

Katie Graham

ENGL 4505

Dr. Roxanne Eberle

08 May 2019

Emma and Mr. Knightley Share a Passionate Kiss

Critical Introduction

At the end of the semester, like many other students, I find myself craving more Austen. With that, I decided to write my fan fiction piece as an expansion on one of Austen's novels. I chose to add a scene to *Emma* because Emma is my favorite Austen heroine because she is the most relatable of Austen's characters to modern young women. She still has somewhat immature tendencies. For most of the novel, she makes mistakes and has to learn to grow from them in order to become a mature adult. Many college women must similarly mature in order to become the best versions of themselves. With men, Emma also has trouble seeing who is good for her and who is bad for her. This is another maturity hurdle that many young adult women must overcome in their twenties. Personally, I also resonate with Emma's stubbornness and fiery personality. I felt that *Emma* has decidedly feminist undertones and a strong message about female maturation that I tried to reflect into my fan fiction piece.

I modeled my fan fiction piece after the piece "And the sky was bright with a holy light" by Rosa_Cotton. Rosa_Cotton's piece stays true to Austen's style and characterizations while adding romance to the relationship between Fanny and Edmund. I felt that the romance between Emma and Mr. Knightley is also lacking. Therefore, the added scene that I created as my fan fiction piece seeks to highlight my personal identification with Austen's

characterization of Emma and to make Emma and Mr. Knightley's marriage more palatable to an audience that is often frustrated with Austen's lack of romance.

I give permission for Dr. Eberle to post my fan fiction assignment on the class website.

Fan Fiction

Mr. Woodhouse had finally retired for the evening. He was exhausted from spending the day worrying about Emma's outing to pick apples. He had been certain Emma would catch a cold, or perhaps receive a sunburn. Mr. Knightley, Frank Churchill, and Emma were left sitting by the fire. Emma employed herself with one of the many books she had yet to finish. She was trying to please Mr. Knightley by reading because she had so greatly upset him with her behavior towards Jane Fairfax during the carriage ride to the orchard. Mr. Knightley and Frank enjoyed a game of cards. The men asked Emma to join them, but she was so ashamed by her behavior that she could not bear to sit at the table and directly face Mr. Knightley. There was tension in the game between Mr. Knightley and Frank, as Mr. Knightley was bothered by Frank's haughty and flirtatious behavior that day, especially towards Emma. When Frank won the card game, he stood up and loudly bragged about his skills and suggested that Mr. Knightley improve his game before they play again in the future. Mr. Knightley grumbled to himself and looked at Frank with great agitation. Frank then approached Emma's chair and kissed her hand.

"My dearest Emma. How lovely your company has been today. I insist that we pick apples again soon," and with a smile he added, "I would take great pleasure in teasing Miss Fairfax about her lover, also."

Mr. Knightley sat unamused. He was furious that Emma seemed to be privy to Frank's attempts to embarrass others. He thought them both childish.

Emma blushed and replied to Frank, "You flatter me, Mr. Churchill." She looked over at Mr. Knightley, knowing her behavior was further agitating him. She bid Frank a good night.

Frank then summoned the footman to have his carriage brought round. When Frank was gone, Mr. Knightley made his feelings about Frank clear to Emma.

He turned towards her and said, “Mr. Churchill is a foolish man! If you keep consorting with him in such a way, it will bring nothing but shame to you! His little quips and jokes show little regard for the feelings of others. I fear he is not a gentleman – not a gentleman at all!”

“Mr. Knightley, how could you be so quick to judge?” Emma asked. She thought Mr. Knightley had no right to tell her who she could and could not associate with. He had no formal authority over her, yet she could not help but feel another twinge in her heart knowing that she was again displeasing him. His approval meant much to her.

“Emma, I spoke with you about your comments towards Miss Fairfax today. I am not quick to judge; I am fair. I have known Frank Churchill for some time now and I see the way – the way he looks at you. I do not like it. I firmly believe that he intends to lead you down a dark path unmeant for ladies like yourself.”

Emma understood his meaning and blushed deeply. Unsure what to say, she desperately looked at her hands and attempted to recover herself. Mr. Knightley opened a book that lie next to him. Emma was glad that the conversation would not continue further, but the more she thought about what Mr. Knightley had said, the more she considered that perhaps he was merely jealous of Frank’s ability to charm women. Mr. Knightley was much older than Mr. Churchill and had never married. She smiled to herself considering that Mr. Churchill could be married long before Mr. Knightley found a wife. Perhaps she would marry Mr. Churchill.

“Mr. Knightley, pray, do tell why are you unhappy with how Mr. Churchill views me? Both of you know that I am a respectable young lady. Moreover, both of you respect me, my

family, and my title far too much to put my reputation in jeopardy. I believe you should take back your insults against his gentlemanliness.”

“I refuse to take my comments back.” Mr. Knightley retorted.

He sighed and closed his book. He sat lost in thought for a moment. Emma could tell there was something serious on Mr. Knightley’s mind as his brow furrowed.

“Have you no more to add, Mr. Knightley?”

“Oh Emma, I have much more to add. There are things I have wanted to say since you were but a very young woman, yet I know you are not ready to hear them. Your immaturity and blindness – which make you privy to Frank Churchill’s attentions – are proof enough that you are not ready to know all.”

“Mr. Knightley, you continue to insult me. To lecture me. To admonish me for indulging in the simple pleasures of being young. You consider me frivolous! You think me silly for enjoying attention when my father has kept me locked at Hartfield largely unable to enjoy the sensations of attention from young men!” Emma cried.

“You always bear my advice and corrections better than anyone should. I pray you understand that I offer my opinion because I care about you and your reputation as much as I care about my own kin. You must admit that my pontifications often take the place of fatherly advice that Mr. Woodhouse is unable to offer due to the state of his health. I do nothing for you that I would not do for a wife, sister, or daughter. I do not find your wants for such attention silly. I find the object of your affections disdainful. He may supply the heart palpitations and laughs that will provide you with temporary happiness, but he will never supply the long-term respect that a woman of your situation deserves. Frank Churchill is incapable of providing you with sustainable happiness. You are unlike most women, Emma.

You are of high rank and find yourself in a position where you could be comfortable even without a husband. For that reason, Emma, you must be careful about who you choose to be your husband because you have the ability to choose.”

Emma rose from her chair, red in the face with anger. “And who are you, Mr. Knightley, to dictate my choice when I have the ability to choose? You are limiting my rights as a woman of privilege. You look down upon my situation even though I am the first lady of Highbury. I care little for a man who regards himself my superior merely due to his sex!”

Mr. Knightley was stung into silence. How could Emma believe he looked down upon her? For most of her life, he had watched her grow into the most striking, strong-willed, and generally pleasing woman he ever had the pleasure of knowing.

“Emma, you misunderstand me. I do not look down upon you. I am strict towards you because I understand that you are capable of the most gracious and best behavior of a woman of your rank. I hold you to the highest standard because the first lady of Highbury, an independent woman like yourself, deserves to be held to that standard.”

Emma then felt guilty about her treatment of Mr. Knightley. She knew no man thought more highly of her besides her father. For many years, Mr. Knightley had been her constant companion, offering her support, advice, and also happiness. While her father permitted her to do little, Mr. Knightley brought her pleasure; he made her laugh. She always felt comfortable and at home with him whether they were at Hartfield or Donwell Abbey.

“Oh Mr. Knightley! I have been unkind. For as long as I can remember, you have done all that is within your power to ensure my happiness.”

Emma realized that when he did lecture her, he only sought to teach her lessons that would promote her happiness and good reputation in the future. She felt ashamed. She felt

something like love for Mr. Knightley in this moment. She felt tears well beneath her eyes and pushed past Mr. Knightley to flee the room. Mr. Knightley turned and lightly grabbed her arm.

“Emma, I beg you not to take leave just yet.” He saw the glassy tears in her deep blue eyes. He felt moved. He could not deny to himself how strongly he loved Emma Woodhouse. How to tell her? When to tell her? He must before she accepted the proposal of someone else! Frank Churchill was the first threat to Mr. Knightley’s happiness. Mr. Knightley always assumed he would marry Emma once she was old enough and mature enough to come to love him, too. Emma was so adamant about not marrying. He never imagined she would become so infatuated with another man such as Frank Churchill that she would consider marrying him. He moved his hand from Emma’s arm, only to gently touch her hand. He pulled it to his lips.

“My Emma, why do you cry?”

“I have treated you unfairly, Mr. Knightley. It never occurred to me that you treated me so because you had so much deference and consideration to my position in Highbury and as a woman.”

Emma and Mr. Knightley stared into each other’s eyes. Emma felt her heart flutter in her chest. *This* was the feeling she had been searching for if she ever were to decide to marry. Slowly, Mr. Knightley’s lips moved towards hers. His eyes closed. With the contact of their lips, Emma felt great passion and her mind went blank. Mr. Knightley released her. He smiled. It was apparent that Mr. Knightley had never been more excited in all his life.

“My Emma, please tell me that you love me as I have always loved you.”

“Mr. Knightley, I would have no other man on this earth.”

The couple joyfully embraced. Mr. Knightley kissed Emma on the forehead and promised to hurry back to Hartfield first thing in the morning. Emma went to bed, deciding how to best break the news to Mr. Woodhouse that she would be marrying after all.

Works Cited

Austen, Jane. *Emma: An Authoritative Text, Contexts, Criticism*. Edited by George Justice, 4th ed., Norton, 2012.

Austen, Jane. *Mansfield Park: An Authoritative Text, Contexts, Criticism*. Edited by Claudia L. Johnson, Norton, 1998.

Rosa_Cotton. "And the sky was bright with a holy light." Archive of Our Own. Organization for Transformative Works. 26 Mar 2014. Web. 06 May 2019.

<<https://archiveofourown.org/works/1371241>>