Jane Austen
— and the —
Romantic Poets

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CHAPTER FOUR

Emma

Ambiguous Relationships

"[Y]ou know we are not really so much brother and sister as to make it at all improper."

"Brother and sister! no, indeed."

Although *Emma* alludes to "Tintern Abbey," as I noted in chapter 1, in connection with one of its central themes, that of the imagination, it is neither that allusion nor that theme that I will be discussing here. For while Wordsworthian ideas about the imagination as a cognitive faculty clearly inform the novel, *Emma*'s greatest debt to the British Romantic poets lies elsewhere. From Wordsworth in particular, but also from Coleridge and Byron, Austen drew ideas here about new possibilities for intimate relationships—their complexity and depth, their freedom from conventional social hierarchies and categories, their transformative potential. Indeed, the novel initiates its exploration of such ambiguous relationships in its very first lines.

For the opening of *Emma* is strangely proportioned. A single sentence characterizes the heroine, a second her relationship with her father, then fully four more her relationship with her governess. That last passage is itself strange, and worth quoting in full:

> [Emma's] mother had died too long ago for her to have more than an indistinct remembrance of her caresses, and her place had been supplied by an excellent woman as governess, who had fallen little short of a mother in affection.
>
> Sixteen years had Miss Taylor been in Mr. Woodhouse's family, less as a governess than a friend, very fond of both daughters, but particularly of Emma. Between *them* it was more the intimacy of sisters. Even before Miss Taylor had ceased to hold the nominal office of governess, the mildness of her temper had hardly allowed her to impose any restraint; and the shadow of authority being now long passed away, they had been living together as friend and friend very mutually attached, and Emma doing just what she liked; highly esteeming Miss Taylor's judgment, but directed chiefly by her own. (7; emphasis in the original)

"Governess," "mother," "friend," "sister"—what, after all that, *was* Miss Taylor's relationship to Emma? The more labels the narrator deploys, the farther she seems to get from finding the right one. Not only do these terms keep displacing and thus mutually qualifying one another, each is itself qualified as it makes its appearance, its adequacy undermined even before it can be enunciated: "little short of a mother," "less as a governess," "more the intimacy of sisters." "Friend" does seem to win out by the end of the passage—a circumstance to which I will return—but before we put too much stock in that alternative, we should note that the "friend" of "friend and friend," the phrase that marks the final stage of Emma and Miss Taylor's relationship, clearly means something different from the "friend" of "less as a governess than a friend," one of the competing definitions of the earlier stages. These different stages, however, do give us a way of making sense of this profusion of relational terms. We can conjecture that Miss Taylor, hired as a governess, was first something like a mother to the orphaned five-year-old, then, as Emma matured, became a kind of friend, then finally, after further maturation on Emma's part, achieved something of the intimacy of a sister.

But however accurate this conjectural narrative might be, the text gives us no reason to believe that these relational modes displaced one another; rather, it suggests a layering process, one in which maternal and amicable and sororal feelings and ways of interacting accumulated over time in an ever-denser affective palimpsest. No wonder that opening description is so long: it must be, to capture a relationship of such complexity—of such ambiguity. And no wonder that each of the relational terms it employs must be so hedged by qualification. For it is precisely Austen's purpose here, at the very start of the novel, to expose the inadequacy of such labels to characterize the kinds of relationships she will be concerned to explore, relationships that, in their fruitful, liberating ambiguity, continually push beyond conventional categories, conventional boundaries, conventional roles.

Emma's relationship with Miss Taylor is the only one whose ambiguity is

made explicit, but all her major ties, with one exception I will discuss below, are similarly complex, even if, with the others, Austen leaves us to try to supply the labels ourselves. To her widowed and childish father she is at once daughter, wife, and mother, in addition to being what the novel's second sentence calls her, the "mistress of his house."[1] Knightley is not only her neighbor, but what the narrator calls "a very old and intimate friend of the family": a term, "friend of the family," the familiarity of which conceals its own complexity, for it seems to imply both a close connection between the Donwell and Hartfield households—we see how easily he drops in for a visit—and also the existence of friendships, of different sorts, between him and each member of the Hartfield family, not excluding the erstwhile Miss Taylor (10). Knightley has also been Emma's brother-in-law for the previous seven years—more ambiguity-within-ambiguity, for as this chapter's epigraph reminds us, Austen's society made no verbal distinction between such a relationship and that of a brother pure and simple, even while recognizing important differences between them. Of course, he has also been for far longer a kind of elder-brother- or father-figure to Emma, and he will eventually become, without dropping any of these other roles, her lover and husband.[2] The ambiguous relationship Emma develops with Frank we will consider later, but we may take this opportunity to note, with respect to Miss Taylor, that in addition to the four relationships approximated in the novel's opening, she has also been for Emma a kind of wife.[3]

Such relationships, however, are in no way peculiar to the heroine. What Frank is to Mrs. Weston, who "stand[s] in a mother's place" to him, "but without a mother's affection," and even what he is to his father, to whom he is practically a stranger, are not to be specified by a simple label—certainly not "son"—as his interactions with each testify (124). Indeed, we can scarcely find a significant relationship within the novel that could be so specified. Even Mrs. Goddard, the schoolmistress, is referred to as "motherly" (20). And the novel also shows us important relationships that may be thought of less as ambiguous, with regard to conventional relational terminology, than as indeterminate. Knightley and Mrs. Weston, John Knightley and Jane (who have an extended conversation toward the end of volume II that exhibits a surprising degree of intimacy)—it is not so much that these relationships attract too many labels, as that they do not attract any. Like the other ties we have been surveying, they reveal the same inadequacy of conventional relational terms that Austen takes pains to expose at the novel's outset, and thus prompt the same questions: What kinds of relationships become possible once those conventional roles and categories have been

transcended? What kinds of feelings lie—or rather, grow—at the interstices of received emotions? What happens when people are brought together and left to find their own way toward each other, free of traditional expectations?

We have never seen anything like this before in Austen's work.[4] The world of the early novels is one of clearly defined roles—daughter, father, neighbor, suitor. (Elizabeth Bennet's relationship with her father may be light-hearted, but it is unmistakably a father-daughter relationship nonetheless.) This lack of ambiguity is not oppressive, but rather allows characters to understand how they are situated relative to one another and to respond accordingly. Indeed, it is part of what makes for the simplicity and clarity of emotions in Austen's early work. In the authoritarian world of *Mansfield Park*, however, the lack of relational ambiguity *is* oppressive. Their rigidly prescribed roles as Sir Thomas's sons and daughters (different roles for each sex, and for the older son as distinct from the younger) are exactly what three of his children rebel against. As for Fanny, her position does entail some initial ambiguity, but that very uncertainty about her role and her relationships makes for a debilitating anxiety, and in any case the Bertrams soon obligingly imprison her in her long-term position as "the lowest and last" (184).

Of course, the issue of substitution, as explored in the previous chapter, complicates the picture relative to her relationship with Edmund. But there is an important distinction to be made. Fanny, having partly substituted Edmund for William, feels emotions for him that hover ambiguously among those of a cousin, a sister, and a lover, but precisely because she knows that one in her position must conceal those last two forms of feeling, her relationship with Edmund itself, her actual behavior toward him, is, for the great bulk of the novel, well defined, stable, and conventional. That is exactly why Edmund is completely unaware, once he finally develops amorous feelings of his own toward her, that those feelings have long been reciprocated. For some nine years, he is the kind, patronizing older cousin, she the adoring, obedient younger one. We might think of them as closer to brother and sister, but they do not; in Mansfield, everyone knows their place. Only toward the end of the novel does Edmund call Fanny "sister" (367), and only at the very end, after the close of the dramatized part of the narrative, do the cousin-siblings also become lovers and spouses.

Still, Austen's exploration of substitution and its culmination in this most disturbingly ambiguous of relationships clearly gave her ideas. The suggestion with which *Mansfield Park* ends becomes the one with which *Emma*, a novel so different in most every other respect, begins. But the discoveries of the earlier novel were not the only thing that gave Austen ideas about

ambiguous relationships. Once again, she would have found them already explored and elaborated in Wordsworth.

Ambiguous relationships can be found throughout British Romantic literature, and are by no means confined to that most celebrated of species, those that "incestuously" blend fraternal and erotic impulses.[5] Among the poems she had available to her, Austen would have found such relationships in "The Mad Mother," with the mingling of maternal and erotic passions I noted in the previous chapter ("Thy father cares not for my breast . . . But thou wilt live with me in love" [ll. 61–67]); in "Lines written at a small distance . . . ," which alternately refers to its addressee as "My sister! . . . my Friend . . . my Sister!" (ll. 9, 19, 37); and, echoing this last but with redoubled emotional force, in—once again—"Tintern Abbey," with its passionate call to "thou my dearest Friend, / My dear, dear Friend," a figure who only after some delay is also revealed to be "My dear, dear Sister!" (ll. 115–116, 121). But to see the passions expressed in these last two poems as incestuous or quasi-incestuous distorts Wordsworth by reading him through the lens of Romanticism as a whole—or perhaps more to the point, of Freud. Rather, Wordsworth means us to understand that such heights of passion can be reached outside the realm of the erotic, that one can feel fraternal or amicable feelings with an erotic intensity. And he also wants us to understand that a large part of what conduces to such intensities is precisely a blending of different kinds of feelings, a dynamic ambiguity of relationship.

Such notions are indispensable to Wordsworth's most extensive exploration of ambiguous relationships, at least among the works published during Austen's lifetime, the Matthew poems. Teacher, friend, brother, father—in a series of lyrics that beautifully unfolds the relationship between the two men, Wordsworth gradually develops the idea that Matthew was all of these at once to him—or even, as the narrator of *Emma* might say, more than a teacher, a special friend, almost a brother, little short of a father. The placement of the poems is itself significant, for they constitute, with the Lucy poems, one of the two foci of the second volume of the two-volume *Lyrical Ballads*. The volume thus centers on two triptychs that lament the loss of an intensely beloved figure, one loved in a straightforwardly sexual fashion, the other in a highly complex but nonsexual one.

At the same time, the 1800 expansion rearranges the order of the first, 1798, volume to highlight "Expostulation and Reply" and "The Tables Turned" by placing them at the head of the entire compilation. Those, too, must be seen as Matthew poems, Wordsworth's intention being to have us

recall that "good friend Matthew"—about whom all we know at first is that he *is* a good friend—when we arrive at the Matthew poems proper those many lyrics later ("Expostulation and Reply," l. 15). It comes as a shock to discover in "Lines written on a tablet . . . " ("Matthew") that "Matthew"—so familiarly named, as an equal and intimate—is in fact the poet's former schoolmaster, even more of a shock to learn in "The Fountain" that of this "pair of friends," one is "young," the other "seventy-two" (ll. 3–4)—and that it is the latter who is the man of "glee," "frolics," and "fun and madness" (l. 20; "Lines," ll. 17, 22). As in *Emma*, as we will see, more than one kind of conventional boundary is being crossed here, more than one conventional verbal usage discarded.

"The Two April Mornings," the most complex of these poems, is also the most complex link in their exposition of the two men's relationship. Matthew, recalling an April morning just like the one he is now sharing with the poet, recalls a highly charged double-encounter he experienced then—an encounter with the grave of his daughter and, at the next moment, with her living image tripping by. But though the experience happened on that distant day, he seems to understand and fully digest it—"The will of God be done!" (l. 4)—only now, because only now does he have someone intimate enough to share it with, and thus to share it with himself with. The two mornings are "brother[s]," and so, this poem of doubles urges us to see, are the two men (l. 28). Finally, in "The Fountain," the third of the Matthew poems proper, the poet proposes a final link: "Matthew, for thy children dead," he declares, "I'll be a son to thee!" (ll. 61–62). Matthew refuses, but his refusal signals not a rejection of ambiguous relationships—the very refusal is accompanied by a spontaneous affirmation of intimacy ("At this he grasped my hand, and said, / 'Alas! that cannot be' " [ll. 63–64])—but an understanding of them that far exceeds that of the "young" and, as he paints himself here, emotionally callow poet (l. 3).

Austen would not have known "Address to the Scholars of the Village School of —," one of the Matthew poems not published until long after her death, but she would not have needed to read it to understand that Matthew was, for the poet and his fellow schoolchildren, "Our common Friend and Father" (l. 4). The paternal dimension of the relationship hovers over all three of the poems published in *Lyrical Ballads*; the poet's faux pas in "The Fountain" lies in trying to make it too literal, too explicit. For doing so would destroy the very ambiguity that keeps all those relational options in play, allowing the two men to move from one to another—from teacherly reproof to friendly discourse to fraternal empathy to paternal counsel—as

circumstances and feeling prompt them to do, but more importantly, allowing them finally to create an intermediate zone of relatedness that blends all these modes together into a connection that is richer, deeper, and freer than any conventional one, at any moment, could be.

We see this same enriching, productive flexibility in the ambiguous relationships in *Emma*, and especially in the most important of them, the one that ultimately emerges as the novel's ideal relationship, that between Emma and Knightley. Thinking of Matthew and his young friend, we may note that theirs is also an intergenerational tie. And thinking of the interactions between Sir Thomas Bertram and his eldest son and daughter that we glanced at in the second chapter of this study, we may note that Emma and Knightley's characteristic encounter involves the delivery of some kind of counsel or reproof on his part. But what a difference between the way such advice is given and received here and those analogous interactions in *Mansfield Park*, where father and children are locked into stereotyped patterns of behavior and emotion.

Two scenes in *Emma*'s first half develop these intricacies particularly well—the first in chapter 1, on the evening after the Weston wedding, the second in chapter 21, when Knightley drops in to congratulate Emma on having treated Jane so handsomely the previous evening at Hartfield—and as such are representative of the strengths and subtleties characteristic of all of the novel's ambiguous relationships. It is therefore worth examining at least one of these scenes in detail. The first part of the later one reads as follows:

> Mr. Knightley . . . was expressing the next morning . . . his approbation of the whole; not so openly as he might have done had her father been out of the room, but speaking plain enough to be very intelligible to Emma. He had been used to think her unjust to Jane, and now had great pleasure in marking an improvement.
>
> "A very pleasant evening . . . particularly pleasant. You and Miss Fairfax gave us some very good music. I do not know a more luxurious state, sir, than sitting at one's ease to be entertained a whole evening by two such young women; sometimes with music and sometimes with conversation. I am sure Miss Fairfax must have found the evening pleasant, Emma. You left nothing undone . . . "
>
> "I am happy you approved," said Emma, smiling; "but I hope I am not often deficient in what is due to guests at Hartfield."
>
> "No, my dear," said her father instantly; "*that* I am sure you are not. There is nobody half so attentive and civil as you are. If any thing, you are too attentive. The muffin last night—if it had been handed round once, I think it would have been enough."
>
> "No," said Mr. Knightley, nearly at the same time; "you are not often deficient; not often deficient either in manner or comprehension. I think you understand me, therefore."
>
> An arch look expressed—"I understand you well enough;" but she said only, "Miss Fairfax is reserved."
>
> "I always told you she was—a little; but you will soon overcome all that part of her reserve which ought to be overcome, all that has its foundation in diffidence. What arises from discretion must be honoured."
>
> "You think her diffident. I do not see it."
>
> "My dear Emma," said he, moving from his chair into one close by her, "you are not going to tell me, I hope, that you had not a pleasant evening." (142; emphasis in the original)

The complicating presence of Emma's father makes the interactions here especially intricate. "[N]ot so openly as he might have done had her father been out of the room"—both Emma and Knightley recognize that there is something potentially disturbing to Mr. Woodhouse about the full nature of their relationship, something that goes beyond his need to maintain his belief in Emma's perfection. Emma's father finds anything new, anything he cannot immediately recognize and comprehend, deeply threatening. He may unwittingly participate in an ambiguous relationship with his daughter, but he would never consciously assent to one, never be anything but extremely uncomfortable at the sight of people stepping out of their conventional relational roles. Here and elsewhere, Knightley accordingly employs a particularly obvious, stagy kind of condescension in speaking to him about Emma—"I do not know a more luxurious state, sir, than sitting at one's ease to be entertained a whole evening by two such young women"—a one-elder-to-another tone that pacifies the old man by performing the attitude he expects Knightley to adopt toward his daughter.

But having thrown him this bone, Knightley can turn to Emma and address her directly in far different accents: "I am sure Miss Fairfax must have found the evening pleasant, Emma . . . " The tone is familiar, all traces of condescension having dropped out of it, and Emma is addressed as "Emma," not as "Miss Woodhouse," a rare and important mark of intimacy. Still, Emma invariably finds Knightley's supervision, whether expressed in approval or rebuke, damaging to her self-love, so here, as usual, she responds to it as no

child ever could, with a playful and even mocking parry-and-thrust: "I am happy you approved . . . but I hope I am not often deficient in what is due to guests at Hartfield." Her father instantly leaps to her defense, but no one is paying attention to him anymore—Knightley essentially talks over him—as something much more important goes forward outside his range of perception. "No . . . you are not often deficient; not often deficient either in manner or comprehension. I think you understand me, therefore." Brought up short by Emma's response, Knightley's tone hardens here, becoming clipped and almost stern, much less that of an equal. But Emma again defends herself, this time even more playfully, while following Knightley in veiling the full purport of their exchange from her father: "An arch look expressed—'I understand you well enough;' but she said only, 'Miss Fairfax is reserved.' " A further exchange, in which Knightley maintains essentially the same tone, then finally: " 'My dear Emma,' said he, moving from his chair into one close by her, 'you are not going to tell me, I hope . . . ' " "My dear Emma": his language, like his body, suddenly moves in close. Four distinct registers of discourse on Knightley's part in as many utterances, ranging from pompously formal all the way to warmly intimate, four different implicit relationships or modes of relatedness.

There are other things to note here as well. First, how the complexity of their relationship has tuned Emma and Knightley's sensibilities to be able to perceive the subtlest communicative inflections—small tonal shifts, facial expressions, body language—sometimes (like Matthew's simultaneous rejection of the poet's desire to stand in as a son and his warm grasping of the young man's hand) operating on more than one level at once. Second, because of this mutual attunement, how intricate a scene Austen is able to construct here, one that essentially keeps three conversations going at the same time: the one Mr. Woodhouse thinks he is having, the one Emma and Knightley are having out loud, and the one they are having silently. *Emma* is Austen's supreme achievement in precise and nuanced communication—both among characters and between author and reader—and we get a little better sense here of why. Third, because Emma and Knightley's relationship leaves so much room for negotiation—for disagreement, for face-saving, for new kinds of appeal—how much more effective a way it is for Emma to receive guidance than would be any sort of paternal dictate. Sir Thomas wants to correct his children; Knightley wants Emma to grow. If *Mansfield Park* so often seems to be about right and wrong, its heroine the character who is ultimately vindicated, *Emma* is about growth, its heroine the character with the greatest potential for development and change.

Fourth, how important to Emma and Knightley's relationship is Emma's playfulness—how it allows them to make the transitions between levels of discourse and lubricate the frictions between their ideas of what their relationship ought to be.[6] (Indeed, her very first words to him are uttered "playfully" [11].) The notion may be extended: in *Emma*, playfulness or play—room for improvisation, space for the exercise of freedom—is exactly what Austen introduces into the normally strict and well-defined system of social roles. Playing is exactly what she does with those roles, seeing how far they can stretch, how fully they can blend, what they can be made into. Both Emma's play and Austen's are directed toward a serious purpose; like Wordsworth's Matthew, they are capable of uniting the most giddy and most sober responses to experience.

And finally, as do the Matthew poems, the scene demonstrates that a fully realized ambiguous relationship involves not so much an alteration between stable relational modes as the achievement of a permanently ambiguous one in which all tones and attitudes are continuously available. I attempted to enumerate before the different relationships in which Knightley stands to Emma, but we would be very hard pressed to name, at any moment in the scene just examined, exactly which of those roles he is occupying, whether that of neighbor or friend of the family or father figure or any other. The lines between those roles or modes, then, do not so much get crossed and recrossed as effaced. Knightley is not finally all of those things to Emma at once, any more than Miss Taylor was at once a mother, a sister, and a governess. He is, as she was, something else altogether.

What he is is what he and Emma and the novel all eventually agree to call him: a "friend." And it is friendship, as typified by Emma and Knightley's relationship, that ultimately steps forth as the novel's new relational ideal, the ambiguous relationship *par excellence*. Now we have already encountered the term "friend" as one of the narrator's alternative, and thus inadequate, ways of naming Miss Taylor's relationship to Emma. "Friend" in that sense—a fixed and well-defined, and therefore stereotyped and imprisoning, form of connection—would be no more appropriate than any other label in characterizing this new kind of relationship.

But something happens to the term during the course of the narrative: it gets worked and reworked, discussed and debated, used by so many different people to mean so many different things, that by the end, friendship emerges as a new idea.[7] Or rather, a whole constellation of ideas. Friendship becomes the novel's supremely important relationship because it becomes

its supremely flexible one, "friend" the one term able to denote the fruitful imprecision and rich complexity of ambiguous relationships. Just as that long opening description of Emma's relationship with Miss Taylor comes to rest on the term "friend"—and already there we see its relative flexibility, even as a conventional term—so too does the novel's entire exploration of ambiguous relationships. Friendship becomes the name for relationships for which there is no name.

But it also becomes far more than that. Because nearly every important relationship in the novel is ambiguous, nearly every one gets rewritten as a friendship. Friendship not only becomes the novel's most important kind of relationship—finally, it becomes virtually its only one. And in thus extending and apotheosizing the idea of friendship, Austen does nothing less than anticipate—and help create—the meaning and role that friendship has come to assume in the modern world. To quote Robert Brain, the leading scholar of friendship:

> In contemporary Western society the boundaries of friendship, kinship, and loving are disintegrating . . . Roles which were more exclusive in other societies have broken down. A wife is her husband's "best friend" and fathers and sons call themselves by Christian names—like friends . . . [T]here seems to be little difference between the love felt between kin and that between friends; sentiments found in the family are based almost completely on ties of love felt between unrelated friends . . . One chooses this or that uncle, this or that cousin, even this or that brother and sister to be friendly with.[8]

And even, as Brain suggests, this or that parent, as well as this or that coworker, neighbor, teacher, student. Friendship has become the relationship in terms of which all others are understood, against which they are all measured, into which they have all dissolved. It has become, in other words, the characteristically modern form of relationship. As Brain says, "We are friends with everyone" now.[9] And while it is clear that Austen has not fully arrived at this state of affairs—however ambiguous Emma's relationship with her father, the novel in no way regards it as a friendship—it is equally clear that she sets us down the road that has led to it, a state of affairs in which, for example, the notion of being friends with one's father is commonplace and unremarkable.

Why has friendship risen to such preeminence in modern imagination and practice? For one thing, its new status is clearly part of the larger reorientations of modernity toward individualism and egalitarianism, away from

vertical ties and toward horizontal ones, and away from strong, stable social structures toward looser, more ephemeral ones.[10] But that is only part of the explanation. Another has to do with the concept's very flexibility, the flexibility that, as we said, is the key to its ability to function as the universal relationship, to mean so many different things in so many different situations—for while we may be friends with everyone now, we are not friends with everyone in the same way.

To regard that flexibility as inherent in the concept itself, however, is to beg the question of how it developed—to speak from our late point in the very historical process we are trying to trace. Friendship appears to us to have a complex semantic nature because it has a complex semantic history. Many different ideas have fed into it, and in particular, many different ideas were feeding into it in Austen's day; its complex history was never more complex than at the time she was writing.[11] The concept of friendship, the word "friend," was the site then of vigorous semantic contestation and rapid semantic change, as new social and existential ideas—ideas about the nature of the individual and his or her relationships with others—came into being and struggled with each other and with existing ideas. Nor was Austen the only writer to be inspired by this ferment, to seize on the possibilities it opened up to explore and elaborate meanings of her own. So too, as we will see, did the British Romantic poets, especially Wordsworth and Byron. Indeed, their innovations were crucial in inspiring hers. In short, *Emma*'s exploration of friendship takes place within a highly complex historical context. It is to that history that I now turn.

To begin with, one important sense of the words "friend" and "friends" was just on the verge of dying out in Austen's day, and may in fact have taken its last large breath in one of her earlier novels. For while I am claiming that in *Emma*, under the influence of Wordsworth and Byron, Austen engages the idea of friendship more deeply and complexly than ever before, an intense investment in the idea, as has long been recognized, pervades her entire body of work.[12] In *Sense and Sensibility*, in particular, "friend" is frequently and pointedly used in a way now obsolete but once integral to what Lawrence Stone calls the Open Lineage Family, the kind of extended kinship group that, he argues, dominated the upper reaches of English society through the early seventeenth century.[13] While Stone's chronology has been criticized as too rigid, and even he acknowledges that various family types coexisted at different times during the three centuries covered by his study, those types remain valuable as categories of analysis.[14] Indeed, while *Sense and Sensibility* itself bears witness to the persistent strength of the Open

Lineage Family through at least the late eighteenth century, it also shows how Stone's different family types were struggling (or still struggling) for allegiance among the upper classes.

The Open Lineage Family, according to Stone, consisted not only of parents and children but also of what were known as " 'friends'—that group of influential advisers who usually included most of the senior members of the kin."[15] The influence of such "friends"—who, as Stone's language makes clear, were not limited to blood relations, but included a family's "advisers," patrons, and important associates—was particularly important when it came to the question of marriage: "It was 'friends' who were the key advisers in the critical decision of marriage, not only among the nobility and gentry, but down to the lower middle classes."[16] How long did this meaning persist? Until Austen's very age: "[a]s late as the 1820s," according to Stone, though, as noted, he underestimates the continuing force that the usage, along with its attendant ideas about familial relations and personal identity, had at that late date.[17]

What is for Stone, by the turn of the nineteenth century, the semantic vestige of an old order is for Austen the sign of a dragon that still needs to be slain. The usage figures so prominently in *Sense and Sensibility* precisely because it is in that novel that Austen wages her most passionate battle against the hard-dying values and prerogatives of the Open Lineage Family, and in particular against the assumed right of its senior members to override a young person's desires in determining the marriage choice.

Sense and Sensibility may satirize sensibility's excesses, but it is squarely on the side of what Stone calls "affective individualism"—the new valorization of individual affection in the governance of personal relations—and against the old allegiance to family interest.[18] The old and new values face off in the struggle between, on the one hand, the Dashwood women, Colonel Brandon, and Edward Ferrars, and on the other, John Dashwood and the rest of the Ferrars family. And the linguistic ground on which that struggle is fought is exactly that of the word in question. While characters on the "good" side of the divide use "friend" both in Stone's old sense—it is an inescapable part of their world—and in what he calls the modern one—"one who supports you and comforts you while others do not, someone with whom to compare minds and cherish private virtues"[19]—John Dashwood, the novel's leading spokesperson for the old values, only ever uses it in its older denotation. Friendship in any other, warmer sense is alien to him. Here he is urging Elinor to secure Colonel Brandon (" 'a kind of [match] that'—lowering his voice to an important whisper—'will be exceedingly welcome to *all parties*' "): " 'Perhaps . . . the smallness of your fortune may make him hang back;

his friends may all advise him against it. But some of those little attentions and encouragements which ladies can so easily give, will fix him, in spite of himself' " (189; emphasis in the original). Again, later in the same conversation, he congratulates Elinor on "having such a friend as Mrs. Jennings. 'She seems a most valuable woman indeed.—Her house, her stile of living . . . ' " (191).

Mrs. Dashwood's way of thinking could not be more different, and she announces as much in a declaration that deliberately seizes control of our key word. Taking leave of Norland—having been more or less evicted by John Dashwood and his wife, in part out of their anxiety at Edward's growing attachment to Elinor—she makes her invitations to Barton Cottage:

> "It is but a cottage . . . but I hope to see many of my friends in it. A room or two can easily be added; and if my friends find no difficulty in traveling so far to see me, I'm sure I'll find none in accommodating them." She concluded with a very kind invitation to Mr. and Mrs. John Dashwood . . . and to Edward she gave one with still greater affection. (SS 21)

The repetition of "my friends" is especially pointed, given the circumstances; the word's meaning, in effect, splits before our eyes. Two different kinds of invitations, for two different kinds of friends: friends as kin, whatever one feels about them, and friends as those for whom one feels affection, whether they be kin or not. The signal gesture with which the novel affirms the second of these meanings is Colonel Brandon's presentation of the living to Edward free of charge, an act of kindness that John Dashwood finds simply incomprehensible. The novel, recognizing the moment at which it stands in the history of language and personal life, enacts the victory of affective individualism over the imperatives of lineage, of friend-as-intimate over friend-as-benefactor.[20]

Although Stone undertakes no separate discussion of friendship as such—indeed, histories of friendship are quite sparse[21]—he touches on it again in his discussion of "companionate marriage," the ideal of marriage in which husband and wife stand together as "companions and equals."[22] While Stone is wrong to believe that companionate marriage arose only in the eighteenth century (Alan Macfarlane traces it back as far as the Middle Ages[23]), he is not wrong to suggest that it was acquiring a new ideological importance, a new literary and political emphasis, during that period. Mary Wollstonecraft, for example, invested the ideal with new political significance when she argued in *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* that marriage should be based on the lasting ties of friendship rather than the transient bonds of erotic attraction.[24]

Again, this is a dimension of friendship on which Austen's imagination had gone to work long before *Emma*. For if she did not invent the idea of marriage as friendship, she revolutionized it. Stone remarks that the "literary apotheosis" of companionate marriage in the eighteenth century "has to be found in Oliver Goldsmith's *Vicar of Wakefield*."[25] But to compare Parson Primrose's relationship with his wife to that of any of Austen's heroines with the man she will marry is to see what an immeasurable advance the latter represents in intimacy, mutual respect, and depth of communication. Goldsmith's couple live on easy and familiar terms and run their family as equals, but they are also constantly at cross-purposes, have little regard for each other's abilities and opinions, and don't so much talk with as jab at each other. Of the kind of intricate mutual knowledge and responsiveness we have already seen between Emma and Knightley, or even that which we find between Elizabeth and Darcy, there is not the shadow of a suggestion.

And there is a further difference between Stone's "conjugal friendship" and the kind of relationships we find in Austen. Austen's lovers become friends *before* they get married. According to Lillian Faderman, women in eighteenth-century England "were encouraged to live in an essentially homosocial environment, to distrust men, and to form close relationships only with other women outside of marriage."[26] As a result, "[w]hen genuine communication occurred between a man and woman . . . people had difficulty believing that the pair were not contemplating marriage." Faderman goes on to cite evidence from Austen herself, namely the assumption aroused by Elinor's friendship with Colonel Brandon that the two are courting, for "what had a man and woman to say to each other, after all?" The main point, however, is not just that Austen so vastly improved on the ideal of companionate marriage as that she had something to improve on. Both the newly important notion of marriage as friendship and Austen's own previous expansion and deepening of that notion constitute additional strands in the history that she had available to her when she came to write *Emma*.

Stone follows his discussion of companionate marriage with a brief account of foreign reaction that makes it clear how peculiarly English that ideal was: "The Duc de La Rochefoucauld noted with surprise in 1784 that: 'Husband and wife are always together and share the same society. [. . .] It would be more ridiculous to do otherwise in England than to go everywhere with your wife in Paris.' "[27] As Margery Sabin notes in her discussion of the differences between Rousseau's handling of the terminology of love in *The Confessions* and Wordsworth's handling of it in *The Prelude*, French thinking of the time tended to draw very careful and sharp distinctions between the different kinds of love, while English thinking allowed them to blend together.[28]

At the very time the English were giving new importance to their long-standing idea of spouses as friends, Rousseau was insisting that his unique feeling for Mme. de Warens, while not what people commonly call love, either, was certainly not friendship: "I have known friendship, at least, if ever a man has, and I have never had this feeling for any of my friends."[29] And though Rousseau describes this unique feeling in language that sounds, on its face, like Wordsworthian-Austenian ambiguity, it is really its opposite: "She was to me more than a sister, more than a mother, more than a friend, more even than a mistress."[30] Their relationship does not hover ambiguously between categories, it transcends them all. Where Wordsworth and Austen say "all of the above," Rousseau says "none of the above." In his novels, meanwhile, according to Allan Bloom, Rousseau trivializes friendship, at least between men, as a mere parasite of sexual love: asserting in *Emile* that it arises only in the wake of "puberty and sexual awareness"—for "[o]ne must have a friend with whom to discuss one's mistress"—and embodying that assertion in *La Nouvelle Héloïse*.[31]

Rousseau's strict separation of friendship from sexual love is scarcely surprising, coming as it does within a cultural tradition that, as Sabin shows, set the two so firmly at odds,[32] and his denigration of the former is no more surprising in a culture so exclusively focused on sexual relations—if not in actual fact, then certainly, as we are about to see, in the perception of Austen's England. The relevance to *Emma* of these distinctions between the French and English ideas of friendship, sex, and marriage is connected, of course, to Knightley's polemical distinction between "amiable" and "*aimable*," a passage to which I will return below (124).

There are further complexities to consider. According to *A History of Private Life*, "Friendship is difficult to analyze because it can be viewed in two extreme and contradictory ways. On the one hand it is often confused with everyday social relations, while on the other hand it is seen as something exalted, which, like love, has only an individual history."[33] Of course, we have already seen that it can be viewed in other ways as well, but the passage points us both to a meaning of "friend" that sets it roughly equivalent to "neighbor"—a usage prominent in *Emma*—and to the classical tradition of friendship as articulated by Aristotle, Cicero, Montaigne, and others and reworked by the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and then still further by the Romantic poets.[34] The classical ideal sees friendship as a rare and exquisite relationship rooted in virtue and dedicated to the pursuit of goodness and

truth. It can thus arise only between men—only they, in the classical conception, can possess the requisite loftiness of soul—only between equals, and only between adults, men of wisdom whose worth has been tested by the world, or at the very least, between an adult and an unusually virtuous and gifted youth.[35]

Aristotle, with characteristic thoroughness, defines three species of friendship, the useful, the pleasant, and the good, the second characteristic especially of youth and only the last corresponding to the foregoing description.[36] As for friendship between husbands and wives, Aristotle allows for it but classes it among the more limited kinds of friendship that subsist between unequals. Cicero waxes warmer in his characterization of the friendship of good men, speaking of a true friend as "a second self . . . For man not only loves himself, but seeks another whose spirit he may so blend with his own as almost to make one being of two."[37] Here we see a characteristic feature of the classical discourse of friendship, its tendency to parallel the rhetoric of erotic love, with the implication that true friendship constitutes a higher alternative to the sexual love of women, both the love and its object being of a higher nature. Bloom, thinking especially of the friendship of Socrates and Alcibiades—one from which, as represented in Plato's *Symposium*, Socrates insists on excluding sexual contact—speaks of an eros of souls rather than bodies.[38]

But surely the most fervent and extreme of the great classical expressions of male friendship is Montaigne's evocation of his bond with Etienne de La Boétie, "so entire and so perfect that certainly you'll hardly read of the like."[39] Montaigne contrasts such friendship to filial, fraternal, and erotic love, to marriage, and to homosexual love, and like Cicero, he regards it as available only to the mature man.[40] This, then, is the "exalted" union of which *A History of Private Life* speaks, something, to its exponents, far finer and rarer even than erotic love: "So many coincidences are needed to build up such a friendship that it is a lot if fortune can do it once in three centuries."[41]

But despite Aristotle and company's exclusion of women from this tradition, its revival during the Renaissance, as typified by Montaigne, soon spread to women and women writers, especially those of the upper classes.[42] Faderman traces the description and celebration of intense female friendships, both fictional and actual, across the literature of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century England and France. Like such "romantic friendships" between men, as they became known,[43] these involved mature and highly refined adults, were every bit as exclusive and all-consuming as erotic attachments, and employed the rhetoric of sexual love, though with no suggestion that they were, in fact, genital.

By the second half of the eighteenth century, Faderman notes, romantic friendship had become a popular theme in English fiction,[44] a fact that suggests both a diffusion of the ideal and its corresponding dilution. That it often degenerated into an overused and overblown cliché we learn from Austen herself.[45] Among the conventions of the novel of sensibility she so gleefully attacks in both the juvenilia and *Northanger Abbey* is that of the passionate and undying attachment that instantly springs up between young heroines of appropriately heightened sensibilities. The satire is most broad, as we might expect, in "Love and Freindship": "We flew into each other's arms, and after having exchanged vows of mutual friendship for the rest of our lives, instantly unfolded to each other the most inward secrets of our hearts."[46] The romantic-sentimental tradition is thus another element within friendship's rich history that Austen had engaged during the first half of her career, adding her own earlier imaginings and valuations to the store of material she had available to her in *Emma*.

Nor did the evolution of this tradition cease with the novel of sensibility, for it was taken up in yet new forms by the British Romantic poets. Most of the expressions that Romantic friendship found in the works and lives of these authors would have been unknown to Austen, but she would have encountered one of the period's most impassioned engagements with the theme in Byron's *Hours of Idleness* as well as in quite a number of the early lyrics not included in that collection. It is scarcely too much to say that the young poet was obsessed with the experience of friendship, and in setting down that experience in verse he added a uniquely Romantic dimension to the classical or classical-romantic ideal.[47] That he had absorbed that ideal by a young age some of his earliest surviving poems make clear. "To E—," written at age fourteen, celebrates a friendship rooted in "Virtue" (3). "To D—," composed a few months later, employs an extreme and frankly erotic rhetoric ("On *thy dear* breast I'll lay my head— / Without *thee! where* would be *my Heaven?*" [ll. 11–12; emphasis in the original]). "Childish Recollections," a somewhat later production, proclaims the superiority of friendship to heterosexual love ("The smiles of Beauty, though those smiles were dear / Could hardly charm me, when that friend was near / . . . / and Friendship's feelings triumphed over Love" [ll. 201–202, 206]).[48]

But Byron stands the classical tradition on its head by making friendship the exclusive province of youth.[49] Again, from "Childish Recollections":

Hours of my youth! when, nurtur'd in my breast,
To Love a stranger, Friendship made me blessed,—
Friendship, the dear peculiar bond of youth,
When every artless bosom throbs with truth;
Untaught by worldly wisdom how to feign,
And check each impulse with prudential rein;
When, all we feel, our honest souls disclose,
In love to friends, in open hate to foes.
(ll. 55–62)

Byron's conception of friendship, as the passage makes clear, is of a piece with the general Romantic revaluation of experience. Youth is elevated over adulthood, innocence over maturity, candor over prudence, spontaneity over self-restraint. "Youth" is rhymed with "truth": as in Wordsworth, youth *is* truth, the time of genuine feeling and perception before the corruptions of the social world take hold.[50] And "the dear peculiar bond of youth," associated with all its purity and frankness and artless innocence, is friendship. If youth is the Romantic Eden, Byron effectively says, then its Eve, or Eves, is one's beloved childhood companions.[51]

"Childish Recollections" is largely an extended encomium to those companions, one that ends with a paraphrase of the French proverb that seems to have seized hold of Byron's imagination around this time, late in 1806, "*l'Amitié est l'Amour sans ailes*" ("Friendship is Love without wings"): "Friendship bow'd before the shrine of Truth, / and Love, without his pinion, smil'd on Youth" (ll. 411–412).[52] Again, though Byron celebrates sexual love as frequently and as fervently in his early lyrics as he does male friendship, friendship is the higher relation: purer, more innocent, more constant.[53] But already in the poems of the first half of 1807, those that make their first appearance in *Hours of Idleness*, he is discovering that friendship does indeed have wings, does fly away—"For Friendship can vary her gentle dominion / . . . / like Love, too, she moves on a swift-waving pinion"—for the simple reason that youth does, as well: "Youth has flown on rosy pinion, / and Manhood claims his stern Dominion" ("To George, Earl Delawarr," ll. 5–7; "To Edward Noel Long, Esq.," ll. 23–24). If youth is Byron's Eden, the poems of 1807–1809 are a long lament over Paradise lost. Those addressed to individual friends ("To George, Earl Delawarr," "To the Earl of Clare," "To a Youthful Friend") are no longer erotic or celebratory, but elegiac, even—for some of his old companions have embraced the corruptions of court and society—bitterly accusatory. It is on this disillusioned note—the revealed transience of the friendship of men as well as of the love of women—that Byron turns his back on England.[54]

But if Byron and Wordsworth both idealize youth, their response to its loss is very different.[55] For Byron, what is gone is gone, but Wordsworth's entire poetic project—"Tintern Abbey," the Intimations Ode—centers on the attempt to carry the energies and feelings of youth into adulthood. While his most important vessel for doing so is poetry itself, another essential one, as the poems we have already looked at in this chapter make clear, is friendship. Wordsworth turns to his sister in the last verse paragraph of "Tintern Abbey" and, evoking her as "my dearest Friend, / My dear, dear Friend," embraces her as the living image and repository of the youth the loss of which he has spent the first two-thirds of the poem lamenting (ll. 115–116). The kind of vicarious access to his "past existence" that she offers him is clearly predicated on the nature and intensity of their connection (ll. 149). Her role in his emotional life—as "dearest Friend"—and in his psychic life—as the living record of his past—are not to be distinguished. The bond of youth, friendship, keeps him in touch with the energies of youth.

It is no different in the Matthew poems. Notwithstanding their darker notes of melancholy and loss, they portray a man who, though old, has cheated time by retaining the spirit of youth, that inextinguishable spirit imaged in the title of "The Fountain." Matthew has stayed so young at heart because he has lived his life among schoolchildren, and ignoring differences of age, befriended them as equals. But youth is not the gift only of the young. Matthew's friendship with the poet has allowed both men to stay in touch with youthful energies: Matthew, because the poet is the far younger man, but the poet himself, because Matthew has remained so much younger at heart. Note the seeming paradox: the poet remains young through his friendship with his younger sister, but also through his friendship with his much older schoolteacher. As in Byron, friendship is "the dear peculiar bond of youth," but for Wordsworth, it doesn't matter how old you are. Everyone is young who is still committed to the special intimacies and intensities of Romantic friendship.

Both Wordsworth and Coleridge invest the word "friend" with special sanctity, utter it with special urgency and passion.[56] Of particular note is the way it is repositioned within the two-volume *Lyrical Ballads*. The reordered first volume features it in four of its first five poems, as if Wordsworth, like Austen in *Emma*, were seeking to redefine and resituate it as a cardinal element of his social imagination. The forsaken Indian woman repeatedly and pathetically calls out to her clan as "My friends . . .

Dear friends" (ll. 28–30), as if there were no closer bond, no dearer name, no higher term of appeal. The poet in "The Last of the Flock" greets the weeping stranger with "My friend, / what ails you?" as the warmest possible earnest of his sympathy (ll. 15).

Friendship, a name applied equally to kin and stranger, thus becomes a flexibly ambiguous or multivalent relationship in just the sense we have been developing. It also becomes a democratic one: that "My friend" in "The Last of the Flock" signals a spirit of equality and a programmatic embrace of humanity that anticipates Whitman. It is in that spirit, of course, that the collection as a whole, with its elevation of the marginal and wretched to literary status, is written. Wordsworth's usage here is thus connected to yet another element within the eighteenth-century complex of ideas about friendship, one that achieved a new relevance around the turn of the nineteenth century: Shaftesbury's notion of social sympathy. This is friendship in its most explicitly political dimension, for sympathy was Shaftesbury's answer, in 1711, to Hobbes's pessimism about human nature, and for well over a century following Shaftesbury, sympathy was understood to rank among the most important bonds that held society together.[57] What is more, as Caleb Crain explains in his study of male friendship in the early American Republic, the replacement of monarchy by democracy in the new nation meant that "friendship in America became charged with a new meaning," as the *only* bond that now held citizens together.[58]

The relevance of this development to the Wordsworth of *Lyrical Ballads*—as he moves from direct political investment in the democratic ideals of the French Revolution toward their embodiment in poetry—need hardly be emphasized. Friendship becomes not only, as in "Tintern Abbey" and the Matthew poems, the ideal of one-to-one relatedness, but also the basis for a revivified human collectivity, a new human community. It is a community that—like the poet and the stranger in "The Last of the Flock'" meeting "[a]long the broad highway" (l. 7), like Wordsworth and his figures in so many of his poems, wanderers all along the broad highway—stands symbolically outside the hierarchical structures of nation and society. Wordsworth thus revolutionizes the classical-romantic tradition of friendship in a second respect. He retains its intensity but discards its exclusivity, calling upon us to bring that kind of presence—erotic in its ardor—to all of our relationships.

That this ideal is indeed made into a moral imperative aimed at his readers Wordsworth makes clear through the sleight-of-hand he performs with the word "friend" in the very first two poems of *Lyrical Ballads*' reordered first volume. While "Expostulation and Reply" is a dialogue between the

poet and his "good friend Matthew," Matthew drops out as a speaker in "The Tables Turned," a maneuver that unmistakably puts the reader in his place. The poem's opening address—"Up! up! my friend, and quit your books"—must be read, then, as directed at us (an idea reinforced by the purport of that address, since it is of course we who are reading at that moment). In this, the first of many moves in *Lyrical Ballads* by which Wordsworth signals the kind of reader he wants us to be and the kind of relationship he wants to have with us, he names that relationship as one of friendship—with all the intimacy, ardor, and productive ambiguity that it will later, in "Tintern Abbey" and the Matthew poems, come to imply, but also with the sense of equality and democratic inter-involvement with both the poet and his subjects that it will very soon, in "The Last of the Flock," come to imply.

In *Lyrical Ballads*, as later in *Emma*, we find an artist both seizing upon and adding fresh impetus to the fact that friendship at the turn of the nineteenth century was not only undergoing a rapid expansion of meaning, it was also beginning an enormous elevation in importance. In both Wordsworth and, following him, in Austen, friendship becomes the essential context of the new values of affective individualism, with its drive toward an increased intensity of, esteem for, and mindfulness toward interpersonal relationships.

These, then, are the various streams that fed into the idea of friendship at the time Austen was writing *Emma*: "friends" as elder kin and benefactors; "friends" as neighbors; the (to us) commonsense notion of a "friend" as a familiar companion for whom one feels affection; friendship as the political phenomenon of social sympathy; the conjugal friendship of the companionate marriage, a self-consciously English institution; the classical-romantic tradition of intense nonsexual friendship; and the Romantic inversions of that ideal to make it an experience particular to youth, perhaps prolongable into adulthood with special determination, and universalized into a common human bond.

Now as I already noted, Austen had been familiar with a number of these ideas, and had been working with them in her fiction, since very early in her career. Indeed, critics have noted from the very first that friendship is her highest social ideal, her image of what marriage should be.[59] But in recognizing that, criticism has taken the idea of friendship too much at face value. Yes, Austen valued friendship above all things; the question is—given the rapidly-evolving welter of possibilities available to her, the enormous

semantic complexity encoded in that seemingly innocuous word, "friend"—what did she mean by friendship?

She herself seems to have taken the concept for granted before *Emma*, or at least before about the middle of *Mansfield Park*. *Northanger Abbey* balances that commonsense form of friendship, the kind Catherine has with Eleanor Tilney, against a bad form, the faux-sentimental, the kind she has with Isabella Thorpe. *Sense and Sensibility* sets that same good form against another evil alternative, "friends" as unloving and mercenary relations. And both novels, as well as *Pride and Prejudice*, hold out that same good form as the basis of a newly profound version of conjugal friendship, one that begins to develop even before marriage.[60] Then, in *Mansfield Park*, with its musings on "the different sorts of friendship in the world" and its own evident ambivalence about whether Fanny's friendship with Mary is good or not, we find that these certainties begin to get shaken (298).

Finally, in *Emma*—in response, it seems, to the stimulus of Wordsworth's exploration of ambiguous relationships in general and of a reimagined friendship as the radical form of such relationships in particular—Austen starts to take the full measure of the concept's complexity in her time, and of the opportunities inherent in that complexity, starts to put the word "friend" in vigorous motion, forces its incongruous and even contradictory semantic alternatives to confront one another, experiments with what friendship can and ought to be by creating situation after situation that tests and stretches its possibilities.

To begin with, the novel itself arrays its conceptions of friendship along a historical axis. I noted in the second chapter of this study that the community of Highbury experiences slow but steady change throughout the novel, as families like the Coles, Perrys, Eltons, Martins, and Westons gradually rise, and the Bateses gradually sink. What I did not note at the time is that the community is portrayed as being, initially, in a state of senescence. We are told, during Emma and Frank's preparations for the ball, that a large room had been added to the Crown Inn "many years ago for a ball-room, and while the neighborhood had been in a particularly populous, dancing state, had been occasionally used as such" (164). "[B]ut such brilliant days had long passed away," and the room is now employed as a club for "the gentlemen and half-gentlemen of the place." The image is one of youthful vigor and excitement declining into aging indolence, and as such reinforces the impression we have had all along, of a community dominated and, as it were, held in check by the feebleness of its most powerful member, Mr. Woodhouse, and the cramped frugality of its most pervasive presence, Miss Bates.[61] The two of them, the second also because of her association with her invalid mother, embody the community's past and the attitudes and practices of that past, still maintaining their hold on the present.

One of the most important of those attitudes is the idea of friendship Mr. Woodhouse and Miss Bates share. It is essentially the one that *A History of Private Life* contrasts with the classical ideal: friendship as "everyday social relations"—friends as neighbors—except that it carries a much greater significance than that pallid phrase implies. For these two figures, their neighbors are indeed all friends. It is an attitude that cuts both ways, for while it implies far less intimacy than we normally associate with friends, it implies a great deal more goodwill and sense of mutual responsibility than we associate today with neighbors. Miss Bates, she announces at one point, feels herself most fortunate to be surrounded by "so many good neighbors and friends," a phrase that—given that we have just been told that "[s]he loved every body, was interested in every body's happiness" (20)—signifies the identity of its two terms rather than their difference. Again, as she makes her way into the ball, greeting a whole raft of characters we have never heard of before and will never hear of again, she exclaims in pleasure at "[s]uch a host of friends!" (267).

Mr. Woodhouse's characteristic way of expressing his goodwill toward his neighbors is to refer to them as his "old friends" or even his "very old friends" (143, 317, 320). Of the Bateses he says "[t]hey are some of my very old friends. I wish my health allowed me to be a better neighbor" (241)—a statement that not only reinforces the identity of "friends" and "neighbors" for the community's most conservative members, but confirms that this idea of friendship has the limitation we suggested before. Mr. Woodhouse's practice of friendship is as shallow as it is broad, and it is interesting that we are told that he is "everywhere beloved for the friendliness of his heart," for to say that someone has a friendly heart is not quite the same thing as saying that he is friendly (8). Mr. Woodhouse's friendliness is more a matter of intention than performance.

Into this settled, self-enclosed world irrupt two highly energetic agents of change: Frank Churchill and Mrs. Elton.[62] I will consider Frank below; Mrs. Elton, needless to say, brings to Highbury a new and thoroughly vulgar idea of friendship, one rooted in some of the same soil as Wordsworth's but trained in a very different direction. If Mr. Woodhouse and Miss Bates's way of relating to the people around them is inadequate for being premodern, Mrs. Elton's is all too modern. With everyone she is instantly intimate, as her famous "Knightley" suggests (228). In one respect, this new style

seems to resemble the old; like Mr. Woodhouse, she, too, regards her neighbors as friends. But there are two crucial differences. The first is the quality of their respective friendships, the degree of their presumed intimacy, which in Mrs. Elton's case seems to know no bounds. The second is her failure to make distinctions between degrees of friendship. Mr. Woodhouse may regard everyone as a friend, but for that very reason he needs to make distinctions between kinds of friends; there are those, as we have seen, who are his "old friends," and there are those who are not, but whom, like Mrs. Elton herself, he is prepared to accept anyway. Miss Bates, too, has her "steady friend[s]" and "true friend[s]" (313). But not only does Mrs. Elton presume to called Knightley her "good friend" after only a few days' acquaintance (294), she refers to him, speaking to Emma, as "our friend Knightley" (375), as if the two were equally his friend.[63] But why shouldn't they be, since Mrs. Elton requires so little time to form her deepest attachments? "I like [the Westons] extremely," she says, "Mr. Weston seems an excellent creature—quite a first-rate favorite with me already" (228).

Mrs. Elton's hyperventilated rhetoric and lack of emotional decorum recall Austen's adolescent spoof of sentimental friendship ("We flew into each other's arms . . . "). She is no parody figure, however, but one Austen intends as a picture of a real and peculiarly modern kind of monster, one who, in Lionel Trilling's phrase, "cultivates the *style* of sensitivity."[64] There is a direct line from that "Knightley" to the confessionalism of the daytime talk-show. She is affective individualism run wild, and as such, represents the negative image of Wordsworth's ideal. Mrs. Elton wants the thrills and trappings of a general intimacy without doing the work necessary to attain it—the work, as Wordsworth performs it in "The Last of the Flock" and so many other poems, of listening to other people's stories in a spirit of wise passiveness, without seeking to foist his will upon them.

Austen's ideal, or at least a large part of it, is something quite similar, but with an important difference that is characteristic of other differences between the novelist and the poet. As we saw on a number of occasions in considering *Mansfield Park*, their different treatment of the same themes can be traced to the fact that, whereas Wordsworth's figures are solitary, Austen's are firmly embedded in their social matrix. The new human community Wordsworth seeks to forge one encounter at a time "along the broad highway" Austen seeks to construct within the confines of the old, structured community itself. For if Mr. Woodhouse and Miss Bates's kind of neighborly friendship is increasingly anachronistic and increasingly inadequate in an age of affective individualism, with its drive for deeper intimacies, Austen does not for that reason seek to discard it, but rather to preserve and extend it.

We can best see why in an encounter the likes of which can be found in none of her other novels, the conversation between Jane Fairfax and John Knightley during the evening of Emma's dinner for the Eltons at Hartfield. It is uniquely characteristic of *Emma*, and directly related to its interest in the kinds of friendships possible within communities, that the novel shows us this interaction at all, one that takes place away from the main lines of the plot and involves neither the heroine nor the hero. What Jane and John Knightley first talk about, in fact, is "the value of friendship" (241)—Austen announcing the theme of the passage even as she develops it. But more important, for now, than what they say on the topic is the fact that John Knightley refers to Jane as his "old friend"—a surprising enough statement considering the scant amount of time they have likely spent together, but all the more so given that just a page earlier he had thought of her merely as "an old acquaintance." The point is that, in the world of *Emma*, the two things are the same. Mr. Woodhouse and Miss Bates's style of friendship, the norm for all personal relationships at Highbury, gives Jane and John Knightley a share in each other's concerns, creates an assumption of mutual benevolence, and in so doing sets them on the road to an intimacy of which neither Mr. Woodhouse nor Miss Bates is capable but which is nevertheless available for more sensitive, more modern spirits to pursue.

Here, the old style enables John Knightley, speaking as just such a friend, to express a delicately phrased hope on a very personal and poignant subject: "As an old friend, you will allow me to hope, Miss Fairfax, that ten years hence you may have as many concentrated objects as I have [i.e., have a family—a rather unlikely prospect]." He speaks the wish as a friend, and she receives it as one: "It was kindly said, and very far from giving offense." The moment swells with feeling: "a blush, a quivering lip, a tear in the eye." Like the poet consoling the weeping stranger in "The Last of the Flock," albeit in a very different way, John Knightley has listened to another person's story and caught her tears. I noted before that Jane and John Knightley have a relationship for which no name seems to exist; we can now recognize that the name is "friendship." It is a friendship that blossoms almost miraculously between these two rather unlikely intimates: they may never have another exchange like this in their lives, but the old style of Highbury friendship, creating the conditions of its own transcendence, has allowed them to have this one.

And then Mr. Woodhouse himself claims Jane's attention to express solicitude in his own way: "I am very sorry to hear, Miss Fairfax, of your being

out this morning in the rain. Young ladies should take care of themselves.—Young ladies are delicate plants." These are formal, even formulaic expressions of goodwill, for this "kind-hearted, polite old man"—"making the circle of his guests," speaking "with all his mildest urbanity"—is performing what amounts to a ceremonial, almost a public function. His insight into Jane's situation and feelings does not remotely approach that of his son-in-law—really, he has none at all—and he does not talk with her so much as at her. And yet she receives his words with equal gratitude: "I am very much obliged by your kind solicitude about me." Part of the value of this old style of friendship, as I suggested before, is that it is itself highly flexible, highly ambiguous in exactly the way we looked at before in examining the scene between Emma and George Knightley. Jane can communicate on one level with Mr. Woodhouse and on an entirely different one with John Knightley, and yet the kind of generalized friendship that prevails in Highbury accommodates the two exchanges equally well. The community's close-knit social structure, in other words—the fact that individuals there typically interact within the context of a larger group, as they do in this scene—does not prevent the development of the kind of higher friendship to which Wordsworth is committed; it enables it.

Indeed, the scene continues with two more people addressing Jane on the matter of her health, Mrs. Elton and Mrs. Weston. The latter "kindly and persuasively" advises her not to go out in the rain (242): after four iterations in less than a page, we cannot by now miss the scene's leading verbal motif—the word "kind." In fact, the word occurs again and again in *Emma* as the hallmark of the novel's sense of a common human community, its belief that we are all of the same "kind." It is a word, then—as these exchanges make very clear—that entails Shaftesbury's notion of social sympathy, one that I earlier connected with the new democratic spirit taking shape both on the far side of the Atlantic and in Wordsworth's poetry.

Emma, of course, like that poetry, was written in a society in which traditional vertical ties still possessed enormous strength. Sympathy—or to revert to the novel's language, kindness—did not need to be relied upon as the sole basis of social relations, as *Mansfield Park* abundantly shows. But as many critics have recognized, *Emma* represents a visionary act of social imagination. Trilling calls it an idyll, quoting Schiller's definition of the genre as one that "presents the idea and description of an innocent and happy humanity."[65] But I do not think that Austen meant us to take her vision as quite so utopian as that, quite so unattainable. She may not have been a democrat, but neither was she the conservative as which she has so often been painted.[66] *Emma*, which stands between *Mansfield Park* and *Persuasion*—a novel oppressed by hierarchical distinctions and another novel that essentially disinherits the aristocracy in favor of a professional class figured as a band of brothers—is an insistently egalitarian work. Everywhere we see class lines being disregarded and crossed: the impoverished Bates visiting Hartfield; Knightley befriending his farmer; "gentlemen and half-gentlemen" playing whist together. One of Emma's most reprehensible faults is her insistence on petty distinctions of class, her fixation on "gradations of rank" (113). *Emma* may not seek to overthrow hierarchical distinctions, but it does seek to ignore them. And this egalitarian impulse is squarely in line with the novel's general interest in the erasure of socially and emotionally confining distinctions. As with the lines drawn by relational terms like "mother and "sister," the novel blurs the boundaries of class, overriding conventional social categories, creating an egalitarian space in which as wide as possible a range of classes can mix freely. Friendship in *Emma*, then, as in Wordsworth's poetry, is a democratizing or leveling relationship. Horizontal ties supersede vertical ones, and the old neighborliness becomes the foundation of an envisioned community of equals.

The idea is underscored by Mrs. Elton's contribution to the scene we have been looking at. While Mr. Woodhouse and Mrs. Weston hope to persuade Jane not to go out again in the rain, Mrs. Elton intends to compel her not to: "Oh! she *shall not* do such a thing again . . . We will not allow her to do such a thing again" (242; emphasis in the original). Her attitude toward other people and their stories is about as far from wise passiveness as can be imagined. Indeed, her whole relationship to Jane is that of a self-appointed "friend" in the John Dashwood sense of the word—a patron who orders destinies by means of the social and financial power at her disposal. "You are extremely kind," Jane responds here, but the word is mere politeness in her use of it—she preserves the forms of neighborliness even if Mrs. Elton does not—and bitterly ironic in the novel's.

Mrs. Elton's own understanding of the word, and her own attitude about class, emerges a few paragraphs later, in connection with the fetching of Jane's letters, when she declares that it would be "a kindness to employ our men." In other words, she will be doing one of her servants a favor by having him go out of his way every day to deliver another household's letters. Which servant? "The man who fetches our letters every morning (one of our men, I forget his name)." Such negligence is a moral lapse of which Mr. Woodhouse, for all his inadequacies, would never be guilty. The "*style* of

sensitivity," narcissistic as it finally is, bespeaks an essential disregard for the common humanity—the kind-ness—of others. The villain in this egalitarian novel is that character most insistent on exercising hierarchical power, most careless and unfeeling in its exercise.

To say that friendship forms the basis of an egalitarian community is not, again, to say that all friendships are equal. Indeed, an emphasis on horizontal connections—the rewriting of all relationships as friendships—gives rise, here, to a need for horizontal differentiation. The word "friend" thus attracts, over the course of the novel, a whole host of qualifiers. We're all friends now, so the question is, what kind of friends are you and I? We have already come across "old friends" and "very old friends," "steady friend," "true friend," and "good friend," and we also find "intimate friend" (54), "very warm friend" (55), "very good friend" (94), "but half a friend" (114), "particular friends" (286), "very particular friend" (168), "excellent friend" (182), "best friend" (220), "dear friends" (263), "kind friends" (314), "thorough friends" (318), and "intimate friends" (346).

I noted before that the freedom that Austen introduces into the ordinarily strict system of social roles—creating flexible, ambiguous relationships that make room for improvisation and growth—can be thought of as a form of playfulness or play. So it is here with friendship, the apotheosis of ambiguous relationships. A world in which everyone is a friend rather than a landlord or patron or dependent is one in which relationships are endlessly adjustable and imagination a more important force than convention. That is exactly what we see in the Matthew poems, but while Wordsworth is not normally thought of as a playful poet, everyone recognizes that *Emma* is an exuberantly playful novel, full of riddles and puzzles and games—the most important of which, as I noted in chapter 1, being the game Austen plays with her readers, setting us in search of the clues that will solve her narrative puzzle.[67] As the Wordsworthian allusion I also noted in chapter 1 makes clear, *Emma* does not condemn the imagination, it only condemns its misuse by the heroine. In fact, it celebrates the imagination, and for the same reason as does *Don Quixote*, another novel that at first appears to condemn it: because the imagination is the faculty that enables us to rejuvenate ourselves, our world, and our relationships with others.

So where is Emma in all of this? It is telling that she is silent throughout most of the scene we were just looking at, speaking up only when the conversation turns to Frank, a subject that flatters her vanity, and even then

addressing herself only to Mrs. Weston and Knightley, her particular intimates. With the kind of friendship that binds the community together she has as little to do as possible, holding herself aloof from the likes of the Bateses and the Coles, begrudging them her every expression of kindness. It is no wonder that loneliness so threatens her as the novel opens, as it threatens no other Austenian heroine.[68]

The idea, pressed on Emma by her environment, that she ought, as a young person, to cultivate a serious friendship or two—the idea that friendship is "the dear peculiar bond of youth"—reflects Austen's absorption of the Byronic revaluation of the classical-romantic tradition. For despite our general sense that Austen valued friendship very highly, the same-sex friendships that we see in the early novels and in *Mansfield Park* almost always involve disappointment and even betrayal: Elizabeth and Charlotte Lucas, Elinor and Lucy Steele, Catherine and Isabella Thorpe, Fanny and Mary Crawford. But here it is part of what marks Emma as psychically misshapen, part of the disabling legacy of her overindulged childhood, that she seems never to have had a true Byronic friend, an equal with whom to share genuine intimacy.

Of course, the friendship she does soon choose to cultivate perfectly accords with her exalted sense of her place in the world and the splendid isolation in which it keeps her. But Emma was looking for a friendship neither equal nor intimate: Harriet, we are told, is not "exactly the friend Emma wanted," but "exactly the young friend she wanted" (24).[69] And not only is Harriet younger—all of four years younger, a difference Emma stresses at every turn—she is also far less worldly, very less wealthy, and—this seems especially important to Emma—far shorter. She is invariably, not Emma's "friend," but her "little friend" (239) or "poor little friend" (25) or "sweet little friend" (47). If we need any further evidence that this is not a friendship of equals, even to its participants, we may note that while Emma calls Harriet "Harriet," Harriet calls Emma "Miss Woodhouse" (e.g., 220).

In fact, we can see exactly what kind of friend Emma thinks she is to Harriet. As in so many respects, Mrs. Elton holds the mirror up to the heroine's worst qualities; Emma plays for Harriet the self-appointed role of benefactor, of "friend" in the John Dashwood sense—patronizing, overbearing, controlling, and just as misguided and destructive as Mrs. Elton is with respect to Jane. Notwithstanding the observation that she treats Harriet in ways analogous to a wife,[70] there is nothing at all ambiguous about this relationship, nothing playful or flexible or spontaneous. Emma may participate

in ambiguous relationships, but in this one of her own devising, she establishes strict roles from the moment she takes Harriet under her patronage and never permits the slightest deviation from her script.

On this score, as on all others, her reformation is a path of many steps. She partly realizes the inappropriateness of her friendship with Harriet by the end of volume I, and it is at this point that the novel first becomes self-conscious about the theme of friendship, its characters first openly struggling over its meaning. Knightley works his own changes on the word in admonishing Emma for trying to raise Harriet out of Mrs. Goddard's set: "Her friends evidently thought this good enough for her; and it *was* good enough . . . Till you chose to turn her into a friend, her mind had no distaste for her own set . . . You have been no friend to Harriet Smith" (54; emphasis in the original). Emma's idea of "friendship," in other words—one in which she falsely tries to substitute for Harriet's real "friends" or benefactors—does not deserve the name. Emma resists Knightley's admonition, but after the Elton fiasco, in a soliloquy that clearly echoes this exchange, she comes to concur at least in part: "I have been but half a friend to her" (114). The assessment is still half-wrong—she hasn't been any kind of friend to her, not in the sense she should have been—but it shows that Emma has begun to think about what friendship ought to mean.

She also eventually realizes, of course, that the friendship she should have been cultivating is with Jane Fairfax.[71] Although she faults Jane for her lack of candor, she is threatened by the prospect of a relationship with her not just because of its inevitable equality, but also because of its inevitable intimacy. For while Emma has never known the intimacy of an equal, Jane has, having been brought up since the age of nine with the daughter of her adoptive parents. It is no surprise that Jane "ha[s] never been quite well since the time of [Miss Campbell's] marriage" (138)—not, as Emma suspects, because of a secret love between her and Miss Campbell's new husband, but rather, we may conclude, because of the loss of so very dear a friend, one who has been, as the narrator of *Emma* might say, almost a sister. (The absence of such closeness between Emma and her own sister is conspicuous.)

Indeed, in Emma's malicious fantasy of a secret affair between Jane and Dixon, there seems more than a little need to denigrate that friendship. Responding to Emma's surprise that Dixon could prefer Jane's playing to that of his fiancée, and to her insinuation that Miss Campbell could not have liked that very much, Frank reminds Emma that Jane is Miss Campbell's "very particular friend." Emma seizes upon the phrase as if it were a snake that had to be crushed: "Poor comfort! . . . One would rather have a stranger

preferred than one's very particular friend—with a stranger it might not occur again—but the misery of having a very particular friend always at hand, to do every thing better than one does oneself" (168). Emma does not have a very particular friend and does not like hearing that anyone else does, especially not the woman with whom she is always being unfavorably compared.

Not only does she find Jane's friendship with Miss Campbell threatening, she also finds it incomprehensible, and the first perhaps because of the second. She knows that the two women share something she has never experienced, and she also knows that her inability to understand it, or experience it, reflects the weaknesses of her own character—just as she knows that her resistance to befriending Jane does as well. Her vanity bars her not only from participating in such a friendship of equals, but also from comprehending the nature of its equality—so evidently unrelated to any superficial equality of accomplishment—or of its intimacy—so evidently unthreatened by the inequality of accomplishment that actually exists.

But even while Emma is failing to develop her long-promised friendship with Jane, she is quite unintentionally developing a different one, one that represents the freest and most far-reaching aspect of the novel's experiment in friendship, as well as Austen's fullest exploration of a kind of relationship of which, as we saw, she was the great pioneer: the friendship of men and women outside the boundaries of marriage. It is Emma's friendship with Frank, one that has been greatly if understandably undervalued in the critical literature. Frank's advance billing is admittedly not good, especially with respect to his qualities as a friend. It is of him that Knightley is speaking—he is arguing with Emma about the likely character of the as-yet-unknown young man—when he makes his distinction between the English "amiable" and the French "*aimable*" (124). The first he defines as having an "English delicacy towards the feelings of other people," the second as merely "hav[ing] very good manners, and be[ing] very agreeable," and behind this distinction we can hear the national differences, or at least national stereotypes, we looked at above.

In their own perception, at least, the English valued friendship over sexual love—indeed, dissolved the second into the first, rewriting marriage as friendship—while the French valued love over friendship, keeping the two rigorously separate. To be amiable, in this understanding, is to behave as a true friend, to be *aimable* to make oneself desirable, lovable in the sense of sexual love. In other words, we might say, if "amiable" means "*amis*-able," "*aimable*" means "*aimer*-able," and pointing to the fact that two etymologically identical words have such different meanings is Austen's way of underscoring the difference between national styles of intimacy.[72]

In fact, Knightley's definitions do accurately anticipate Frank's character as it first appears—he is very agreeable, but his pretense with Emma and Jane does show a lack of delicacy toward the feelings of other people. And yet, by the end of the novel, his character has modulated, as a greater delicacy, a greater sensitivity, has gradually emerged; Frank the "Frank" has become Frank the "frank." And in the meantime, a relationship has developed between him and Emma that, while it begins because she finds him so *aimable*, so desirable, a feeling he does everything he can to incite, continues and grows stronger precisely because they come to find each other so amiable. In other words, a very "English" dissolving of love into friendship is exactly what ends up taking place between them—without their having planned it, and perhaps even without Austen having fully planned it, for some of their most significant encounters have an especially improvisatory feeling. Austen is allowing herself to experiment with the possibilities of friendship between an unmarried young man and young woman, and so are they.

The most important of these encounters is Frank's leave-taking at Hartfield right around the middle of the novel. His pretend courtship has not only led Emma to mistake his feelings for her, as he intended, it has led them both into depths of feeling he did not foresee. Emma is wrong to think he is in love with her, but she is not wrong to think that he feels for her very deeply. The misunderstanding is concentrated in a single moment: "He hesitated, got up, walked to a window. 'In short,' said he, 'perhaps Miss Woodhouse—I think you can hardly be quite without suspicion'—" (215). She expects a proposal of marriage, of course, while what he really wishes to divulge—out of a sense of trust and a desire for frankness that are almost enough to make him breech an inviolable secrecy—is his understanding with Jane. Still, with his nervous movements and broken speech, Emma does not mistake the strength of his feelings. Precisely because he has so involved Emma, albeit unbeknownst to her, in his deepest emotions and concerns, his feelings toward her have become those of an intimate friend. It is no wonder that Emma is so confused, after he leaves, about her own feelings. She thinks that she, too, is in love—or rather, thinks "that she *must* be" (216; emphasis in the original). Frank's scheme of obfuscation has caused her to misread her own emotions as well, but again, not their depth. As her continued reflections lead her to see—Emma's emotional honesty always eventually saves her from her worst errors of imagination—the feelings she is feeling and groping to express are also those of an intimate friend. In every scenario she spins

out about her future with Frank, "[t]heir affection was always to subside into friendship," "true disinterested friendship" (217, 219).

And that is just what happens, even while Frank maintains his charade of pretend-flirtation, and especially afterward. For we must remember that most of the negative judgments passed on Frank, both before and after the revelation of his true attachment, come from Knightley, who is a far from disinterested witness. In a novel in which even the "good" characters almost all come with large admixtures of negative qualities, Frank is very far from being all bad, and the best thing about him is the relationship he develops and maintains with Emma, unconsciously cooperating with her to move it from the pretend-love in which it begins to the "true disinterested friendship" in which it ends.

And it is precisely the ambiguity of the word "friendship" at that time, the flexibility of the relationship in the contemporaneous English practice of it, that allows them to make the necessary imaginative and emotional transitions. A rigorously "French" segregation of erotic and amicable feelings and bonds would have made that process impossible. Instead, Austen develops potentialities latent in her culture's evolving social practices, especially the practice of the companionate marriage. And yet her development was so far-reaching as to result in a radically innovative type of relationship, the male-female friendship—before, after, or entirely apart from the existence of erotic impulses and possibilities—one that remained otherwise virtually unexampled in the literary record for many years after Austen's day but that is a commonplace of social practice in our own.[73]

The scene of Frank's leave-taking closes with a characteristically English gesture that, as much as the word we have been looking at and in conjunction with the occurrence of one of its forms, encapsulates the ambiguities and possibilities of Emma and Frank's relationship at that moment. The two take their leave with "[a] very friendly shake of the hand." It is remarkable that such different understandings and differently understood emotions are able to meet and find expression in one gesture, and it is also remarkable that the same gesture, with some of the same accompanying language, recurs later in the novel under very different circumstances. Visiting Jane after the revelation of her engagement, and hearing that Mrs. Elton is about to interrupt them, Emma "compress[es] all her friendly and all her congratulatory sensations into a very, very earnest shake of the hand" (371).

Austen has created a physical analogue to the language of friendship, a gestural shorthand, so to speak. That gesture is poignant here in that it is vir-

tually all the friendship that Emma and Jane will ever have, but the retrospective light it throws on that earlier handshake suggests that instead of getting her equal, intimate, flexible, mutually respectful friendship with Jane (and in a devious manner, because of that loss), Emma gets it with Frank. The latter may not be quite as rich and satisfactory as the former would have been, but as we have said, it is far more revolutionary. With it, the novel and its characters cross yet another boundary (that of gender), blur yet another set of socially and emotionally confining distinctions. And again, just as with their crossing of the boundaries of class, the vehicle is friendship. So while Mrs. Elton brings a deplorable new form of friendship to Highbury, Frank, the novel's other bearer of modern tidings, helps create one that Austen means us to value very much. Among other things, it becomes one of the chief constituents of the novel's crowning ambiguous relationship, its crowning friendship.

That relationship, of course, is Emma's with Knightley.[74] We know precisely when she realizes that she loves him, but when does he realize that he loves her? He gives two completely different answers, each time with evident sincerity: "He had been in love with Emma, and jealous of Frank Churchill, from about the same period, one sentiment having probably enlightened him as to the other" (355; the statement is Knightley's, rendered through indirect discourse, not the narrator's), and "I . . . have been in love with you ever since you were thirteen at least" (379). Which account is true? They both are, of course, because Emma and Knightley's sexual attraction is an outgrowth of all the other feelings, all the other modes of relatedness, they share, and so its origin is necessarily obscure. Even more, as Knightley's apparent confusion suggests, its nature keeps changing. Frank's arrival raises Knightley's desire to a sexual boil, but his feelings for Emma had had an erotic component long before that. How else can we explain his otherwise paradoxical statement, very early in the novel, when forced by Mrs. Weston to acknowledge Emma's beauty: "I confess that I have seldom seen a face or figure more pleasing to me than her's. But I am a partial old friend" (34). The avowal borders on the shocking: an "old friend," a "friend of the family" nearly twice her age, taking great "pleasure" from the contemplation of a young woman's figure. But then, with Knightley's "I . . . have been in love with you ever since you were thirteen at least," Austen flirts with outright pedophilia. Like the "incest" in *Mansfield Park*—and indeed, the incest here, in this same relationship—her point is precisely to challenge us into rethinking our conventional compartmentalizations of the different forms of intense affection.[75]

We may be forgiven our obtuseness, however, because these same conventional understandings blind Emma and Knightley themselves, for a long time, to all that they feel for each other. Indeed, one of the novel's pleasures lies in watching both parties come to a full awareness of just what their relationship contains. The ball marks one important stage. After another display of the extraordinary mutual sensitivity that their long and rich history has made possible—"her eyes invited him irresistibly to come to her and be thanked," "[h]e looked with smiling penetration," etc.—Emma asks him to join her in the set: "You have shown that you can dance, and you know we are not really so much brother and sister as to make it at all improper" (273–274). "[N]ot really so much brother and sister" is, of course, exactly the kind of ambiguity the narrator employs in the opening description of Emma's relationship with Miss Taylor. Emma and Knightley are not brother and sister, but then again, in the language of the day, they are. Emma, still oblivious to her sexual feelings, is undisturbed by the ambiguity. But Knightley, already alive to his, is very much disturbed. "Brother and sister! no, indeed," he exclaims—to which the novel ultimately replies, "Brother and sister! yes, indeed." The exchange concludes a chapter—concludes, indeed the whole long episode of the ball—and the effect of this pregnant placement is to make it into a signpost that points us toward Emma and Knightley's climactic encounters.

The physical gesture that accompanies that exchange is again as significant as its play with language, for what do Emma and Knightley do as they prepare to dance, but, as the text tells us, take hands? Emma's handshake with Frank anticipates more than one, indeed more than two subsequent moments of intimacy, but before we can look at the others, we must glance at the scene that precipitates Emma's final recognitions, the outing at Box Hill. To Emma's humiliating witticism there, Miss Bates responds, "I must make myself very disagreeable, or she would not have said such a thing to an old friend" (306). "Old friend," again: Emma's great sin is to have violated, more flagrantly than ever and in the glow of her more intimate connection with Frank, the kind of friendship that binds the community together, that basic sense of equality that expresses itself in an acknowledgment of every person's dignity and without which, as Wordsworth understood, the more exalted reaches of friendship risk becoming no more than a mutual narcissism. In delivering his rebuke, Knightley also speaks as a "friend," even though by doing so, as he knows, he risks alienating the woman he loves (310). Friendship, he implies, means sacrificing oneself for one's friend's sake. His attempt to educate Emma into friendship's responsibilities has

thus come full circle, for his reproof here echoes and completes the one he had delivered near the start of the novel, when he told her that she had been "no friend to Harriet Smith" (54).

Austen's rendering of the scene in which Knightley becomes aware that Emma has atoned for her sin strikes all the chords with which we are by now familiar. The information that she has visited the Bateses is communicated indirectly (by Mr. Woodhouse, in fact), and the interchange that follows between Emma and Knightley is both highly complex and entirely silent; in fact, the two do not speak again for the rest of the scene. Emma blushes, looks at him, and it seems "as if his eyes received the truth from her's, and all that had passed of good in her feelings were at once caught and honoured" (317). And then comes "a little movement of more than common friendliness on his part.—He took her hand." Or is it rather that Emma herself makes the first motion? She isn't sure. "More than common friendliness"—their bodies are speaking a language of their own, saying things their possessors do not fully understand: "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."

The gesture that Austen established those many chapters earlier as a physical sign of friendship's ambiguities she is now, like the word "friend" itself, playing with, stretching, manipulating, making ever more complex and ambiguous. Here the handshake is on the point of turning into a kiss of the hand, a gesture Knightley forswears for a reason the converse of that for which he abjured the label of "brother and sister." That had seemed to preclude eros, this too clearly to speak it. But Emma does not think so; to her it would have spoken "perfect amity" (318). As I discussed in chapter 2, the word "perfect" is ironized nearly every time it appears in the novel, and this instance is no exception. Here, though, the irony points to a state in excess of the indicated perfection, not one that falls short of it. "Perfect amity" is not nearly amity enough; there is more to Emma and Knightley's friendship than mere friendship.

The novel's climactic scene, the marriage proposal, includes yet another variation on the handshake motif, as Emma, walking with Knightley in the shrubbery, suddenly finds "her arm drawn within his, and pressed against his heart" (349). We might recognize by now that all of these takings of hands point to and in a manner pun on the novel's final, implicit one, Emma and Knightley's "joining of hands" in matrimony.[76] But this echoing of gestures is not the only way in which Emma's most important scene with Knightley recalls that earlier one with Frank. There she forestalled a man's avowal of his love for another woman in the mistaken belief that it was to have been a proposal of marriage. Here she forestalls a proposal of marriage in the mistaken belief that it was to have been a man's avowal of his love for another woman. But here she relents the next minute, and precisely out of a sense of what it means to be a friend—indeed, the very sense that Knightley had displayed at Box Hill: "I stopped you ungraciously, just now, Mr. Knightley, and, I am afraid, gave you pain.—But if you have any wish to speak openly to me as a friend . . . as a friend, indeed, you may command me" (352). Given what she thinks he is going to say and what she has already discovered about her own feelings, it is the most self-sacrificing thing she can do.

With it, and with Knightley's response, Austen places the word "friend" at the novel's very fulcrum, reimagining it one final time as the characters reimagine it for themselves, discovering the full significance with which she would have them invest it. Knightley at first recoils from the word: " 'As a friend!'—repeated Mr. Knightley.—'Emma, that I fear is a word—No, I have no wish—'." As with his earlier recoil from "brother and sister," he still believes that one kind of relationship, one set of feelings, precludes another. It is precisely the same blindness that had kept Emma from recognizing her own sexual feelings all along. But then a light dawns: "Stay, yes, but why should I hesitate? . . . Emma, I accept your offer—Extraordinary as it may seem, I accept it, and refer myself to you as a friend." The basis of the love he hopes they will have, he finally sees, is friendship. Loving each other sexually, as husband and wife, would not preclude loving each other as friends in all the ways they always have. Marriage would be not the end of their friendship, but its fulfillment. And so it is as a friend that he is willing to speak, just as it is as a friend that she is willing to listen. Austen constructs the encounter so that friendship becomes the path to its own transfiguration. It is as friends that Emma and Knightley avow their love, and as friends that they will live it.

As in Wordsworth, friendship thus makes possible the transgression of yet another conventional social boundary, that of age. Emma, who had made so much of the four-year difference between herself and Harriet Smith, will marry a man sixteen years her senior. At thirty-seven, Knightley is old enough to be her father, but in contrast to the comparable disparity between Marianne Dashwood and Colonel Brandon, this one is deemphasized as the lovers draw together. Emma herself, at the ball at which Knightley splutters his "no, indeed," laments his "classing himself with the husbands, and fathers . . . so young as he looked! . . . His tall, firm,

upright figure . . . there was not one among the whole row of young men who could be compared with him" (269). Youth and age are not to be determined, Austen is telling us, by the calendar. This is a novel, after all, in which the elderly Mr. Woodhouse, "a much older man in ways than in years," is babied by his young daughter (8). Emma and Knightley's marriage is a union, like that of Matthew and the poet, of two young people of very different ages. Indeed, like Matthew and the poet, the two keep each other young, Knightley by releasing Emma from the frozen certainties—including the certainty that she will never marry—that threaten to make her (as Elizabeth Elliot will be of Sir Walter) a carbon copy of her father, Emma precisely by retrieving Knightley from the class of husbands and fathers and drawing him back into the mating dance.

The circumstance suggests an addendum to Brain's dictum about modern friendship: we are friends with everyone now because, while friendship in modernity is the special province of youth, we are all young now, too. Ever becoming, mind ever growing (like Emma, like Wordsworth): the modern individual—or at least the contemporary individual, for Austen is very far ahead of her own time here—is ever young, his or her intimacies always cast in terms of youth's "dear peculiar bond."[77]

To put it another way—for youth and adulthood, as we have been saying, are no longer mutually exclusive categories here—Emma and Knightley's relationship, like that of Matthew and the poet or the poet and his sister in "Tintern Abbey," carries friendship over into adulthood. That friendship can be so carried over is, in fact, exactly the theme of Jane Fairfax and John Knightley's discussion of friendship in the scene we looked at earlier. John Knightley claims, or pretends to claim, that friendship is exclusively an affair of the young, that husbands and fathers can no longer be bothered with it. But as Jane recognizes perfectly well, the very conversation they are having belies his self-consciously world-weary pose (241).

Austen is well known for her commitment to maturity,[78] but she is also—less obviously but quite as much as Wordsworth or Byron—a lover of youth and its ardor. It is a matter, in the sense I developed in chapter 1, of esteeming "Elinor" but loving "Marianne." Adults do not tend to come off very well in Austen's novels, and the young people she likes least—Collins, Mr. and Mrs. Elton—are precisely those who lack true passion. Those she loves most, though—Catherine; Marianne; Elizabeth Bennet, with her bright eyes; Fanny and Anne, with their quiet but powerful feelings; and finally Emma herself—conspicuously display it. Austen believed in growing up, but she also believed in carrying what is most valuable in youth over into

adulthood. Here, where youth and adulthood join hands under the aegis of friendship, the distinction between the two is blurred altogether.

And like Emma and Frank, but even more importantly so, Emma and Knightley also blur the boundaries of gender.[79] Just as Austen seeks to level the hierarchy of classes here, so too the hierarchy of husband and wife. That Knightley takes the extraordinary step of moving in to his bride's home is itself quite significant, but there is far more to their equality than that. For equality in friendship, as the relationship between Jane and Miss Campbell has taught us, is not a matter of equal abilities and accomplishments. In that superficial sense, Emma does indeed make an unequal marriage. It is rather a matter of a mutual esteem so deep that it can ignore such differences. By rewriting marriage as friendship, Austen replaces an institutional, legal, hierarchical relationship, one ultimately based on the power of coercion, with an informal, egalitarian, loosely structured one that is ultimately based on autonomy, affection, and trust.

Of course, we must ask by now, of the idea that Austen rewrites marriage as friendship, friendship in what sense? The answer is: in as many senses as possible. As hard as Austen works to create the possibility of pre- or extramarital friendship between men and women through her development of the relationship between Emma and Frank, she knows that such a relationship, by excluding sex, is necessarily limited. By making that relationship a long prelude to Emma and Knightley's, she incorporates this new form of friendship into the sexual union of husband and wife. It is important to emphasize, again, that this does not entail a replacement of sexual love by friendship. It has been said that Austen preferred friendship to sexual love, and in this particular case, that the love of Emma and Knightley is nonerotic.[80] But such judgments proceed from precisely the cultural prejudice that Austen was seeking to overthrow. As Brain points out, it is only in the West that we draw a sharp distinction between eros and friendship at all.[81] Other cultures do not make that distinction, and neither—and this is part of what is so revolutionary about her—did Austen.

Indeed, incorporating friendship into the sexual union of marriage allows her to bring the intensity of same-sex classical-romantic friendship—which is patterned, after all, on the erotic bond—into the kind of male-female friendship she pioneered. But while she is interested in classical-romantic intensity, as we have seen, she has no interest in classical-romantic exclusivity. Emma and Knightley's marriage will honor the ties of neighborly friendship as well, as the novel's closing reference to "the small band of true friends" who witness their wedding suggests (396). The result is a kind of

meta-ambiguity, as the hero and heroine's relationship becomes a space in which different forms of friendship, each themselves ambiguous, can meet and combine into ever-new possibilities. The novel begins by asking "what will become" of Emma (35); it ends by inviting us to imagine what will become of Emma and Knightley's friendships—and our own.

35. For the marriage of Fanny and Edmund as narcissistic, see Smith, " 'My Only Sister Now,' " Brown, *Jane Austen's Novels*, p. 98, and Handler and Segal, *Jane Austen and the Fiction of Culture*, p. 83 n., who cite a number of studies. Incestuous energies are found, of course, throughout English Romantic poetry. See Peter L. Thorslev, "Incest as a Romantic Symbol," *Comparative Literature Studies* 2 (1965): 41–58; and Alan Richardson, "The Dangers of Sympathy: Sibling Incest in English Romantic Poetry" *SEL* 25 (1985): 737–754. For a defense of the novel's investment in incestuous feeling as in line with what we find in Wordsworth and other British Romantic authors, see Ruoff, "Sense of a Beginning," pp. 183–184.

36. For other discussions of this blurring of conjugal and fraternal impulses, see Hudson, *Sibling Love and Incest*, p. 17, Claudia L. Johnson, *Jane Austen: Women, Politics, and the Novel*, pp. 116–120, and Ruoff, "Sense of a Beginning," pp. 183–184. We will see a great deal more of this and other kinds of blurring in discussing *Emma*'s "ambiguous relationships."

37. For "Tintern Abbey" as a poem of crisis, see Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism*, p. 92, and Bloom, "To Reason with a Later Reason," in *Ringers in the Tower*, p. 17.

38. For an illuminating discussion of these matters, see Brown, *Jane Austen's Novels*, pp. 92–97.

39. This is not to say that substitution never occurs in Austen's other novels: Mr. Collins's replacement of Elizabeth by Charlotte, Emma's of Mrs. Weston by Harriet, and Anne's of her mother by Lady Russell are all examples; a less obvious but more important one is Miss Bates's whole approach to life, which as I noted in chapter 2 in discussing *Emma*'s manipulation of the word "happy," involves exactly the kind of making-do we are calling by that term. The difference between these examples and what we find in *Mansfield Park* is one of pervasiveness or pattern: *Pride and Prejudice*, *Emma*, and *Persuasion* may contain isolated instances of substitution, but none of those novels is governed by that mechanism in the way that *Mansfield Park* is.

40. Trilling, "*Mansfield Park*," in *Jane Austen: A Collection of Critical Essays*, p. 133.

CHAPTER 4: *Emma*: Ambiguous Relationships

1. Handler and Segal note that Emma quasi-incestuously replaces her mother (*Jane Austen and the Fiction of Culture*, pp. 41–42).

2. Hudson also notes this multiplicity of roles (*Sibling Love and Incest*, p. 50).

3. As has been pointed out by Claudia L. Johnson, *Equivocal Beings*, p. 196, and Todd, *Women's Friendship in Literature*, p. 277. The observation is based, in part, on Knightley's remark to Mrs. Weston that "you were receiving a very good education from *her*, on the very material matrimonial point of submitting your own will, and doing as you were bid; and if Weston had asked me to recommend him a wife, I should certainly have named Miss Taylor" (33; emphasis in the original).

4. In *Persuasion*, as Handler and Segal note, Elizabeth Elliot also quasi-incestuously replaces her mother (*Jane Austen and the Fiction of Culture*, p. 42).

5. As discussed by Ruoff, "Sense of a Beginning," p. 184, who cites examples from Wordsworth ("The Mad Mother" and *The Prelude*), Coleridge ("Dejection"), Percy Shelley ("Epipsychidion"), and Mary Shelley (*Frankenstein*). For an extended discussion of the way Wordsworth's several "loves" for Dorothy, for Coleridge, and for nature and the objects of nature blend together in *The Prelude*, very much along the lines of the kind of ambiguity I am tracing here in Austen, see Sabin, *English Romanticism*, pp. 33–47.

6. For a discussion of Emma's playfulness, see Tony Tanner, *Jane Austen* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Macmillan, 1986), p. 199.

7. I am indebted to Karl Kroeber for this insight.

8. Robert Brain, *Friends and Lovers* (New York: Basic Books, 1976), pp. 15–16.

9. Brain, *Friends and Lovers*, p. 258.

10. For the movement from vertical ties toward horizontal ones—from "filiation" to "affiliation," in his terms—see Edward W. Said, *Beginnings: Intention and Method* (2nd ed.; New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), pp. xiii–xiv. Franco Moretti also speaks of "the strengthening of bonds within generations" as characteristic of modernity (*The Way of the World: The Bildungsroman in European Culture* [London: Verso, 1987], p. 5). For the movement from strong, stable social structures toward looser, more temporary ones, see my article on "Conrad's *Lord Jim* and the Transformation of Community," *Raritan* 20 (fall 2000): 71–72.

11. For a discussion of the "spectrum of relationships designated in the eighteenth century as 'friendship,' " see Naomi Tadmor, *Family and Friends in Eighteenth-Century England: Household, Kinship, and Patronage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 167ff. Tadmor reviews the historiographic literature on these various types of relationships (pp. 169–170), then goes on to provide a detailed case study of their appearance within the life of the eighteenth-century shopkeeper and diarist Thomas Turner (pp. 171–236).

12. Richard Simpson, in his famous appraisal of 1870, notes that "in her idea love was only an accident of friendship, friendship being the true light of life, while love was often only a troublesome and flickering blaze which interrupted its equable and soothing influence" (in *Jane Austen: The Critical Heritage*, ed. Southam, p. 246), an idea implicit in Scott's remark, in his review of *Emma*, that "at Highbury Cupid walks decorously, and with good discretion, bearing his torch under a lanthorn, instead of flourishing it around to set the house on fire" (in *Jane Austen: The Critical Heritage*, p. 67). For Allan Bloom, the "expectation of [Austen's] novels is that one's beloved will be one's best friend or that marriage is itself the essential friendship" (*Love and Friendship* [New York: Simon and Schuster, 1993], p. 196).

13. Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex, and Marriage in England, 1500–1800* (New York: Harper and Row, 1977). Stone's chronology has the Open Lineage model in play from 1450 to 1630, the Restricted Patriarchal from 1550 to 1700, and the Closed Domesticated from 1640 to the end of the period covered by his study.

14. For an example of such criticism, see Alan Macfarlane's review of *The Family, Sex, and Marriage, History and Theory* 18.1 (Feb. 1979): 121–122, one of the most important critiques of Stone's work. Macfarlane also cites Stone's qualifications of his chronology (p. 121).

15. Stone, *Family, Sex, and Marriage*, p. 5. Tadmor also discusses this sense of the word (*Family and Friends in Eighteenth-Century England*, pp. 167–168) as well as citing earlier studies that take it up (pp. 169–170).

16. Stone, *Family, Sex, and Marriage*, p. 98. See also Tadmor, *Family and Friends in Eighteenth-Century England*, pp. 167 and 169.

17. Stone, *Family, Sex, and Marriage*, p. 98. His citation from the 1820s, which has "friends" in the plural, "is evidence," Stone says, "of how long the old usage persisted, long after 'friend' in the singular had taken on its modern meaning" (p. 98). But the singular usage also appears in *Sense and Sensibility*, as we will see. The OED is even more behindhand, dating its latest citation for "friend" (sense 3): "kinsman or near relation," to 1721.

18. Stone, *Family, Sex, and Marriage*, pp. 221ff. Again, Stone has been roundly criticized for arguing that affection scarcely existed as a factor in English social relations before the eighteenth century (Alan Macfarlane, review of *The Family, Sex, and Marriage*), but the concept of affective individualism doesn't stand or fall on that question, but rather on the centrality of the affections to an individual's self-conception. Macfarlane convincingly argues that both affection and individualism existed in England before the eighteenth century, but an increasingly strengthened and increasingly important ideology of the individual, increasingly centered on the affections, did emerge during that century and through the period we have come to call the Romantic era, as evidenced in part by the material from Shaftsbury, Wollstonecraft, and Wordsworth that I discuss below. In these writers and others, and especially in Austen, the affections come to be regarded, for the first time, as the principal ties that bind individuals in society as well as the principal way that individuals define themselves. This, as we will see, is what sets us on the road to the situation in which, as Brain says, "We are friends with everyone" (*Friends and Lovers*, p. 258).

19. Stone, *Family, Sex, and Marriage*, p. 97. Stone is quoting Johnson's dictionary. Again, we must hedge Stone round with qualifications. Not only is Johnson's definition a too-simple characterization of the word's modern semantic complexity, as we are saying, it also can't in any sense be called exclusively modern (being present, as we will see, as far back as Aristotle). Still, the definition is useful in denoting the term's meaning within the system of values Austen champions here, one that is presented as nascently modern.

20. As Tadmor argues, the same two notions of friendship struggle, in something like the same way, in *Clarissa* (*Family and Friends in Eighteenth-Century England*, pp. 265–268). We can mark the half-century's distance between the two novels by noting that it is only in the later work that the idea of friend-as-intimate, championed by both writers, can win.

21. According to *A History of Private Life*, "no historian and few anthropologists before Robert Brain have studied friendship for itself" (ed. Roger Chartier, trans. Arthur Goldhammer [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989], III:450), and again, "[h]istorians have paid too little attention to friendship" (ed. Michelle Perrot, trans. Arthur Goldhammer [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990], IV:562). The *History* itself does only a little to redress the omission, devoting less than twenty-five pages to the topic in the first cited volume, only four in the second, and none at all in the work's final volume (vol. 5, eds. Antoine Prost and Gérard Vincent, trans. Arthur Goldhammer [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991]). Brain himself notes that any number of Western thinkers have written treatises on friendship, including "Plato, Aristotle, Ovid, Cicero, St. Francis, Bacon, Montaigne, Thomas More, Descartes, Pascal, Jeremy Taylor, and Adam Smith," but "[m]ost of these literary attempts to portray, explain, or analyze friendship . . . are necessarily ethnocentric . . . We have studies by Freud and Malinowsky, Havelock Ellis and Kinsey on sex, a host of volumes on kinship and marriage, several scientific and not so scientific studies of aggression, refined analyses of romantic passion, and delicately wrought accounts of amity in the androgynous Bloomsbury set. But we have no modern theorist of love and friendship" (*Friends and Lovers*, p. 12). While Tadmor, as noted, cites a number of studies in which friendship is discussed, none is a study of friendship. Her book, of course, begins to redress this gap.

22. Stone, *Family, Sex, and Marriage*, p. 328.

23. Alan Macfarlane, *Marriage and Love in England: Modes of Reproduction, 1300–1840* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), pp. 154–159. Many of Macfarlane's sources express this ideal in the language of friendship, as do many of Stone's.

24. Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (New York: Norton, 1988), pp. 30ff.

25. Stone, *Family, Sex, and Marriage*, p. 328.

26. Lillian Faderman, *Surpassing the Love of Men* (New York: Morrow, 1981), p. 91.

27. Stone, *Family, Sex, and Marriage*, p. 329. Macfarlane, for once, concurs, noting that "[e]ven the French, within the European marriage pattern, found the system odd" and citing to this effect not only the same passage from the Duc de La Rochefoucauld but also ones from Taine and Cobbett (*Marriage and Love in England*, p. 156).

28. Sabin, *English Romanticism*, pp. 23–24, 35–39. Sabin contrasts the definitions of love given in the *Encyclopédie* and Johnson's *Dictionary*.

29. Sabin, *English Romanticism*, p. 26. Her translations are those of the Penguin edition (trans. J. M. Cohen).

30. Sabin, *English Romanticism*, p. 28.

31. Allan Bloom, *Love and Friendship*, p. 147 (the words are Bloom's). But see Faderman, *Surpassing the Love of Men*, pp. 78–79, for a discussion of the friendship between Julie and Claire in the latter work, a bond that "threatens to overshadow the very passionate heterosexual relationships in the story" (p. 78). The two positions can be reconciled with Faderman's observation that, while eighteenth-century society distrusted strong expressions of friendship between men as evidence of or a prelude to homosexual involvement, they had no such corresponding fears about female friendships—women were presumed to be able to control themselves—and indeed often approved of them as evidence that the young women would be equally passionate and loyal in marriage (p. 75). I consider such romantic friendships below.

32. She quotes a string of La Bruyère's maxims to this effect, including "Love and friendship exclude one another" (Sabin, *English Romanticism*, p. 25).

33. *A History of Private Life* III:450.

34. For discussions of the classical tradition, see Allan Bloom, *Love and Friendship*, pp. 401–428, and Faderman, *Surpassing the Love of Men*, pp. 65–67. For friends as neighbors, see also Tadmor, *Family and Friends in Eighteenth-Century England*, p. 169.

35. Leading examples of the latter include Achilles and Patroklos, Socrates and Alcibiades, and Virgil's Nisus and Euryalus. Allan Bloom sees Falstaff and Hal as a comic version of the same paradigm (*Love and Friendship*, pp. 399–428). The friendships mentioned in Cicero all involve adults, as does Montaigne's with Etienne.

36. "Perfect friendship is the friendship of men who are good, and alike in virtue . . . Love and friendship therefore are found most and in their best form between such men. But it is natural that such friendships should be infrequent; for such men are rare" (1156b;

Nicomachean Ethics VIII.3; *Introduction to Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon [New York: Modern Library, 1947], p. 475). The complete discussion occupies Books VIII and IX.

37. Cicero, *de Amicitia*, section 21 (*Two Essays on Old Age and Friendship*, trans. E. S. Shuckburgh [London: Macmillan, 1927], pp. 188–189).

38. Allan Bloom, *Love and Friendship*, p. 411. For Socrates's refusal of sexual contact, see Plato, *Symposium*, trans. Alexander Nehemas and Paul Woodruff (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1989), pp. 68–71 (217a–219d).

39. "Of Friendship," in Michel de Montaigne, *The Complete Essays of Montaigne*, trans. Donald M. Frame (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1957), p. 136.

40. This is consistent with what we saw above about the strict separation of friendship and sexual love in the French tradition. Rousseau, of course, reverses Montaigne and the rest of the classical tradition's valuation of the former over the latter. To Allan Bloom, this is a crucial step in the history of friendship: "For Aristotle, the exchange of speeches, *logoi*, is the ground of friendship and, at the same time, it grows out of man's *natural* spirituality, which is reason. But for Rousseau all meaningful speeches refer back to ultimately bodily sentiments or feelings . . . This is the source of the enduring modern problem of explaining friendship, and perhaps even of practicing it" (*Love and Friendship*, pp. 147–148; emphasis in the original).

41. Montaigne, *Essays*, p. 136.

42. Faderman, *Surpassing the Love of Men*, pp. 65–73.

43. Faderman, *Surpassing the Love of Men*, pp. 74–75.

44. Faderman, *Surpassing the Love of Men*, pp. 76–84, 103ff.

45. Faderman notes that the literature of romantic friendship itself sometimes made a point of distinguishing between true and false manifestations, those based on genuine sentiment and those merely based on the fashion for lofty expression (*Surpassing the Love of Men*, pp. 81–84).

46. *Juvenilia of Jane Austen and Charlotte Brontë*, p. 107.

47. Byron's early poems on friendship include "To E—," "To D—," "Epitaph on a Beloved Friend," "The Cornelian," "Childish Recollections," "To George, Earl Delawarr," "The Episode of Nisus and Euryalus," "The Death of Calmar and Orla," "To Edward Noel Long, Esq.," "To the Duke of Dorset," "To the Earl of Clare," "To a Youthful Friend," and "L'Amitié est L'Amour sans Ailes," not published until 1832. But the pairing of love and friendship as life's two supreme experiences—the love of women and the loving friendship of men—can be found throughout his early verse.

48. See Louis Crompton, *Byron and Greek Love* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), pp. 71–81, for the question of whether any of his "fervid schoolboy friendships" involved sexual activity (p. 75). Crompton's discussion relies on Faderman's delineation of the nature of romantic friendships.

49. He even goes so far, in his paraphrase of Virgil's episode of Nisus and Euryalus, as to turn Nisus, as well, into a youth. Euryalus is still the younger man, but Nisus is referred to as "the Dardan boy" and addresses Euryalus as "the comrade of my youth," which suggests a rough equality of ages (ll. 38, 58). So much did Virgil's story possess Byron's imagination that he rewrote it twice, the second time in a prose version in imitation of "Ossian," "The Death of Calmar and Orla," that makes the denouement even more

self-sacrificing. Calmar, the Nisus figure, survives the bloody encounter and is found by his comrades, but insists on dying and being buried with Orla anyway.

50. Though the same may be said of Rousseau, we have already seen how very different is his conception of friendship as something that arises only in the wake of sexual maturation.

51. For the idea of youth as the Byronic Eden, see Robert Gleckner, *Byron and the Ruins of Paradise* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1967), pp. 5ff.

52. Though the poem of that name, written around the very same time, was not published until after his death, Byron supplies the original of the proverb in a note.

53. For the early poems' idealization of love and friendship as that which "heaven and paradise" are associated with, see Gleckner, *Byron and the Ruins of Paradise*, pp. 4ff.

54. See "To a Lady, On being asked my Reason for quitting England in the Spring," "Fill the Goblet Again," and "Stanzas to a Lady, on leaving England."

55. We also find the same complex of ideas in Scott. In *The Lady of the Lake*, one of the verse romances named in *Persuasion*, we read that in James's dreams, "Again returned the scenes of youth, / Of confident undoubting truth; / Again his soul he interchanged / With friends whose hearts were long estranged" (I.xxxiii.17–20).

56. Note Coleridge's uses of the word in "This Lime-tree Bower my Prison" (ll. 6, 16, 20, 37) and "The Nightingale" (ll. 40, 110). It is not for nothing that he named his short-lived journal *The Friend*.

57. Caleb Crain, *American Sympathy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), p. 4. As Wollstonecraft put it, "The most holy band of society is friendship" (*A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, p. 30).

58. Crain, *American Sympathy*, p. 4. It was therefore male friendship that was of particular interest, since women were not full citizens.

59. See above, note 12.

60. Claudia L. Johnson notes that *Pride and Prejudice* eventuates in the creation of a "band of good friends" related by marriage, with the friendships having come first (*Jane Austen: Women, Politics, and the Novel*, p. 92). See also my article on "Community and Cognition in *Pride and Prejudice*," *ELH* 64 (1997): 518.

61. As well as, in an extended sense, by the ill health and arbitrary tyranny of Mrs. Churchill. As Mr. Woodhouse checks Emma's youthful vitality and Miss Bates Jane's, Mrs. Churchill does Frank's.

62. As a proof-text for the commonplace notion of Highbury as a self-enclosed world, we may note that the Crown's post-horses are kept "more for the convenience of the neighborhood than for any run on the road" (p. 164).

63. Mr. Weston—whose moral imbecility almost matches Mrs. Elton's, as their conversation in chapter 36 demonstrates—is similarly indiscriminate, regarding seemingly everyone as his "old friends" (264), though the temperature of these relationships seems to be more like those of Mr. Woodhouse than of Mrs. Elton.

64. Trilling, "*Mansfield Park*," p. 133; emphasis in the original. Trilling is referring to Mary Crawford and notes that she is "the first brilliant example" of this "distinctively modern type." Each of the last three novels contains such a figure, *Persuasion*'s William Walter Elliot being the final example.

65. Trilling, "*Emma*," p. 57.

66. Most importantly in Duckworth, *Improvement of the Estate*, and Butler, *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas*.

67. This not to say that *Pride and Prejudice* and *Northanger Abbey* are not also playful novels, or that Elizabeth Bennet and Henry Tilney are not every bit as playful as Emma. For *Emma* as a playful novel, see J. M. Q. Davies, "*Emma* as Charade and the Education of the Reader," in Emma, ed. David Monaghan, pp. 77–88; as well as Alastair M. Duckworth, " 'Spillikins, Paper Ships, Riddles, Conundrums, and Cards': Games in Jane Austen's Life and Fiction," in *Bicentenary Essays*, pp. 279–297. Modert also suggests that the novel plays "a hidden calendar game" with the reader, situating many of its events on holy days or holidays but often in ways concealed from immediate view ("Chronology Within the Novels," p. 57).

68. Most of whom, like Marianne, are far more likely to have trouble finding a minute to themselves. For discussions of Emma's loneliness, see James Thompson, "Intimacy in *Emma*," in Emma, ed. David Monaghan, pp. 119–123; and Tanner, *Jane Austen*, p. 203.

69. For a discussion, along different lines, of Emma's friendships with Mrs. Weston, Harriet, and Jane, see Todd, *Women's Friendship in Literature*, pp. 274–301.

70. Todd, *Women's Friendship in Literature*, pp. 284–285. See also above, note 3

71. For a discussion of Emma's thwarted friendship with Jane, see Ruth Perry, "Interrupted Friendships in *Emma*," in Emma, ed. David Monaghan, pp. 127–147. Perry notes that Emma cannot imagine the possibility of friendship based on equality (p. 133). For a similar point, see Thompson, "Intimacy in *Emma*," p. 113.

72. For a different discussion of this passage in the context of English and French cultural stereotypes, see Claudia L. Johnson, *Equivocal Beings*, p. 201. For other discussions of the way the novel pits French against English, see Roberts, *Jane Austen and the French Revolution*, pp. 33–42, and Sales, *Jane Austen and the Representation of Regency England*, p. xx.

73. To my knowledge, the first important English novel after Austen to deal with male-female friendship outside of marriage in any significant way is *Jude the Obscure*, where, in a leading instance of her modernity, a "friend" is precisely what Sue Bridehead wants to be to both Jude and Phillotson, albeit to their continual torment (e.g., Thomas Hardy, *Jude the Obscure* [London: Penguin, 1998], pp. 148, 233, 234).

74. See Bruce Stovel, "Comic Symmetry in *Emma*," in Emma, ed. David Monaghan, pp. 20–34, who remarks that "the action of the novel can be seen as Emma's search for, and triumphant discovery of, a true friend" (p. 25). For a negative view of Emma and Knightley's marriage as involving an incestuous turning inward, see Brown, *Jane Austen's Novels*, p. 15.

75. On *Mansfield Park*, see Ruoff, who remarks that "[b]ecause of their interest in presenting complex and often unlikely experience, Romantic writers were nervous about compartmentalizing either sensation or emotion" ("Sense of a Beginning," p. 184).

76. Nor are these hand-takings the only relevant ones. Emma asks Knightley to "shake hands" in token of their reconciliation after Harriet's refusal of Martin (84), then finds "her hand seized" by Elton during his proposal of marriage (108).

77. See Moretti, *Way of the World*, pp. 3–5, for a discussion of youth as symbolic of modernity, as expressed especially in the emergence of the *Bildungsroman* as the chief novelistic form in the nineteenth century. "Youth," Moretti writes, "becomes for our modern culture the age which holds the 'meaning of life' " (p. 4). But he also goes on to talk about the inevitable ephemerality of youth, the fact that "[y]outh does not last forever," as essential to the form and meaning of the *Bildungsroman* (p. 6). I am suggesting that in recent decades, with the rise of youth culture to centrality in Western society, and also proleptically in the marriage of Emma and Knightley, youth *is* prolonged forever, as a set of attitudes and practices within adulthood itself.

78. Susan Morgan, *Sisters in Time* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 23–55.

79. Relevant here is Claudia L. Johnson's discussion of Emma as a manly woman and of Knightley as a new kind of man (*Equivocal Beings*, pp. 191–203).

80. For the general statement, see above, note 12. For the specific one, see Claudia L. Johnson, *Equivocal Beings*, who remarks that Knightley's love for Emma is "*fraternal* rather than heterosexual" (p. 201; emphasis in the original).

81. *Friends and Lovers*, p. 17. As does Rousseau, as we have seen, in favor of the first and the exponents of classical-romantic friendship in favor of the second. This prejudice also helps explain why the English, the exponents of the ideal of companionate marriage, have acquired a reputation for sexlessness: by uniting marriage with friendship, that ideal has necessarily been seen as sundering it from sexuality.

CHAPTER 5: *Persuasion*: Widowhood and Waterloo

1. See Julia Prewitt Brown, who notes that "[m]ost of the major characters are literally or figuratively widowed" (*Jane Austen's Novels*, p. 148); Wiltshire, who speaks of the novel as setting Anne against a "continuum of other mourners who freely display their grief" (*Jane Austen and the Body*, p. 156) and regards the adjustment to loss as the novel's major theme (pp. 165ff.); Duckworth, who also discusses the novel's engagement with questions of loss (*Improvement of the Estate*, pp. 190–193); Elaine Showalter, who sees the novel as involving a movement between retrenchment and advancement ("Retrenchment," in *Jane Austen's Business*, pp. 181–191); and especially Mooneyham, in her chapter on "Loss and the Language of Restitution in *Persuasion*," who takes up these and a range of other related issues (*Romance, Language, and Education*, pp. 146–175).

2. Given that both *Mansfield Park* and *Persuasion* deal with loss and deprivation, it is worth delineating the difference between substitution (the way characters deal with them in the earlier novel) and widowhood or mourning (the way they deal with them here). Substitution refuses to acknowledge loss in the first place; the problem with widowhood, as we will see, is that it might never do anything other than acknowledge it. Anne's dilemma, as the novel opens, is that she has never tried to find a substitute for Wentworth (or more properly, has never finished mourning him). For Benwick, Louisa Musgrove does not constitute a substitute for Fanny Harville, since he falls in love with Louisa only after having acknowledged and digested—mourned—the loss of Fanny. (Whether he does so too quickly is a point I take up below.) We may note that the difference between substitution and widowhood accounts for the two novels' differing atmospheres: *Mansfield Park*'s tense unease, *Persuasion*'s melancholy.