, 315.
- ¹²I have devoted little comment to Emma's imagination since this has been ably discussed elsewhere, especially by A. Walton Litz, *Jane Austen: A Study of Her Artistic Development* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), pp. 132-49; David L.

Minter, "Aesthetic Vision and the World of *Emma*," *NCF*, 21 (1966), 49-59; Edward M. White, "*Emma* and the Parodic Point of View," *NCF*, 18 (1963), 55-63; and J. S. Lawry, "'Decided and Open'; Structure in *Emma*," *NCF*, 24 (1969), 1-15.

¹³For Frank's mobility contrasted to Mr. Knightley's stability, see U. C. Knoepfelmacher, "The Importance of Being Frank: Character and Letter-Writing in *Emma*," *SEL*, 7 (1967), 655 ff. What makes this contrast most questionable is that we see Mr. Knightley at Donwell only once in the novel.

¹⁴"The Collar," *The Works of George Herbert*, ed. F. E. Hutchinson (London: Oxford University Press, 1941), p. 154.

¹⁵That Frank has an element of the vagabond in him adds a further irony to his encounter with the gypsies on the Richmond road. Mrs. Elton's listlessness is also expressed by the gypsy image: in the Donwell excursion, as she envisions it, there is to be "no form or parade — a sort of gypsy party" (355).

¹⁶See Lionel Trilling, "*Emma* and the Legend of Jane Austen," *Beyond Culture* (New York: Viking Press, 1968), pp. 31-55. I am in essential agreement with Trilling's conclusion that the novel combines idyllic stillness with activity and development, but I think he has not sufficiently explained how this reconciliation occurs. Jane Austen leads Emma from a moral and psychological state in which the idyllic appears insipid and ceaseless activity meaningless into one where the changing and the changeless are mutually supportive.