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**The Portrayal of Heroines in Jane Austen's Novels**

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Ráda bych poděkovala vedoucímu své práce PhDr. Zdeňkovi Beranovi za jeho trpělivost, ochotu a cenné rady při zpracování práce.

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I declare that the following BA thesis is my own work for which I used only the sources and literature mentioned.

I have no objections to the BA thesis being borrowed and used for study purposes.

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

All of the six finished novels of Jane Austen, *Sense and Sensibility*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Mansfield Park*, *Emma*, *Persuasion* and *Northanger Abbey*, have one important feature in common, a heroine. It is rather interesting to look at the individual heroines more closely as each of them has a distinctive personality. Although it is often argued that Austen only manages to describe “a small section of society locked in an almost timeless present in which very little will or can change,”<sup>1</sup> this is exactly the reason why she is such a popular author. The world of Jane Austen is captivating especially because the author explores “human nature in many forms and many situations”<sup>2</sup> and because her works possess the power to “transcend time and place.”<sup>3</sup>

As Carol Howard mentions, Jane Austen was “a careful observer of human motivation and social interaction”<sup>4</sup> and by exploring the world of the heroines, the reader can observe many interesting issues such as various patterns of behaviour. Austen is indeed concerned mostly with the behaviour of the heroines under the influence of the surrounding society. Emma, Elizabeth, Catherine, Marianne, Anne and Fanny inevitably share certain features and similar patterns could also be found in the narratives. The motivation for the behaviour of the heroines is directly influenced by the environment and as they are distinct from one another, it is not possible to perceive them as if they all belonged to the same category. Marilyn Butler, the author of *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas*, suggests that the heroines can be divided into two categories on the basis of their depiction with regard to their position and behaviour in the surrounding environment.

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<sup>1</sup> Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, Introduction by Tony Tanner (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1981) 7.

<sup>2</sup> Debra Teachman, *Understanding Pride and prejudice: a student casebook to issues, sources, and historical documents* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1997) xi.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, xi.

<sup>4</sup> Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, Introduction by Carol Howard (New York: Barnes & Noble Classics, 2003) xiv.

“Jane Austen moves turn and turn about between two plots, which can be crudely characterized as built about the Heroine who is Right and the Heroine who is Wrong. The first type, the Heroine who is Right, acts as spokesman for conservative orthodoxy. Elinor, Fanny, and Anne advocate principle, duty, and the sacrifice of private inclination to the service of others. The Heroines who are Wrong arrive at this state of true understanding only late in the day: they begin in intellectual error, brought about in Catherine by immaturity and false lights, but in Elizabeth and Emma by the more spiritual-looking errors of pride and presumption.”<sup>5</sup>

When Butler talks about “the Heroine who is Right”, she is referring to the fact that the heroine is exemplary, she insists on her principles and stands against the environment which does an injustice to her. On the other hand, “the Heroine who is Wrong”, is the one who makes wrong decisions based on her incorrect judgements. Although Butler herself suggests that her classification is crude, the distinction between the two types of heroines provides an interesting point of view from which it is possible to study Jane Austen’s heroines. The dichotomy challenges the reader to observe whether the heroine behaves as a fallible or as an exemplary one. With Butler’s classification taken into account as inspiration, this thesis serves as an attempt to answer the question whether it is possible to divide the heroines of Jane Austen’s novels strictly into two groups as heroines *exemplary* and *fallible*. The comparison and contrast of the heroines is based on an analysis of the key passages of the studied novels. Important issues and events in the novels are discussed with the heroines’ behaviour taken into account.

The main emphasis of the thesis is put on the examination of the fallibility of the heroines and the subsequent realization of their errors. The fallibility of the heroines in general terms can be perceived as misjudgement. In the certain period of their lives, the heroines err and it is only later that they can learn to see the true character of things that surround them.

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<sup>5</sup> Marilyn Butler, *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002) 166.

The philosophers of the eighteenth century are concerned with the idea of knowledge, considering “not only the question what do we know, but the more reflexive matter of how we know what we know, and the limits set on knowledge by the very processes and instruments of cognition.”<sup>6</sup> David Hume believed that the “perceptions of human mind” could be divided into two groups he calls “*impressions* and *ideas*.”<sup>7</sup> While the impressions are “sensations, passions and emotions, as they make the first appearance in the soul,” the ideas refer to “the faint image of these in thinking and reasoning.”<sup>8</sup> As Tanner suggests, the philosophy can be implied on the novels of Austen as knowledge and “a change of mind”<sup>9</sup> are major issues for the fallible heroines. The “change of mind” is seen as “an act by which consciousness demonstrates some independence from the patterns of thought which have predetermined its readings of things.”<sup>10</sup> According to Tanner, *Pride and Prejudice* is a novel about “pre-judging and re-judging” and “a drama of recognition – re-cognition.”<sup>11</sup> This could be applied in the case of other fallible heroines as well as it is not only Elizabeth Bennet who needs to “look again at thing and if necessary make revisions and amendments until [she] sees the thing as it really is.”<sup>12</sup> The fallible heroines err when the immediate impressions enter their mind with “force and violence.”<sup>13</sup> With the guilt of “Wrong Assent, or Error”<sup>14</sup>, they have to make their “lonely struggle towards true vision”<sup>15</sup> afterwards. Although the “first impressions”<sup>16</sup> blind the heroine at first, they play an important role on her way to knowledge and experience as “without experience [there is] no reason [and] without impressions [there is] no experience.”<sup>17</sup> As Tanner pertinently summarizes, Hume as well as Austen understand that “[b]oth experience

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<sup>6</sup> Tanner, Introduction to *Pride and Prejudice* 8-9.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 13.

and reason depend upon impressions, and first impressions thus become our first steps into full human life.”<sup>18</sup> The discrepancy between an objective and a subjective view of the world that results from Tanner’s interpretation of Hume’s philosophy serves as a central viewpoint from which the six novels are analyzed in the thesis.

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<sup>18</sup> Tanner, Introduction to *Pride and Prejudice* 13.

## 2. THE FALLIBLE HEROINE

According to Butler, four of Jane Austen's heroines can be considered fallible at first sight; Elizabeth Bennet, Emma Woodhouse, Catherine Morland and Marianne Dashwood. Their position is not exactly the same and therefore the motives for their errors also vary. Catherine and Marianne are the youngest of Austen's heroines and therefore immaturity, naivety or far-fetched imagination has to be taken into consideration. Elizabeth is "very principled and strong minded"<sup>19</sup> which plays a significant role in her choices and decisions. Emma, although only twenty years old, finds herself in a superior position of the woman in charge of her household which influences her behaviour significantly. She is financially secured and therefore does not have to worry about marrying well, which is exactly what Elizabeth has to bear in mind in her position. Debra Teachman suggests that *Pride and Prejudice* can be perceived as a "novel of emotional growth"<sup>20</sup> and it is rather apparent that the same can be said about the other novels in which the fallible heroine "learn[s] to change her mind."<sup>21</sup>

### 2.1 Elizabeth

Elizabeth Bennet, the well known heroine of *Pride and Prejudice*, can be very determined in her principles and she is making her choices accordingly. The whole Bennet family is obsessed with the issue of marriage and although Elizabeth is aware of the fact that to marry well is almost her duty, she possesses "bold independence and insistence on placing individual preference above economic motive in marriage."<sup>22</sup> It is, among other things, "the liveliness of [her] mind" (PP 352)<sup>23</sup> that brings about the errors she makes.

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<sup>19</sup> Howard xxiv.

<sup>20</sup> Teachman xxiii.

<sup>21</sup> Tanner, Introduction to *Pride and Prejudice* 9.

<sup>22</sup> Howard xiii.

<sup>23</sup> PP 352 = *Pride and Prejudice*, page 352. Following quotations in this form (i.e. PP, page) refer to Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* (New York: Barnes & Noble Classics, 2003).

The first apparent mistake is Elizabeth's determination in judging Mr Darcy too quickly. She trusts her first impression of him on their first encounter. The primary impulse to her resolute judgement is a conversation in which Mr Darcy refers to her as "tolerable; but not handsome enough to tempt *me*" (PP 13). This commentary is the reason why Elizabeth begins to look at Mr Darcy adversely. At first, the comment amuses her as she has a "lively, playful disposition" (PP 13) and she goes to tell her friends about it to entertain them. However, she is left with "no very cordial feelings towards [Mr Darcy]" (PP 13). Elizabeth is laughing at the incident on the outside but on the inside, she determines her attitude towards Darcy instantly. Her opinion is clearly stated later in a conversation with her friend Charlotte Lucas. Charlotte mentions Elizabeth will surely find Mr Darcy likeable but Elizabeth resolves that it would be "the greatest misfortune of all! To find a man agreeable whom one is determined to hate! Do not wish me such an evil" (PP 88). As Butler suggests, this is "hate at first sight"<sup>24</sup> for Elizabeth.

Elizabeth is resolute not to change her mind about Darcy and it is unthinkable for her to like him at this point. This implies that Elizabeth is not only stubborn and possesses strength of character but that she is also proud. Later on, her pride shows even more clearly when she makes her second mistake of believing Mr Wickham everything he says about Darcy. After Wickham makes up his story in which Darcy plays a role of a villain, Elizabeth is disgusted and expresses her feelings; Mr Darcy deserves to be "publicly disgraced" (PP 78). She seems to be persuaded by Wickham rather easily and his seemingly charming character plays a considerable role here as he is the man "towards whom almost every female eye was turned" (PP 74). She is "the happy woman" (PP 74) as Wickham can be a great companion and has "the skill of the speaker" (PP 74). This is of crucial importance as this talent together with his looks are the main reasons for Elizabeth to be rather "easily talked into believing him."<sup>25</sup> When he says honourable things such as that he could never do anything against Mr Darcy for

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<sup>24</sup> Butler, *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas* 213.

<sup>25</sup> Nicholas Marsh, *Jane Austen: The Novels* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998) 31.

the sake of his father, Elizabeth finds him “handsomer than ever” (PP 78). According to Butler, Elizabeth’s “pride in her own fallible perception is her governing characteristic.”<sup>26</sup> Elizabeth is now even more resolved in what to think about Darcy.

“I had not thought Mr. Darcy so bad as this – though I have never liked him. I had not thought so very ill of him. I had supposed him to be despising his fellow-creatures in general, but did not suspect him of descending to such malicious revenge, such injustice, such inhumanity as this” (PP 78).

She expresses her feelings using strong words and accuses Darcy of injustice and even *inhumanity*. She is blinded both by her pride based on his comment on her looks and by the information Mr Wickham has just told her. When she talks to her sister Jane about Mr Darcy and everything he supposedly did, Jane suggests that “one does not know what to think” (PP 83) but Elizabeth replies “I beg your pardon; one knows exactly what to think” (PP 83). This shows how resolved Elizabeth is. Moreover, she is sure Wickham does not lie as there was “truth in his looks” (PP 83). This, again, signals that his charms persuaded her. As Nicholas Marsh suggests, Elizabeth “arrives at a judgment against her own sense and intelligence, suppressing her own perceptions”<sup>27</sup> because she is charmed by Wickham.

The eavesdropping is an activity which literally prompts misunderstanding. The information Elizabeth overhears is not meant for her ears. She does not know Darcy at all; she only thinks that he is “haughty, reserved, and fastidious” and his manners are “not inviting” (PP 17). Therefore she judges him on the basis of his “superficial behaviour” instead of on the basis of “a firm understanding of the man.”<sup>28</sup> Elizabeth is therefore forming her judgement “beforehand without examination,”<sup>29</sup> having only “the evidence of his deportment

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<sup>26</sup> Butler, *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas* 207.

<sup>27</sup> Marsh 32.

<sup>28</sup> Teachman 15.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

and tone.”<sup>30</sup> She merely assumes who is the person behind the unflattering remark and because of her “lack of knowledge about [Darcy’s] upbringing, his family situation, and his past behaviour,” Elizabeth is “biased against him.”<sup>31</sup> When she talks to Wickham, it is a direct contact, a conversation between four eyes. Because of the nature of the situation, Elizabeth is overwhelmed which results in her biased judgement. As Teachman suggests, her acceptance of Wickham is “based solely on the fact that [he] is more sociable and more enjoyable company than Darcy has been.”<sup>32</sup> Instead of “examin[ing] the fact,” she only takes the “outer appearance of goodness”<sup>33</sup> into account. The immediate nature of the two key situations pushes Elizabeth to decide what is true without hesitation. As Tanner suggests, she “identifies her sensory perceptions as judgements, or treats impressions as insights” and therefore assumes the “violent condemnation of Darcy” and “instant credence”<sup>34</sup> of Wickham. Carol Howard pertinently summarizes the fallibility when she states that Elizabeth makes “an inappropriate set of judgements” by putting “too much weight on first impressions” and that there is also “excess of pride in her own ability to read character.”<sup>35</sup> Moreover, it is a well known fact that *Pride and Prejudice* was originally named *First Impressions*. The situations mentioned could be, in fact, considered the most important first impressions of Elizabeth. As was already stated above, the notion of the first impressions is closely connected to Hume’s philosophy. Because Elizabeth’s impressions are so “lively,”<sup>36</sup> she is putting “too much confidence in unverified and (...) completely false evidence.”<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Tanner, Introduction to *Pride and Prejudice* 10.

<sup>31</sup> Teachman 15.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>34</sup> Tanner, Introduction to *Pride and Prejudice* 9.

<sup>35</sup> Howard xxiii.

<sup>36</sup> Tanner, Introduction to *Pride and Prejudice* 12.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 15.

## 2.2 Emma

Like Elizabeth, Emma Woodhouse also overestimates her ability to judge characters. More precisely, she believes she is the right person to decide about relationships of people around her as she has a talent for matchmaking. Emma's high opinion of her ability is initiated by her belief that she herself helped to make a match between Miss Taylor and Mr Weston which resulted in their marriage. She considers it her achievement as she declares "I made the match myself" (E 7).<sup>38</sup> This is an important statement as it tells a lot about Emma and her character. Based on her 'success', she is resolved to continue with matchmaking for other people. She is very confident to think it was thanks to her interference that this couple has formed an attachment.

The reader is provided with another opinion from a very reliable source, Mr Knightley. He is not only a friend but also a mentor to Emma. While other people respect Emma's superior position and do not dare to advise her or otherwise interfere in her actions, Mr Knightley is always happy to provide his point of view and his opinions serve as another perspective to the one of Emma. In the particular case of the marriage, Knightley objects that this cannot be Emma's success as "success supposes endeavour" (E 8). He says there is nothing to be proud of as she just "made a lucky guess" (E 8). Emma is stubborn and opposes that even though it might have been a lucky guess, there was "pleasure and triumph" and "some talent" (E 8) in it. Having "a sort of habitual respect for his judgment in general" (E 55), Emma respects Knightley but her self-importance prevents her from seeing things as they really are. Emma often behaves rather immaturely and not taking advice from Mr Knightley is a significant mistake. He is ready to show her she is not always right but Emma is blind. She is "so absolutely satisfied with herself" and "so entirely convinced that her opinions were right

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<sup>38</sup> E 7 = *Emma*, page 7. Following quotations in this form (i.e. E, page) refer to Jane Austen, *Emma* (New York: Bantam Classic, 2004).

and [Mr Knightley's] wrong" (E 56). Apparently, Emma is not ready to admit she might be mistaken which also implies her immaturity.

To understand Emma's behaviour, it is important to know that she finds herself in a special position in terms of her social status and financial security. Although only twenty years old, Emma already manages her household as her father is too old and there is no other authority in the house. She is "the real ruler of the household at Hartfield – in her domestic ascendancy she is unique among Jane Austen's heroines."<sup>39</sup> Because she has always had "very little to distress or vex her" (E 1) and is already financially secured, she does not have to worry about getting married as the other heroines do. Despite her young age, Emma can be very responsible especially when she considers her father. She respects him and declares that in order to take care of him, she will never marry. "Marriage, in fact would not do for her. It would be incompatible with what she owed to her father, and with what she felt for him. Nothing should separate her from her father" (E 360). Her feelings are sincere and Emma is truly aware of her responsibilities.

Emma is, however, also taking advantage of her superior position. She has "the power of having rather too much of her own way, and a disposition to think a little too well of herself" (E 1). The position gives Emma confidence and also power over other people. Quite on the contrary to her responsibility, she invents her 'game' of matchmaking because she is bored and wants to do something that would entertain her. She "must, indeed" make the matches as it is "the greatest amusement in the world" (E 7). To her father, who is distressed by the fact that Miss Taylor has left their household, Emma promises she will make "only one more" (E 8) match for Mr Elton. Matchmaking is not only an entertainment for Emma as she sincerely believes in her ability to help people. Encouraged by her previous success, she sees another person who might need her 'help' in Harriet Smith, a young friend of hers. Emma considers her and Mr Elton "an excellent match" and thinks that it is "too palpably desirable,

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<sup>39</sup> Butler, *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas* 251.

natural, and probable, for her to have much merit in planning it” (E 27). This clearly shows that Emma believes it is almost her duty to interfere. Her excitement about the ‘game’ and genuine desire to help unite here. Blinded by her previous ‘success’, Emma is “quite convinced” that Mr Elton is “being in the fairest way of falling in love, if not in love already” (E 33). This is a confident statement but Emma is so preoccupied with the idea of a perfect match that she loses touch with reality. As Butler suggests, “so energetic a programme of action demands steady judgement in an inexperienced girl if it is not to lead to disaster.”<sup>40</sup> Emma, rather immature, is therefore “off to a bad start” which is largely caused by her “attitude to her mentors.”<sup>41</sup> Emma is too sure about her “self-sufficiency”<sup>42</sup> and therefore unable to face a criticism from Mr Knightley who is trying to help her. Taking advantage of her position in order to manipulate people and the inability to listen to Knightley are two crucial mistakes Emma unknowingly makes. The reason is her immaturity and self-importance.

As Robert Liddell suggests, Emma seems to be a “particularly poor judge of character” with a “great belief in her judgment.”<sup>43</sup> The same can be easily said about Elizabeth. Both heroines are rather hasty in making their judgements about other people. Elizabeth’s judgement of Mr Darcy is, in fact, based only on his brief remark and later further confirmed on the basis of some information from a man who is almost a stranger to her. She is proud of herself standing firmly on the side of her sister, who, apparently, had been rejected by Mr Bingley because of Mr Darcy. At this point, there is no one to guide Elizabeth and tell her the truth and therefore she is free to continue her ill-judgement only to realize her mistake later. Emma also seems to recognize her talent for matchmaking too swiftly and does not see that her ‘help’ is not desirable. However, in the case of Emma, there is Mr Knightley, a friend

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<sup>40</sup> Butler, *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas* 251.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 251.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 251.

<sup>43</sup> Robert Liddell, *The Novels of Jane Austen* (London: Longmans, 1966) 54.

who could guide her and advise her if only she would let him. Although the topics Jane Austen explores in *Pride and Prejudice* and *Emma* might differ, the fallibility of both Emma and Elizabeth originates from their pride as well as from their immoderate belief in ability to judge people. Moreover, they sincerely believe that they have the right to behave the way they do.

### 2.3 Catherine

Catherine Morland is a girl from the countryside and one of the youngest of Austen's heroines. At the age of seventeen, "her heart [is] affectionate, her disposition cheerful and open" (NA 17).<sup>44</sup> She has a passion for books, gothic romances especially. Together with her inexperience and naivety, this passion plays an important role in the development of her character. Catherine's mind is "as ignorant and uninformed as the female mind at seventeen usually is" (NA 17) which inevitably leads to some of the errors she makes. As Butler suggests, Catherine is "naive and inexperienced heroine" who "stands at the threshold of life and needs to discriminate between true friends and false."<sup>45</sup> After she obtains the wonderful opportunity to spend some time in Bath, Catherine is "all happiness" (NA 16). Such a fashionable place full of excitement differs from the country significantly and offers Catherine excitement as well as experience as she finds herself in a society for the first time.

The novel in the late eighteenth century was just coming into existence and the genre was rather popular. The story of *Northanger Abbey* is "quintessentially concerned with novel-reading"<sup>46</sup> and Austen merges the genres of Romance and Gothic novel here. She also mocks the Gothic novel as Catherine is the exact opposite of a typical beautiful heroine. Her 'adventures' are ordinary situations and only become supernatural and exciting in her mind. Catherine is presented as both reader and a heroine of a novel. She is, according to Butler, "the

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<sup>44</sup> NA 17 = *Northanger Abbey*, page 17. Following quotations in this form (i.e. NA, page) refer to Jane Austen, *Northanger Abbey* (London: Penguin Books, 1995).

<sup>45</sup> Butler, *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas* 173.

<sup>46</sup> Jane Austen, *Northanger Abbey*, Introduction by Marilyn Butler (London: Penguin Books, 1995) xv.

archetypal simple reader.”<sup>47</sup> Being merely a child, she has to learn how to *read* “people, behaviour, dress and conversation as well as (...) books.”<sup>48</sup> As a reader, Catherine explores the rules of society. As a heroine, she becomes overwhelmed by her own imagination but matures gradually.

It could be said that Catherine makes two vital mistakes in the novel. First, Catherine is mistaken when she trusts her newly found friend in Bath, Isabella Thorpe. Isabella is four years older and apparently “at least four years better informed” (NA 30). Thanks to her experience, Isabella becomes a society-guide for Catherine who is overwhelmed by the society of Bath at first. They form an “increasing attachment” (NA 30). They also share passion for novels and Isabella is slowly becoming more important than the books for Catherine. “[I]f it had not been to meet you, I would not have come away from [a book] for all the world” (NA 36) Catherine assures Isabella and implies that no one else but her can detach her from a book. Although Catherine is “delighted with this extension of her Bath acquaintance” (NA 30) at first, it soon becomes apparent that Isabella is not a very good influence. She is confident among men while Catherine has no experience at all. “[Y]ou are just the kind of girl to be a great favourite with the men” suggests Isabella but Catherine rejects the idea, “oh! dear, (...) how can you say so” (NA 37), as she has neither the experience nor the confidence of Isabella who is using her charms to attract attention of James Morland, Catherine’s brother. The way the two of them behave “might have informed Catherine, had she been more expert in the development of other people’s feelings” (NA 42). This implies that Catherine is just too inexperienced to understand the obvious flirtation between them. Similarly confused, Catherine does not know how to behave in a company of Isabella’s brother John Thorpe. For instance, when she is not sure whether he can drive her home, she answers “in some distress, from a doubt of the propriety of accepting such an offer” (NA 44). She is simply not sure about the social rules and not yet able to recognize what is appropriate and what inappropriate.

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<sup>47</sup> Butler, Introduction to *Northanger Abbey* xvii.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, xix.

Another person Catherine befriends in Bath is Henry Tilney. She feels she is “in high luck” to know him and finds him “as agreeable as she had already given him credit for being” (NA 23). She likes Henry from their first meeting, he has a good influence on Catherine and will play an important role later in the novel.

Catherine begins to observe the true character of Isabella after she sees her flirting with Captain Tilney, an older brother of Henry Tilney. Nevertheless, Catherine does not want to believe what she sees as she considers Isabella a good person. She is too naive and only experience will show her that not all people are as good as she imagines. Instead, Catherine believes that Isabella doesn't do it consciously. “Captain Tilney was falling in love with Isabella, and Isabella unconsciously encouraging him; unconsciously it must be, for Isabella's attachment to James was as certain and well acknowledged as her engagement” (NA 130). For Catherine, Captain is the person ruining the relationship of Isabella and James. She cannot see that the affection is mutual and does not want to admit to herself that Isabella could be so vicious. “To doubt her truth or good intentions was impossible” (NA 130). Catherine does not dare to accuse Isabella of anything wrong. She possesses her childish naive belief that all people are good or bad but nothing in between, like the characters from her books.

Isabella is aware of Catherine's admiration and knows that Catherine can be manipulated. “She knew her beloved Catherine to have so feeling a heart, so sweet a temper, to be so easily persuaded by those she loved” (NA 88). When Catherine almost misses a walk with the Tilneys because of Isabella, it is the first time she begins to see her friend in a different light. Isabella now appears to her “ungenerous and selfish, regardless of every thing but her own gratification” (NA 88). These are “painful ideas” (NA 88) for Catherine because she likes her friend but now “their hearts [are] at war” (NA 89). Catherine finally leaves for a walk with the Tilneys “in great agitation” (NA 90). The conflict is the first important step for Catherine who is learning not to be manipulated by others so easily.

The second error of Catherine is connected to her passion for gothic novels. When the Tilneys invite her to spend some time at Northanger Abbey with them, Catherine is very excited. “No one who had ever seen Catherine Morland in her infancy, would have supposed her born to be an heroine” (NA 13). Catherine has a passion for novels and by opening her novel in such a way, Jane Austen is playing with the idea of a heroine experiencing her adventures. The author implies that there is a connection between the heroines of the novels Catherine reads and Catherine herself. Quite interestingly, this association mirrors the fact that Catherine is tangled into the world of novels to a great extent. As it is apparent later in the novel, she is unable to recognize the reality from the imaginative world of her books. Similarly, at the end of chapter one, the *heroine* is mentioned again. “But when a young lady is to be a heroine (...) Something must and will happen to throw a hero in her way” (NA 16). This approach of Austen only reinforces the fact that Catherine is so blinded by the novels she loves and wants to experience a true heroine’s adventure so much that she is almost losing her touch with reality. Because of her vivid imagination, Catherine sometimes does not see events in the realm of reality. As Liddell suggests, Catherine “has wandered too far into the land of Romance, and it is Henry who must lead her back.”<sup>49</sup>

Northanger Abbey is a setting that awakes Catherine’s imagination as she associates the place with her favourite gothic novels. It is “perfect bliss” (NA 123) for her to spend some time at such a place.

“Northanger Abbey! – These were thrilling words, and wound up Catherine’s feelings to the highest point of ecstasy. Her grateful and gratified heart could hardly restrain its expressions within the language of tolerable calmness. To receive so flattering an invitation!” (NA 123)

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<sup>49</sup> Liddell 6.

For such a gothic novel enthusiast, this is a dream come true and Catherine cannot express how happy she is to go. “Everything honorable and soothing, every present enjoyment, and every future hope was contained in it” (NA 123). Catherine is considering the “present enjoyment” of reading about such places and “future hope” of being able to visit the place herself.

At first, Catherine is sure that Northanger Abbey is going to be “a fine old place, just like what one reads about” (NA 138). However, after discovering that what she considered an ancient manuscript is merely an inventory of linen, she feels that “[n]othing could now be clearer than the absurdity of her recent fancies” (NA 150). The place is simply boring. However, the discovery does not discourage Catherine from inventing a gothic story of her own. There are some uncertainties regarding the death of Henry’s mother and Catherine forms a suspicion that General Tilney, her husband, murdered her. She even begins to see evidence for her accusation. “[T]here was something in the turn of his features which spoke his not having behaved well to her” (NA 157). In Catherine’s mind, General is not dissimilar to the villains of gothic novels now. “He must have been dreadfully cruel to her” (NA 157) is Catherine’s decision when she discovers he does not even have a portrait of his wife in his room. “His cruelty to such a charming woman made him odious to her” (NA 157). Without having a proof other than her vivid imagination, Catherine is persuading herself more and more into believing he really is a murderer. Her blood “ran cold with the horrid suggestions” (NA 163). This implies that Catherine is enjoying her imagination. She feels she is becoming a part of something that reminds her of the gothic novels she loves. She sees General as pure evil and imagines everything so vividly that she is not willing to consider any rational explanation any more. Catherine ‘heroine’ is experiencing adventures from a Gothic novel at the abbey and “takes the reader with her into the setting and plot of a Radcliffean novel of terror, mystery and self-induced illusion.”<sup>50</sup> From Anne Radcliffe, Austen borrows the

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<sup>50</sup> Butler, Introduction to *Northanger Abbey* xxvi.

“paranoid consciousness of [a] female victim”<sup>51</sup> and like Radcliffe’s heroines, Catherine is also “emerging from dependency and irrational fear to self-reliance.”<sup>52</sup>

## 2.4 Marianne

In the case of Marianne Dashwood, her wrong judgement is based mainly on the nature of her personality. While her sister Elinor knows how to manage strong feelings, Marianne expresses them openly. Elinor is “affectionate” but possesses “coolness of judgment” (SS 6).<sup>53</sup> Marianne, on the other hand, is “eager in every thing” and “her sorrows, her joys [have] no moderation” (SS 6). When Elinor expresses her affection for Edward Ferrars by saying she “think[s] very highly of him” and “esteem[s]” (SS 17) him; Marianne “burst[s] forth with indignation” and calls Elinor “worse than cold-hearted” (SS 18). Marianne is apparently more openly affectionate than her sister and does not like when people hide their feelings.

After Marianne accidentally meets Mr Willoughby, she is instantly sure he is “the man who could satisfy her ideas of perfection.”<sup>54</sup> Marianne is young and rather immature girl with passion for literature and music. She considers Willoughby “equal to what her fancy had ever drawn for the hero of a favourite story” (SS 38). It is soon apparent that he charmed Marianne and “caught all her enthusiasm” (SS 42) and while waiting for him to visit, she is in “a pitiable state of anxiety.”<sup>55</sup> When Willoughby visits Marianne for the first time, they talk “with the familiarity of a long established acquaintance” (SS 42) as their taste for arts is “strikingly alike” (SS 42). Marianne is very pleased to find someone who understands her so much. There is no doubt that Willoughby is “exactly formed to engage Marianne’s heart” (SS 43). When Elinor rebukes her for her behaviour, Marianne knows she “erred against every common place notion of decorum” by being “open and sincere” (SS 42). She is aware of showing her feelings

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<sup>51</sup> Butler, Introduction to *Northanger Abbey* xxvii.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, xxvii.

<sup>53</sup> SS 6 = *Sense and Sensibility*, page 6. Following quotations in this form (i.e. SS, page) refer to Jane Austen, *Sense and Sensibility* (London: Penguin Books, 1995).

<sup>54</sup> Liddell 18.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

of enthusiasm and joy too much but simply cannot help herself as she is not used to hide her feelings like her sister does.

“Willoughby was all that her fancy had delineated in that unhappy hour and in every brighter period, as capable of attaching her; and his behaviour declared his wishes to be in that respect as earnest, as his ability was strong” (SS 43).

Marianne is completely charmed, almost enchanted by Willoughby. “Every thing he did was right. Every thing he said, was clever” (SS 47). He possesses every good quality of character imaginable and she has “no eyes for any one else” (SS 47).

When Marianne accepts a horse as a gift from Willoughby “without hesitation” (SS 51), Elinor thinks it inappropriate as he is a man so little, or at least so lately known to her” (SS 51). The situation initiates a little quarrel between the sisters. While Elinor thinks such gift is “too much” (SS 51), Marianne opposes that with Willoughby, she is “much better acquainted [than] with any other creature in the world” (SS 51). She is stubborn and declares that her “judgment has long been formed” (SS 52). Elinor is wise enough to end the conversation as it would only attach Marianne “more to her own opinion” (SS 52). This, yet again, shows how stubborn Marianne can be and that when she enthuses about something, she does it properly. As Butler suggests, Marianne’s way is “subjective, intuitive, implying confidence in the natural goodness of human nature.”<sup>56</sup> Marianne’s enthusiasm and behaviour leads everyone to assume that she and Willoughby are engaged. When he calls Marianne her Christian name, Elinor can see it as a sign of “an intimacy so decided” (SS 52). After Willoughby cuts a lock of Marianne’s hair, Elinor is almost sure that they are engaged but, on the other hand, a “strange kind of secrecy” (SS 63) makes her doubt it.

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<sup>56</sup> Butler, *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas* 188.

## **2.5 A Comparison of errors of the fallible heroines**

One of the issues that connect Catherine and Marianne is their naivety. They believe that all people are good and are not able to see beyond this idea. Catherine trusts Isabella as in her she finds a friend who is helping her to understand the life in society. Catherine is a girl pure at heart and her inexperience with the real world prevents her from seeing the reality. Her naivety and innocence allow her to believe that everyone else's character is also uncorrupted. When she defends Isabella after she sees her flirting with Captain Tilney, it is an apparent evidence of Catherine being truly pure and unsuspecting. However, it is also rather naive to believe that only Captain is involved in the flirtation as the affection is surely mutual. Catherine has simply too little experience with relationships to observe that. The naivety of Marianne also shows when she throws herself into the company of Willoughby so eagerly. At her young age, she does not yet have much experience with men and relationships but unlike Catherine, Marianne does have a close person who could help her avoid her mistake if only she was willing to listen. Her older sister Elinor is more cautious and reasonable. Nevertheless, Marianne is not listening to her advice that she should not be so attached to a man she knows so little. By this, Marianne resembles Emma who also refuses to listen to Mr Knightley.

The second feature the two heroines, Catherine and Marianne, share is their passion. An excessive obsession with books is what leads Catherine into making her second mistake of General Tilney's accusation. If she was not so passionate about reading, Catherine would not confuse the real world with the world of the novels to such an extent. The zeal together with a vivid imagination is what blinds her. Marianne is also very passionate, in her case about music and literature. When she discovers that Willoughby likes the same authors as she does, she is simply sure he is the right man for her and becomes blind to anything else. Moreover, Marianne is very ardent at heart and likes to openly express all her emotions. It is apparent especially in comparison with her sister Elinor who is able to guard her feelings.

As was already mentioned above, Emma and Elizabeth make a similar mistake when they wrongly judge characters of other people. It could be said that the very same error occurs in the case of Catherine and Marianne as well. Nevertheless, there is one crucial difference. While Emma and Elizabeth are consciously aware of their ‘skill’, the other two heroines are not. Elizabeth mentions that she “valued [herself] on [her] abilities” (PP 196) meaning she is proud of her ability to guess the good or bad characters of people. Emma also values her ability to decide about relationships for other people and calls it her “talent” (E 8). In this sense, they are fallible, as Butler suggests, on the grounds of their “pride” and “presumption.”<sup>57</sup> Although their ‘abilities’ are faulty, the heroines believe in them and this is exactly what distinguishes them from Catherine and Marianne. When Catherine judges Isabella, she does it “by her own standards of honesty and fidelity.”<sup>58</sup> These standards are biased as she is still entangled in her childhood fantasies. She is a bad judge of a character because of her immaturity and lack of experience. Marianne is too passionate to be able to stop herself for a moment and think rationally about her actions. She is “infected by romantic stereotypes”<sup>59</sup> which distort her view of reality. On their way to the realization of their errors, Catherine and Marianne have to discover “the unreliability of truths as well as lies.”<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Butler, *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas* 166.

<sup>58</sup> Barbara Hardy, *A Reading of Jane Austen* (London: Peter Owen, 1975) 88.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 89.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 88.

### 3. THE REALIZATION OF ERRORS

#### 3.1 Elizabeth

As was already mentioned, each fallible heroine realizes her mistake at some point in the novel. In *Pride and Prejudice*, the reversal of Elizabeth's attitude is the most important passage. After she rejects Mr Darcy's marriage proposal, Elizabeth receives an explanatory letter. Her reading of the letter is rather emotional as she does not know what to think. Until now, she was sure that she was right to think ill of Darcy who spoiled the relationship of her sister Jane and Mr Bingley.

The letter comes as a surprise to Elizabeth as she does not know what to expect at all. She is still angry at Mr Darcy because of his marriage proposal and at first, her feelings towards him do not change; she reads "with a strong prejudice against everything he might say" (PP 192). She learns that Darcy "misconstrue[d] Jane's quiet amiability as lack of sufficient interest in Bingley"<sup>61</sup> and therefore he discouraged the relationship. This is something Elizabeth does not accept as she considers "his belief of her sister's insensibility" to be "the worst objections to the match" (PP 192). Moreover, this only reassures Elizabeth of how proud he is as he does not express any regrets for what he has done, which "satisfie[s] her" (PP 192). This satisfaction implies that Elizabeth likes the idea of him being wrong and she is only happy to see that he is still "all pride and insolence" (PP 192). Elizabeth is already distraught by the letter and according to Marsh, this accusation of Darcy is her "angry generalization."<sup>62</sup>

The discomposure of Elizabeth's mind grows after she learns the truth about Mr Wickham. A major emotional turmoil begins here and Austen pertinently chooses the right words to express exactly what Elizabeth feels. The use of rather emotional and dramatic

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<sup>61</sup> Howard xxv.

<sup>62</sup> Marsh 35.

expressions such as “astonishment, apprehension (...) horror” (PP 193) together with Elizabeth’s feelings “difficult of definition” (PP 193) only support the whole image of such a psychologically extreme situation. In her inner struggle, Elizabeth’s mind can “rest on nothing” (PP 193). She seems to be unable to accept the information about Wickham as, according to Marsh, she is “caught in a conflict between reason and prejudice.”<sup>63</sup> She does not want to believe it and prefers intuition to reason as her heart tells her “[t]his must be false” (PP 193). Angry, confused and “incapable of attending to the sense” (PP 192), Elizabeth puts the letter “hastily away” and resolves to “never look in it again” (PP 193) in order to “close her mind to the letter’s influence.”<sup>64</sup> However, Elizabeth’s attitude changes gradually and she begins to listen to her mind instead of her heart. She now “weigh[s] every circumstance” and thinks about “probability of each statement” (PP 193) which implies she is trying to think rationally and there is “reasonableness”<sup>65</sup> present. For the first time, she begins to see that the letter “must make [Darcy] entirely blameless throughout the whole” (PP 194). Elizabeth now recalls her own encounter with Mr Wickham and slowly begins to change her mind about him. Suddenly, she is “struck with the impropriety of such communications to a stranger, and wonder[s] it had escaped her before” (PP 195). Elizabeth sees she trusted a stranger and does not understand why she did not realize this sooner. The letter opens her eyes and she must admit how “differently did everything now appear” (PP 195). She is not yet persuaded entirely but every “struggle in [Wickham’s] favour” is now becoming “fainter and fainter” (PP 195).

At this point, Elizabeth is finally ready to realize she was wrong in her judgement of Mr Darcy and is “absolutely ashamed of herself” (PP 196). She now sees how “blind, partial, prejudiced, absurd” (PP 196) she was and realizes she has acted “despicably” (PP 196). Elizabeth does not only admit that it was a mistake to believe Wickham. She can also see that her “folly” was “vanity” (PP 196). This implies that the unlucky remark of Mr Darcy at the

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<sup>63</sup> Marsh 34.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 34.

ball was not only amusing for Elizabeth but that it also hurt her self-conceit. As Marsh suggests, she learns that she was “vain about her intelligence.”<sup>66</sup> With regard to Darcy and Wickham, her vanity was then “alternately flattered and offended by the two men.”<sup>67</sup> The famous conclusion, “[t]ill this moment I never knew myself” (PP 196), expresses Elizabeth’s state of mind pertinently. She is “heartily ashamed”<sup>68</sup> of “having felt a dislike that could be called hating.”<sup>69</sup> Last but not least, Elizabeth can also see the other faults of her character that led to the errors. “I, who have prided myself on my discernment! I, who have valued myself on my abilities!” (PP 196) In this exclamation, Elizabeth realizes that her ability to estimate the character of a person, the skill she was so proud of, failed her. Such discovery is “humiliating” (PP 196) for her. This passage is, in a sense, a moment of maturity for Elizabeth. As Howard mentions, she is now “able to turn her keen powers of perception inward”<sup>70</sup> and recognizes she erred. While she reflects on her behaviour during her personal emotional conflict, Elizabeth shows her strength and discovers a new skill of being able to admit her errors. She goes through “humiliation and painful self-recognition” but proves she possesses “the capacity for introspection”<sup>71</sup> as well. From this moment, “Darcy’s character will continue to rise”<sup>72</sup> in Elizabeth’s mind.

In comparison to the previous situations, in which Elizabeth became a victim to her first impressions, the letter represents a completely different means of communication. A letter embodies a very private and intimate form of communication as it is only meant for the eyes of the addressee and read “in retirement from the social scene.”<sup>73</sup> Therefore, in this particular case, Darcy can openly express all his thoughts and feelings for Elizabeth and, as Tanner suggests, to “convey information in a way which would not be possible on a social occasion

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<sup>66</sup> Marsh 36.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>69</sup> Hardy 52.

<sup>70</sup> Howard xxiv.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., xxiv.

<sup>72</sup> Tanner, Introduction to *Pride and Prejudice* 18.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 26.

where public modes of utterance necessarily restrict the more private ones.”<sup>74</sup> A letter as an important method of communication can be found in other novels of Jane Austen as well. In *Northanger Abbey*, the letter plays a similar role as in *Pride and Prejudice*. Like Elizabeth, Catherine also awakes from her delusion thanks to a letter when she learns about the true nature of her friend Isabella. In *Persuasion*, Captain Wentworth declares his love for Anne in a letter and similarly, in *Emma*, Frank Churchill apologizes and explains everything in a letter for the heroine. Thanks to a letter, the two heroines are relieved and their fears are dissolved. Letters in the hands of Austen’s characters play an important role as they possess a power of revelation, illumination and truth-telling.

Elizabeth has another moment of ‘first impression’ when she visits Pemberley. However, this one differs from the previous situations significantly. This time, Elizabeth has all the important background information regarding Darcy in her mind. She knows his true nature and therefore she is able to judge the place while possessing real evidence in favour of Mr Darcy. Her judgement has slowly been improving since she read the letter but it is only after she visits the mansion that her attitude transforms completely. As Tanner suggests, the change of her mind cannot be complete without seeing the house as the “physical penetration of the interior of Pemberley” serves as “an analogue and an aid for her perceptual penetration of the interior quality of its owner.”<sup>75</sup> Through the estate, Elizabeth can see the nature of Darcy himself. As Howard implies, Pemberley can “reflect the values and temperament of the owner”<sup>76</sup> and so it has the power of making a statement about the owner. Elizabeth is aware of the fact that the mansion reflects Darcy’s personality. She allowed herself to be impertinent before but now, after learning about the true nature of Darcy, she respects him more and “blushe[s] at the very idea” (PP 225) of meeting Darcy himself here. The fact that the housekeeper honours Mr Darcy saying she had “never known a cross word from him in [her]

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<sup>74</sup> Tanner, Introduction to *Pride and Prejudice* 26.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>76</sup> Howard xxvii.

life” (PP 232) only reinforces Elizabeth’s newly gained opinion on Darcy. She considers this praise “most extraordinary, most opposite to her [former] ideas” (PP 232). Elizabeth wishes to hear more about him and according to Howard, it is apparent that Darcy “commands the allegiance and respect of his servants” and therefore he must be a good estate owner as well as “a man of principles and generosity.”<sup>77</sup> Elizabeth considers that “to be mistress of Pemberley might be something!” (PP 229) Such a statement implies that although Elizabeth believes she will marry for love, she is aware of the fact that, according to the society, a woman has to marry well. *Well* in the time of Jane Austen “referred almost exclusively to financial considerations”<sup>78</sup> and, apparently, Elizabeth is aware of her duty and the idea of Pemberley as her future home pleases her.

### 3.2 Emma

Emma is thoroughly tangled into her game with other people’s feelings and because of her imagination and confidence, she fails to see that Mr Elton is interested in her, not in Harriet. She, yet again, makes a mistake of not believing Mr Knightley when he is trying to tell her. “What an idea!”(E 96) Emma thinks on Knightley’s account and cannot admit that someone else would be right. She goes even further in considering that his idea must be wrong. She is “amusing herself in the consideration of the blunders which often arise from a partial knowledge of circumstances, of the mistakes which people of high pretensions to judgement are for ever falling into”(E 96). Emma wants to prove to herself that she is right and that Knightley does not know all the circumstances. However, she is “not very pleased” with Mr Knightley for “imagining her blind and ignorant” (E 96). This shows that although Emma thinks she knows better than Knightley, his opinion of her matters to her. Later on, Emma begins to notice Mr Elton’s behaviour but she is still not willing to take Knightley’s advice into consideration and rejects it as “[a]bsurd and insufferable” (E 101).

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<sup>77</sup> Howard xxvii.

<sup>78</sup> Teachman 6.

When Mr Elton indeed proposes, Emma's "astonishment is much beyond anything [she] can express" (E 112). At that moment, Emma realizes she was blinded by her created image of the perfect match and failed to see what was really happening. She reflects on what she has done and considers it "a most complete error" (E 113). She is "miserable" and calls this unfortunate event "a wretched business" (E 115). While she was manipulating the people around her, Emma did not notice that she, herself, was manipulated and feels "pain and humiliation" (E 115). She was a part of her game without even knowing it but can understand that she "misinterpreted his feelings" (E 117) and therefore it is not surprising that Mr Elton has also misinterpreted hers. Emma is willing to admit that it was completely her mistake and that "the first error and the worst lay at her door" (E 117).

"It was foolish, it was wrong, to take so active a part in bringing any two people together. It was adventuring too far, assuming too much, making light of what ought to be serious, a trick of what ought to be simple. She was quite concerned and ashamed, and resolved to do such things no more" (E 117).

It is apparent that Emma genuinely feels bad when she makes such confession. She realizes that she had no right to actively interfere into feelings of others and declares she will not continue matchmaking. More importantly, Emma also realizes that this is not painful only for her. She has been playing with lives of other people and therefore "compared with the evil to Harriet, all was light"(E 115). Emma is concerned about Harriet even more than about herself. She can see that it was because of her that Harriet "thought of him with hope" (E 118) and Emma herself "assured her of his attachment" (E 118). With an uneasy conscience, Emma goes to bed "with nothing settled but the conviction of her having blundered most dreadfully" (E 118). When she confesses everything to Harriet the next day, Emma feels that it "completely renewed her first shame" (E 121). She is sorry to see Harriet's tears and even considers her to be "the superior creature of the two" (E 122). This is an important moment for Emma who is now able to admit that innocent Harriet is a better person than herself.

Although the incident with Mr Elton opens Emma's eyes and she is able to consider other people's feelings now, the true turning point comes later, at the Box Hill picnic. She shamelessly insults old Miss Bates when she jokes about her talkativeness. Although it is a rather cruel remark, no one from the party dares to express it might have been inappropriate. Miss Bates admits she must be "very disagreeable" when Emma says "such a thing to an old friend" (E 320). She is visibly hurt but Emma does not notice it, she thinks her remark was amusing for everybody. Mr Knightley feels obliged to confront Emma now as she went too far. He can see that, blinded by her superior position and everyone's admiration, Emma does not realize what she did. Knightley cannot believe how "unfeeling" and "insolent" she was; he "had not thought it possible" (E 324). Emma does not know how to react, she says she "could not resist" (E 320) and then, although blushing, she tries to "laugh it off" (E 324). She is apparently ashamed a little but tries to escape from this uncomfortable situation with laughter. Considering how annoying Miss Bates can be, she mentions "[n]obody could have helped it. It was not so very bad" (E 324) and tries to behave as if her remark was appropriate. However, Mr Knightley wants Emma to understand how hurt Miss Bates now is after she "felt [Emma's] full meaning" (E 324). "It was badly done, indeed! You, whom she had known from an infant" (E 324) continues Knightley in an attempt to awake feelings of guilt and shame in Emma. She finally begins to see that not only she behaved very inappropriately and humiliated Miss Bates but also that Mr Knightley is very upset with her now. After realizing this, she feels ashamed, she is "not able to speak" (E 325) and her feelings are "combined only of anger against herself, mortification, and deep concern" (E 325). Emma's apparent inner struggle is, as in the case of Elizabeth, expressed by strong words. She is almost unable to describe her feelings as she is "vexed beyond what could have been expressed - almost beyond what she could conceal" (E 325). Emotionally, Emma feels something she has probably never felt before as she has always had a very little to worry about. "Never had she felt so agitated, mortified, grieved, at any circumstance in her life. She was most forcibly struck" (E 325). Emma reflects on her error and feels ashamed of being "so brutal, so cruel" (E 325). She is not able to recollect

herself and on the way home, she has “tears running down her cheeks” (E 325). The tears are “extraordinary” which implies this does not indeed happen to Emma very often. “As she reflected more, she seemed but to feel it more. She never had been so depressed” (E 325). Mr Knightley opened Emma’s eyes and showed her that she has been misusing her advantageous position and this incident was simply too much. Not only she deeply regrets her behaviour, Emma is also sorry she disappointed Knightley.

After realizing her crucial mistake, Emma begins to see other important things in a new light. Thanks to Harriet who confesses she is in love with Mr Knightley, Emma realizes she has deluded herself and failed to see she is in love with Mr Knightley herself. She is “bewildered amidst the confusion of all that had rushed on her” (E 357). Emma is so confused she does not know what to think. She is trying to understand the “deceptions she had been thus practicing on herself” (E 357) and calls her error “blindness of her own head and heart” (E 357). She thinks of Mr Knightley and understands she had been “totally ignorant of her own heart” (E 357). Emma finds herself in an emotional turmoil so strong that she cannot even express what she feels or should feel. “A few minutes were sufficient for making her acquainted with her own heart (...) she admitted – she acknowledged the whole truth” (E 353). At this moment, Emma discovers “with the speed of an arrow” (E 353) her true feelings. “Mr. Knightley must marry no one but herself!” (E 353) This is another moment of awakening for Emma as she can understand her true feelings for the first time. “She saw it all with a clearness which had never blessed her before” (E 353). Until now, Emma was so preoccupied with matchmaking for other people she did not notice her own feelings. Suddenly, it seems impossible to imagine that Mr. Knightley would marry anyone else. Knightley as a mentor has to help the “very wrong-headed heroine”<sup>79</sup> to realize her errors.

Emma does not make only one mistake but rather a series of mistakes. The first revelation comes after Mr Elton proposes to her. Although she thought she had everything

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<sup>79</sup> Liddell 109.

under her control, she herself is manipulated without knowing it. However, this is not enough for Emma to change her ways. She is biased by her imagination and so preoccupied with matchmaking that she is blind to the objective judgement represented by Knightley. Another error which accompanies Emma throughout the whole novel is her unwillingness to believe Mr Knightley and his opinions when he tries to help her. There is a special bond between Emma and Knightley from the very beginning of the novel. He is the perfect match for Emma; handsome, clever and with the same social position. Being older and wiser than Emma, he can guide her. He is “always her standard of what a man should be.”<sup>80</sup> It takes almost the whole novel for Emma to realize that she is in love with him. This, according to Liddell, shows Austen’s technique of “slow and entirely convincing being-together of Emma and Mr Knightley.”<sup>81</sup>

### **3.3 Catherine**

Catherine is so overwhelmed by her imagination and influenced by the novels she reads that she literally loses touch with reality and it is Henry who has to awake her. After she is caught by him in his mother’s room, Catherine realizes she has made a mistake of accusing Captain Tilney of murder. Henry explains to her that his father was “truly afflicted by her death” (NA 172) and there is no way that she would have been murdered. Catherine is “very glad of it” and thinks it “would have been very shocking” (NA 172) if her idea was true. Henry is trying to explain to Catherine rationally that she has been too influenced by the books she reads. When Henry asks her to “consider the dreadful nature of the suspicions” (NA 172), he wants her to think in the realm of reality and Catherine admits her fantasies were far-fetched indeed. She “blushed deeply, and could say no more” (NA 170). When Henry asks her to consult her “own understanding (...) own observation of what is passing around” (NA 172), he wants her to wake up and start living in reality instead of in the books that have shaded her

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<sup>80</sup> Liddell 109.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 110.

sense for what is real. “Remember the country and the age in which we live” (NA 172) is a pertinent remark of Henry as this is exactly what Catherine forgot to consider. After Henry opens her eyes, Catherine is ashamed of her error and runs away with “tears of shame” (NA 172). She is now “completely awakened” (NA 173) from her childhood fantasies and can finally see the “extravagance of her late fancies” (NA 173). “Most grievously was she humbled. Most bitterly did she cry” (NA 173) but not only because of her shame. She is also afraid she loses the trust and favour of Henry and is aware of the fact that she disappointed him as everything she did is now “all exposed to him” and so he must “despise her forever” (NA 173). Catherine feels not only the shame for what she has done, she is also upset as she thinks that Henry might hate her. Catherine is “thoroughly awakened, and thoroughly humbled”<sup>82</sup> now. As Butler mentions, she is now able to “abandon her error and humbly submit to objective reality.”<sup>83</sup>

During the process of maturing, Catherine is forced to understand that life is not a novel. There is also another lesson she has to learn; unlike the characters from her books, people are not only black and white. This second part of Catherine’s awakening comes with a letter from her friend Isabella. After eloping with Tilney, Isabella asks Catherine to sort out everything between her and Catherine’s brother James. Catherine realizes how blind she was not to see the true character of Isabella until now. “She must think me an idiot” expresses her feelings Catherine and cannot believe Isabella has only been using her. She can now see “what she has been about” and concludes “I wish I had never known her” (NA 190). Catherine is certainly not going to be manipulated by Isabella any more. Catherine makes two major mistakes based on her naivety. The first one is her ridiculous accusation of General Tilney. This is probably the most obvious mistake of Catherine as it is closely connected to the theme of the novel and to the character of a heroine who likes gothic novels. Catherine’s great imagination prevents her from seeing things as they are. However, there is also a second

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<sup>82</sup> Liddell 7.

<sup>83</sup> Butler, *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas* 176.

considerably important mistake; Catherine lets Isabella manipulate her. Only after reading Isabella's letter, Catherine realizes how naive she was and finally understands Isabella's motivations for her behaviour. She is now able to see that people can be both good and bad and nothing in life is just black and white as in the books. Catherine's character is developing through the novel and when she realizes her crucial mistakes, it signals that she is maturing. This process of growing from a child into a young woman makes Catherine differ from other two fallible heroines, Elizabeth and Emma, who are grown already.

### **3.4 Marianne**

When Willoughby suddenly comes to tell Marianne that he is leaving for London, she does not understand such overturn of events. She leaves the room "in violent affliction" (SS 66). Her eyes are red and she can "neither eat nor speak" (SS 71). It is clear that Marianne bears the news of Willoughby's departure with difficulty. She is "awake the whole night" (SS 73) weeping and in the morning, she is "ashamed to look her family in the face" (SS 73). Her "violence of affliction" gradually changes into "calmer melancholy" and "occasional effusions of sorrow as lively as ever" (SS 73). Marianne is not able to hide her feelings, which is something that distinguishes her from her sister Elinor. What Marianne does not know is that Elinor, in silence, also suffers. This, however, does not mean that Elinor would be less passionate. The difference is she can hide what she feels. When Elinor learns that Edward Ferrars, a man she has feelings for, has been long engaged to someone else, her reaction is "astonishment (...) as painful as it was strong" (SS 110). Her "complexion varied" but she "stood firm in incredulity and felt in no danger of an hysterical fit, or a swoon" (SS 110). In her place, Marianne would be hysterical. Elinor is "greatly shocked" but her only visible reaction is that she "for a few moments remained silent" (SS 110).

Marianne's reaction after the London ball serves as a nice contrast to Elinor's. After Willoughby behaves almost as if he did not know her, Marianne's feelings are "instantly

expressed” (SS 150). Her face is “crimsoned over”, she is “unable to stand” (SS 150). She is not ready to accept his behaviour and resolved that she “must see him again – must speak to him instantly” (SS 150) as she can “not have a moment’s peace till this is explained” (SS 150). Marianne expresses herself “in a voice of the greatest emotion” (SS 149) and then falls into “silent agony” (SS 150). Next day, she is writing a letter to Willoughby with “frequent bursts of grief” (SS 152). He answers and explains that he is engaged to some other woman. After reading the news, Marianne “almost screamed in agony” (SS 154). She feels she was “cruelly used” but cannot believe that Willoughby would be “capable of such cruelty” (SS 159). She calls his letter “barbarously insolent” (SS 160) and in a “restless pain of mind”, Marianne is “growing more and more hysterical” (SS 161). Later, her grief changes into a “silent misery” (SS 166). She receives the news of his marriage “with resolute composure” but then bursts into tears again and for the rest of the day she is “in a state hardly less pitiable than when she first learnt to expect the event” (SS 183). The whole family considers it a betrayal as Willoughby’s behaviour persuaded them he loved Marianne. He possessed “all the distinguishing tenderness which a lover’s heart could give” (SS 63).

After she recovers from a violent fever, Marianne is finally able to reflect on the past events. She knows her illness was “entirely brought on by [herself]” (SS 239) and that her “own feelings had prepared [her] sufferings” and “almost led [her] to the grave” (SS 239). On a symbolical level, it could be said that when Marianne falls ill, she is subconsciously giving up on everything. She is unable to cope with the situation of leaving her love and refuses to forget him. More than anything else, Marianne is sorry for how she behaved in her grief. She feels “[e]very body seemed injured by [her]” for she was “insolent and unjust” (SS 294). She is sorry for not being “more considerate” (SS 294) especially to Elinor.

“[D]id I turn away from every exertion of duty of friendship; scarcely allowed sorrow to exist but with me, regretting only that heart which had deserted and wronged me, and leaving you from whom I professed an unbounded affection, to be miserable for my sake” (SS 294).

Marianne believes she should have been more helpful to Elinor and regrets her selfishness. She declares that from now on, she will try to be less openly passionate and promises “my feelings shall be governed and my temper improved. They shall no longer worry others, nor torture myself” (SS 294). She is now reconciled with the past and states “I have nothing to regret – nothing but my own folly” (SS 298). It could be said that the character of Marianne develops even further as, “instead of falling a sacrifice to an irresistible person, as once she had fondly flattered herself with expecting” she “found herself (...) submitting to new attachments, entering on new duties” as a wife of Colonel Brandon, a respectable gentleman. This new Marianne has learnt her lesson and matured.

### **3.5 A comparison of realizations of errors**

One feature connecting all four heroines is that after the error, they reflect on it and learn from it; they themselves make a “moral discovery.”<sup>84</sup> Emma is realizing her mistakes gradually. First, she realizes what she has done after the shock of Mr Elton’s proposal. Not only did she wrongly judge her ‘talent’ but more importantly, she disappointed and hurt Harriet. It is a large step forward for her and indicates that she is beginning to change her attitude. The second and most crucial point in the book is the Box Hill passage. This situation brings a thorough awakening to Emma and is comparable to the passage in *Pride and Prejudice* in which Elizabeth reads the letter from Mr Darcy. Emma deeply regrets her behaviour now and also realizes how much she disappointed Mr Knightley. Emma’s third apprehension is connected to her personal feelings. Although she considers Knightley a close

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<sup>84</sup> Butler, *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas* 166.

friend, she never actually thinks of him as a potential husband. Thanks to Harriet, Emma realizes she is in love with him herself. While interfering with feelings of other people, Emma has been neglecting hers. Now she is finally able to concentrate on herself and understands what she really feels. According to Hardy, Emma “looks back with shame at her elations, her interpretations and her fantasies, all grounded in selective and self-flattering speculations.”<sup>85</sup> When she realizes she loves Mr Knightley, it “illuminates a past in which she has been only half-awake, in spite of her pride in perception and plan.”<sup>86</sup> As Hardy suggests, Emma was so sure about everything she did and carefully planned that she forgot to see the reality.

Another heroine who loses touch with reality is Catherine. She also experiences her own awakening when Henry Tilney reproaches her for her far-fetched ideas. Catherine cannot believe how she could be so foolish. This is a part of the process of her maturing and her childhood fantasies are, thanks to this lesson, suppressed. There is, however, one more lesson for Catherine when she discovers the true nature of Isabella Thorpe. It indicates she is more experienced now and realizes that it is not possible to trust everyone. Catherine firmly states that she wish she had never known Isabella and understands that their friendship was false. Bath and Northanger Abbey are places where Catherine experiences real life and matures. While Emma and Catherine realize they were wrong instantly, Elizabeth only slowly awakes from her delusion after she reads Darcy’s letter. As Hardy suggests, Elizabeth is distressed by “past blindness of her imagination, its easy susceptibility and its determined misreadings.”<sup>87</sup> Above all, Elizabeth feels shame and shame together with blindness is something that connects all the four fallible heroines.

Marianne’s awakening, however, slightly differs from the other three’s. She might have made a mistake by being too passionate and obsessed with Willoughby, who was almost a stranger to her. She had attached herself to him despite her sister’s warnings. She also

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<sup>85</sup> Hardy 100.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 100.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 100.

blindly believed that he loved her although he had never openly declared it. However, Marianne cannot blame herself when Willoughby leaves as it is not her fault at all. The lesson for her to realize is that she should not be guided by her feelings so thoughtlessly anymore. Marianne rather puts an emphasis on regretting her behaviour after Willoughby's departure. She admits she had erred when, in her grief, she only thought of herself while her sister might have needed some help and comprehension.

The fallible heroines certainly learn a lesson on their way to self-knowledge. As Hardy aptly suggests, all the heroines “progress and mature by working through falsehood towards truth.”<sup>88</sup> Especially in the case of Elizabeth and Emma, it is apparent that the understanding is not only about discovering the truth but also about the “difficulty of telling the truth.”<sup>89</sup> When Elizabeth reads the letter, she does not want to admit her error; it is rather difficult for her at first. Similarly, Emma cannot believe her own feelings after she discovers she loves Mr Knightley. In both cases, the heroines are very emotional as well as confused which signalizes how difficult it can be to acknowledge the truth. As Butler suggests, all four heroines have to “arrive at the same realization that (...) ‘pride’ and ‘vanity’ have blinded them in relation both to themselves and to external reality.”<sup>90</sup> In “private reflection,” the heroines “mature in judgement, reconsider first impressions, and [are] able to make substantial changes to [their] mental reality-picture.”<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Hardy 87.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 89.

<sup>90</sup> Butler, *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas* 192.

<sup>91</sup> Tanner, Introduction to *Pride and Prejudice* 26.

## 4. THE EXEMPLARY HEROINE

### 4.1 Fanny

As Butler suggests, the exemplary heroine is typically hurt by some injustice of the surrounding environment and there surely is a lot of unfairness to be talked about in the case of the *Mansfield Park* heroine, Fanny Price. At the very beginning of the novel, Fanny is miserable. She is sent to Mansfield Park to be brought up there as her parents cannot afford to raise her. This is an injustice Fanny cannot influence. She is losing her family and finds herself in a completely alien environment. She is “[a]fraid of everybody, ashamed of herself, and longing for the home she had left” (MP 50).<sup>92</sup> This is a natural reaction of a young child in a new situation and Fanny sees “something to fear in every person and place” (MP 51). Moreover, she feels she does not belong here; she is “disheartened by Lady Bertram’s silence, awed by Sir Thomas’s grave looks, and quite overcome by Mrs. Norris’s admonitions” (MP 51). She feels lonely because nobody is paying enough attention to her. “Her feelings were acute, and too little understood to be properly attended to. Nobody meant to be unkind, but nobody put themselves out of their way to secure her comfort” (MP 50). From her home full of her siblings, Fanny is used to laughter and attention. This new place could not be more different from home and although nobody is unfriendly on purpose, Fanny feels unwelcome. Her cousin, Edmund Bertram is the only person who can comfort her and Fanny finds her only friend in him. He is nice to her from the very first moment and reminds Fanny of her beloved brother William. He helps her “with all the good will that her brother could himself have felt, and probably with somewhat more exactness” (MP 53). Thanks to Edmund, Fanny grows more comfortable; “[t]he place became less strange, and the people less formidable” (MP 53). The new environment is stressful for Fanny at first. Nevertheless, it cannot be simply stated

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<sup>92</sup> MP 50 = *Mansfield Park*, page 50. Following quotations in this form (i.e. MP, page) refer to Jane Austen, *Mansfield Park* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1966).

that this event would be an injustice. Thanks to her uncle, Fanny is going to be brought up in a better environment. It is only much later when Fanny appreciates she had been brought to Mansfield Park. When she visits her birthplace in Portsmouth later in the book, she realizes that her home is “a place of chaos.”<sup>93</sup> She can see the striking difference between Mansfield Park, the “house of order”<sup>94</sup> and Portsmouth, “the abode of noise, disorder, and impropriety” where “nothing was done as it ought to be” (MP 381).

Henry and Maria Crawford arrive at Mansfield with the only intention; to amuse themselves. It is decided that a play called *Lovers' Vows* is going to be rehearsed and performed. This is an important part of the novel as the play, in fact, enables the ‘actors’ to hide their true feelings behind the characters of the play and therefore to openly express them. The Crawfords come from London, which is considered not only the world of “glamour, excitement, activity, amusement” but also “world of endlessly false appearances” where “manners substitute for morals.”<sup>95</sup> Theatre is a symbol of “short term pleasures.”<sup>96</sup> Such false appearances are inherent with Henry and Maria and Mansfield Park is now under their influence. Maria and Edmund are playing the lovers and through their characters they are, in fact, revealing their feelings for each other. As Butler suggests, “Edmund, who has always been considerate of Fanny, is now seduced by his physical delight in Mary into forgetting her.”<sup>97</sup> Fanny, a skilled observer, cannot overlook their behaviour and therefore “[Edmund’s] drama becomes Fanny’s [as] she loves him and he loves Mary.”<sup>98</sup> Fanny does not even want to take part in the play as she does not want to disappoint Sir Thomas who would disapprove of it. However, everyone tries to persuade her to play which makes her very uncomfortable and so she is “growing more and more red from excessive agitation” (MP 169). When Fanny defends herself “I really cannot act” (MP 168), it shows that she is not only true to her

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<sup>93</sup> Jane Austen, *Mansfield Park*, Introduction by Tony Tanner (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1966) 13.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>96</sup> Marsh, 90.

<sup>97</sup> Butler, *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas* 228.

<sup>98</sup> Douglas Jefferson, *Jane Austen's Emma: A Landmark in English Fiction* (London: Sussex University Press, 1977) 24.

principles but also modest and tries to be as little a burden as she can. Moreover, Fanny does not want to pretend to be someone she is not. This could be implied not only for the play but for the life of Fanny as such. She is a principled girl with a good sense for what is right or wrong. After she is asked to participate, her “awareness of something wrong in the behaviour of the others becomes also a personal drama”<sup>99</sup> to her.

It is evident that Fanny and her cousins are not treated equally; she is always the least important one and reminded constantly that she has to obey everyone else. No one seems to care what Fanny thinks; “[f]ew young ladies of eighteen could be less called on to speak their opinion” (MP 81). This inferior position makes Fanny a spectator of people and events for most of the time. She learns to observe the world around her very well. As Jefferson suggests, she can “measure with her own sensibility the exact degree of other people’s kindness or unkindness.”<sup>100</sup> Although she is “full of jealousy and agitation” (MP 180) when Edmund and Mary play lovers, she never says a word aloud. This shows the nature of Fanny who prefers to suffer silently. She is used to the fact that no one is interested in her opinions and often feels “insignificant” (MP 180). Fanny’s behaviour shows the nature of her character pertinently. Many times, she could have declared her feelings for Edmund but she is silent. It is not surprising considering the fact that she is used to be always the last, always the least important. When Fanny speaks for herself, it is very rare. She hardly ever expresses her opinion but one evening, at a dinner, she defends Sir Thomas who she respects above all. “She had never spoken (...) so angrily to any one; and when her speech was over, she trembled and blushed at her own daring” (MP 236-237). Fanny is not very comfortable in such a situation and thinks it may have been too courageous. Apparently, this is not a typical behaviour of Fanny and she feels uncomfortable about it. Unlike Emma, Fanny has “the least reason for self-confidence and assertiveness.”<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Jefferson 24.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 23.

The conflict of values of generations is rather apparent in *Mansfield Park*. The Crawfords who intrude the order of the place come from “the world of liberty, amusement and fashion [with] no redeeming virtues.”<sup>102</sup> London is a world “governed only by considerations of money”<sup>103</sup> and stands in a sharp contrast against the “old order and way of life.”<sup>104</sup> During the absence of Sir Thomas, London symbolically takes over and “very nearly bring total ruin to the world of *Mansfield Park*.”<sup>105</sup> Fanny seems to be the only person sincerely afraid of losing the “traditional rural ways and values”<sup>106</sup> Sir Thomas and the place as such represents. As Tanner pertinently concludes, “*Mansfield*, at its best, perfects people, London, at its worst, perverts them.”<sup>107</sup>

As Butler suggests, in the novel where heroine is exemplary, “characters other than the heroine (...) must perceive how far they have been deluding themselves”<sup>108</sup> and this is exactly the case of Edmund. While fallible heroine “makes the moral discovery”, in the novel with exemplary heroine, the heroine “brings it about in someone else.”<sup>109</sup> In *Mansfield Park*, it is Fanny who, thanks to her flawless character, makes Edmund realize she is the right person for him. After all, Fanny and Edmund share the same traditional values and after Edmund realizes he was only deluded by the beauty of Maria, he can finally see how important Fanny is to him.

The greatest injustice that happens to Fanny is when Henry Crawford proposes to her only to amuse himself. Thinking that she will fall in love with him, he wants to break her heart. Fanny is very uncomfortable about it. She “twice attempted in vain to turn away from him” (MP 305) and cannot believe that he could be serious. “This is all nonsense. Do not distress me. I can hear no more of this” (MP 305) she says to him. She is very surprised; “she could hardly stand.” Fanny has a good reason not to believe Henry as she is the only one who

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<sup>102</sup> Tanner, Introduction to *Mansfield Park* 14.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>104</sup> Marsh 24.

<sup>105</sup> Tanner, Introduction to *Mansfield Park* 14.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>108</sup> Butler, *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas* 166.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 166.

knows about his “relapse into adultery.”<sup>110</sup> He secretly flirts with one of her cousins, Maria. She knows that “such were his habits that he could do nothing without a mixture of evil” (MP 305). However, the rest of the family does not know the true nature of Henry. Sir Thomas considers him a gentleman and therefore he does not understand why Fanny would reject him and accuses her of “ingratitude” (MP 319). He is upset as she “disappointed every expectation” he had and “shewn [herself] very, very different from anything that [he] had imagined” (MP 318). Fanny respects her uncle; his opinion matters to her significantly and therefore she is very upset. She is accused of thinking “only of [her]self” (MP 318) and cries “bitterly” (MP 319).

Although it hurts her that Sir Thomas is so deeply disappointed, Fanny does not tell him the truth about Henry and Maria. Instead, she chooses to suffer. This passage is the lowest point in the novel for Fanny; she could not possibly feel worse.

“Her heart was almost broke by such a picture of what she appeared to him; by such accusations, so heavy, so multiplied, so rising in dreadful gradation! Self-willed, obstinate, selfish, and ungrateful. He thought her all this. She had deceived his expectations; she had lost his good opinion. What was to become of her?” (MP 319)

Fanny considers herself to be in a position of Sir Thomas’s daughter. In this sense, she feels she had disappointed him as a father, as someone who always wanted only the best for her. She is unsure about the future. He gave her “the severest pain of all” (MP 320). Although Fanny is “miserable for ever” (MP 320) and her mind is “all disorder” (MP 320), she does not think at all about telling the truth. This is the “stillness” and “quietness,”<sup>111</sup> qualities so typical of Fanny. As Marsh suggests, she “represents female resistance, setting up her individual feelings and her judgement in opposition to the power of Sir Thomas wields.” As she does not

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<sup>110</sup> Tanner, Introduction to *Pride and Prejudice* 21.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

know what to say and “her breath [is] almost gone” (MP 316), Marsh calls her a “victim” under “an appalling pressure.”<sup>112</sup>

The reversion in the narrative comes together with the news of the elopement of Maria and Henry. It is a scandal as Maria is a married woman now. For Fanny, however, this is liberation. Thanks to this situation, Fanny is not seen as the wrong one who refused Henry any more. She knows she is now safe from Henry. “She was, she felt she was, in the greatest danger of being exquisitely happy, while so many were miserable. The evil which brought such good to her! She dreaded lest she should learn to be insensible of it” (MP 431). Fanny is ashamed for her feelings of happiness as she feels it is inappropriate to be happy when everyone else is not. It is such a relief for her that everyone knows the truth now and she is “incapable of suitably sharing the distress even of those whose distress she thought of most.” Fanny cannot decide whether it is right or wrong to be happy. As Marsh suggests, her “selfish joy [is] overwhelming her principles.”<sup>113</sup> She knows that such a development of events means separation of Edmund and Mary and that she will be, once again, beloved by her uncle. Still, Fanny “feels guilty because the Bertrams’ catastrophe brings her pleasure.”<sup>114</sup>

It is rather difficult to decide where Fanny belongs. The problem might be that she is simply too exemplary, too flawless. As Tanner suggests, Fanny is “totally passive”<sup>115</sup> and “triumphs by doing nothing.”<sup>116</sup> The passivity is one of the typical features of Fanny’s character. She does not do much; most of the time, she is only observing the events happening around her. She does not interfere and “hardly risks.”<sup>117</sup> On the other hand, when she knows she is right, Fanny stands for her principles even if it means to oppose her uncle, the greatest authority for her. According to Tanner, the fact that Fanny “does not put a foot wrong”<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Marsh 147.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 54.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 54.

<sup>115</sup> Tanner, Introduction to *Mansfield Park* 8.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 8.

makes her “even less sympathetic”<sup>119</sup> among the readers. Sympathetic or not, it seems like there cannot be a more exemplary heroine. However, the fact that she is so static does not make her a very exciting heroine.

## 4.2 Anne

At the age of twenty-seven, Anne Elliot is the oldest of all Austen’s heroines and her age plays an important role in the novel. When Anne meets Captain Wentworth for the first time, she is too *young*. Years later, she is too *old* and her age is an obstruction. At a very young age, Anne falls in love with a handsome but poor Frederick Wentworth. However, under the influence of Lady Russell who “deprecat[ed] the connexion in every light” (P 27),<sup>120</sup> she is persuaded not to marry him. Lady Russell is someone Anne “had always loved and relied on” (P 27) and so she was “persuaded to believe the engagement a wrong thing: indiscreet, improper, hardly capable of success, and not deserving it” (P 27). The main issue is the fact that Wentworth is not financially secured. Years later, Anne recalls the past events and knows that she thinks differently now. As Marsh suggests, Anne “deeply regrets her caution”<sup>121</sup> and “wishes she had taken a risk.”<sup>122</sup> Whenever she thinks of Wentworth, it brings a “revival of former pain” (P 30).

“She was persuaded that under every disadvantage of disapprobation at home, and every anxiety attending his profession, all their probable fears, delays, and disappointments, she should yet have been a happier woman in maintaining the engagement, than she had been in the sacrifice of it”(P 29).

Anne feels that she would have been happier now if she chose differently. Nevertheless, she “did not blame Lady Russell, she did not blame herself for having been guided by her” (P 29).

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<sup>119</sup> Tanner, Introduction to *Mansfield Park* 8.

<sup>120</sup> P 27 = *Persuasion*, page 27. Following quotations in this form (i.e. P, page) refer to Jane Austen, *Persuasion* (London: Penguin Books, 2003).

<sup>121</sup> Marsh 61.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

According to Marsh, Anne finds herself in an inner conflict between “considerate thoughtfulness and care on the one side; and a thoughtless, headstrong attitude to life on the other.”<sup>123</sup>

When Anne meets Captain Wentworth for the first time after eight years, she is excited. “[A] thousand feelings rushed on Anne, of which this was the most consoling, that it would soon be over” (P 56). She is thrilled but also worried about their reunion. When she recalls what happened years ago, she considers that “all had been given up” (P 56). Giving up might suggest Anne is considering her decision a mistake. Therefore, it is rather interesting that she does not blame herself for what she did. Captain Wentworth’s feelings for Anne are now rather cold as he cannot forgive her and blames her for “not showing the same degree of confidence in him”<sup>124</sup> as he is now in a good financial situation. It seems like his affections are now turned towards Louisa Musgrove, a young and rather immature girl. Nevertheless, this begins to change after Louisa’s accident takes place. As Anne helps to take care of Louisa, Wentworth can see her strengths; her “self-control” and “ability to act.”<sup>125</sup> This is a moment of revelation for Captain Wentworth. He is now able to see that his judgement of Anne was “prejudiced by his bitterness at the broken engagement”<sup>126</sup> and that her behaviour was “neither a symptom of weakness, nor cold-hearted prudence, but a further sign of principle and fortitude.”<sup>127</sup> This is a very important observation as, for Captain Wentworth, weakness is something he thinks Anne possesses. Now, he is convinced it is not the case and begins to see her in a different light.

Anne’s behaviour implies that she is still in love with Captain Wentworth although she believes she has no chance. After she learns that it is another man, Captain Benwick, who is in love with Louisa, this information “[makes] Anne’s heart beat in spite of herself, and [brings]

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<sup>123</sup> Marsh 61.

<sup>124</sup> Butler, *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas* 275.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 276.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, 276.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, 276.

the colour into her cheeks when she [thinks] of Captain Wentworth unshackled and free” (P 158). She is hoping quietly that she might still have a chance. In Bath, they are accidentally reunited again and Captain’s behaviour is far from the coldness of their first meeting. Anne is happy to be able to talk to him again; “her happiness was from within. Her eyes were bright, and her cheeks glowed” (P 175). She recalls the way he talked to her, “his manner and look,” “his half averted eyes”; according to her, it all “declared that he had a heart returning to her at least” and so he “must love her” (P 175). However, as Marsh suggests, Anne still has a “fear of hoping too much.”<sup>128</sup> The crucial turning point for Anne comes with a letter from Wentworth in which he confesses to his feelings for Anne. He talks of “half agony, half hope” (P 222) and promises he offers himself “with a heart even more [her] own” (P 222). Anne is rather surprised but also delighted. “Such letter was not to be soon recovered from” (P 223) she thinks and feels “overpowering happiness” (P 223). Her happiness is comparable with the one of Fanny after she receives the message about Maria’s elopement. These passages represent the climax of the novels and from this point the heroines know that all their sufferings are behind them.

The end of the novel only confirms how exemplary Anne was. It is Wentworth himself who admits it was because of his “pride” and “folly” (P 227) that he never wrote a letter to her. He assures her that he “persisted in having loved none but her” (P 226). He admits that he “could think of [her] only as one who had yielded, who had given me up, who had been influenced by any one rather than by me” (P 229) but now regrets his behaviour and says he understands why she rejected him. “I shut my eyes, and would not understand you, or do you justice” (P 231) he confesses and realizes he was wrong. As Butler suggests, this is “the image characteristic of Jane Austen’s faulty heroines – that of blindness upon which light suddenly breaks.”<sup>129</sup> Anne also explains her motivation for her decision; she is sure she made a good decision because it was her duty. “I have been thinking over the past, and trying impartially to

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<sup>128</sup> Marsh 61.

<sup>129</sup> Butler, *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas* 276.

judge of the right and wrong (...) I must believe (...) much as I suffered from it, that I was perfectly right in being guided by the friend” (P 230).

Anne certainly belongs among the exemplary heroines and when she declares that “a strong sense of duty is no bad part of a woman's portion” (P 231), she summarizes pertinently the vital issue of the novel. Her sense of duty together with Fanny’s sense for traditional principles are virtues that make these two heroines exemplary. In comparison to Elizabeth Bennet, who is strong enough to oppose to her mother and reject Mr Collins, Anne leaves others to decide for her. However, this is not perceived as her weakness or mistake as she, herself, states it was “perhaps one of those cases in which advice is good or bad only as the event decides” (P 230-231). According to Hardy, it is perceived as Anne’s “strength” when she can “accept the past without violent blame and remorse (...) as a part of herself.”<sup>130</sup>

In comparison to lively Elizabeth or passionate Marianne, Fanny and Anne are both rather passive heroines. There is a lot happening inside their minds but they never openly display what they feel. On the inside, Anne feels “regret, loss, deprivation, shock, doubt and tension.”<sup>131</sup> On the outside, however, this does not show. As Butler suggests, Anne’s feelings are “often indistinguishable from those of a victim of her environment”<sup>132</sup> and, in the case of Fanny, the reader tends to feel the same.

### **4.3 The exemplarity of the fallible heroines**

Although the fallible heroines show their independence to a certain degree, there are strict rules of the society to be followed. Women in the early nineteenth century did not have much choice in their lives. Within the traditionally patriarchal society the status of women was clearly stated. It was generally expected that they would not work and therefore they

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<sup>130</sup> Hardy 101.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

<sup>132</sup> Butler, *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas* 283.

“depended largely on male relatives for support.”<sup>133</sup> Moreover, good marriage was of a great importance as social position “tended to be established in terms of families, not individuals.”<sup>134</sup> The important role of a family is apparent especially in the case of Elizabeth’s mother Mrs Bennet as she is especially obsessed with the issue of marriage. Marriage of one of her daughters would mean “a measure of financial security for the others and might help, through the social connections established, to ensure a succession of respectable marriages in the family.”<sup>135</sup> On the other hand, such closeness within a family could also lead to a disastrous end as “any scandal committed by one member of a family implicated all – and could literally destroy the chances of the unmarried women in the family to find respectable mates.”<sup>136</sup> Although Mrs Bennet might be considered a rather comic character, Teachman suggests that “her focus on the necessity of her daughters’ marrying is, in fact, reasonable, even commendable.”<sup>137</sup> Moreover, to remain unmarried is considered frightening and when Charlotte Lucas in *Pride and Prejudice* agrees to marry ridiculous Mr Collins, it serves as “perhaps the clearest picture in Austen’s works of the lengths to which a woman would go to avoid the fate of spinsterhood.”<sup>138</sup> This practical solution for Charlotte is seen by Elizabeth as “most humiliating picture” as she believes Charlotte is “disgracing herself” (PP 120).

The context of the time is crucial for the understanding of Austen’s heroines’ behaviour. The issue of marriage is vital and therefore it is not surprising that “at least part of the business of most women in Austen’s novels is matchmaking – for themselves or for others.”<sup>139</sup> However, as Marsh suggests, the marriage is presented to the heroines as “an incompatible contradiction between romantic qualities (...) and economic imperatives.”<sup>140</sup> The society and its rules influence the heroines significantly and therefore “[w]hatever

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<sup>133</sup> Howard xix.

<sup>134</sup> Teachman 3.

<sup>135</sup> Howard xxxiii.

<sup>136</sup> Teachman 3.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>140</sup> Marsh 137.

[the heroines] achieve in their relationship, *must* be achieved within the limits of what society will recognise and accept.”<sup>141</sup> Heroines’ principles remain unshaken as they all possess “the sense of social responsibility and decorum.”<sup>142</sup> It is rather the fallible heroine’s right or wrong judgement Austen mainly focuses on.

It can be said that all four heroines regarded as fallible do fit into a pattern in which they make some mistake and then realize it and learn from it. If they were to be considered the opposite to the exemplary heroines such a straightforward separation would not be pertinent. Like the exemplary ones, the heroines who err also make good decisions and at some point in the novel become victims of their surroundings. Elizabeth is capable of making a variety of good choices for herself throughout the novel. When she chooses not to accept the proposal of rather ridiculous Mr Collins, it only proves that she is staying true to her principles, which is exactly the reason the other heroines are considered exemplary. For her, “personal fulfilment”<sup>143</sup> is vital as she hopes to marry for love. In a sense, her behaviour is similar to Fanny’s. When Fanny rejects the proposal of Henry Crawford, it is because she believes he is not a good person. Emma also becomes a victim when she is unknowingly manipulated by Frank Churchill. He tricks her into thinking that he is in love with her. Before the letter elucidates the situation, Emma really believes Frank has affection for her. While Emma likes to manipulate others, she is not aware of being manipulated herself. Although Frank has a good reason for behaving as he does, it is not fair with regard to Emma. In this sense, Emma is innocent as she is not aware of his intentions. It is only later, when Frank sends Emma a letter in which he explains everything. He writes that he would not have played the game with Emma “had [he] not been convinced of her indifference” (E 380). Emma is touched by the letter and forgives Frank. Catherine also faces an injustice of the environment. Although she did not do anything wrong, she is told to leave Northanger Abbey. Her relationship with

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<sup>141</sup> Marsh 137.

<sup>142</sup> Howard xviii.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, xiv.

Henry is threatened only because his father was told Catherine was rich and then discovered she was not. She is being punished for something she did not cause herself. Marianne suffers probably the greatest injustice of all fallible heroines. She is hurt by Willoughby who, although he acts as a gentleman, later chooses to marry another woman for money. In her case, it is problematic to decide to which extent Marianne is wrong. Although her inclination to Willoughby is rather exaggerated, it is not the reason he leaves her. Above all, he betrays her.

## 5. CONCLUSION

In the case of a fallible heroine, there is a noticeable pattern in the storyline. The heroine begins with an error that she cannot see at first. Emma and Elizabeth make their mistakes because they are convinced they 'know the world'. In the case of Catherine and Marianne, the errors are based on the fact that they 'do not know the world yet'. While Emma and Elizabeth overestimate their own abilities to judge characters of people, Catherine and Marianne simply do not have enough experience to do the same. In *Pride and Prejudice*, *Emma* and *Northanger Abbey*, there is an important moment, a climax, where the heroine loses everything she believed in and finally is able to see the reality for the first time. When Elizabeth reads her letter from Mr Darcy, her inner emotional chaos is comparable to the one of Emma after the picnic or to Catherine's state of mind after Henry's rebuke. What connects the three heroines at that moment is their shame. They are all ashamed of what they have done and now, enlightened, they are able to see the reality and to avoid their errors in the future. However, Emma does not have only one moment of such revelation but also two minor ones; after the incident with Mr Elton and later, when she realizes her feelings for Mr Knightley. These are important findings for Emma. Similarly, Catherine also has another 'moment of truth' when she receives the letter from Isabella and discovers her true nature. All three heroines have some other person who helps them realize they were wrong. Mr Darcy, Mr Knightley and Henry Tilney are heroes with "moral and intellectual superiority."<sup>144</sup> Moreover, Emma and Marianne both have a close person who functions as a guide for them. Both Mr Knightley and Elinor try to help the heroines by showing them the right way but neither of them succeeds at first. It is only after the awakening that the heroine is able to see she should have listened to the guide. Catherine and Elizabeth do not possess such a helper.

The situation and succession of events in *Sense and Sensibility* is slightly different. Marianne is losing Willoughby gradually; the real climax comes only after she receives the

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<sup>144</sup> Liddell 109.

letter in which Willoughby explains everything. Nevertheless, this is not a turning point for Marianne in a sense of her awakening yet. She pities herself and falls into agony, unable to think clearly and this leads to her illness. It is only after she recovers and goes for a walk with Elinor that she can finally reflect on her errors. She admits that her sister was right to advise her not to be so openly passionate and more importantly, Marianne realizes her error of being selfish and not thoughtful enough when Elinor needed her. In terms of the pattern in the narrative, it is logical to put Elizabeth, Emma and Catherine into the same category labelled as 'fallible heroine'. However, it is rather questionable whether Marianne should belong here as well. Partially she should, as she also errs but otherwise, her story differs from the other three.

As was already stated above, after the thorough examination of the heroines' behaviour in various situations, it is apparent that Elizabeth, Emma, Catherine and Marianne are not *purely* fallible heroines. On the other hand, the exemplary heroines, Anne and Fanny are, indeed, merely exemplary as there is nothing to be found in the narrative that would put them in a bad light. They might be too static which makes them unattractive but in terms of exemplarity, they simply do not err at all. In connection to their passivity, the heroines share another important feature that distinguishes them from the fallible heroines; they are closed in their own inner world. Anne and Fanny are both emotional inside and mostly do not let their feelings surface. Elinor would therefore also belong among exemplary heroines. Like in the case of fallible heroines, in *Mansfield Park* and *Persuasion*, there is also an important moment, a turning point for the exemplary heroines. After Fanny discovers the scandal of Henry and Maria, her happiness can be compared to the one of Anne after she reads the letter from Captain Wentworth. From this moment, the heroines feel justice is finally done to them.

After a close observation of the narratives, it can be concluded that there is a visible pattern repeated in *Pride and Prejudice*, *Emma*, *Northanger Abbey* and *Sense and Sensibility*. With regard to this significant finding, it can be said that the division of Jane Austen's novels into the two categories is beneficial. However, while the exemplary heroines proved to be truly

faultless, it would do an injustice to the fallible ones to say that they only err. They do make good decisions in which they resemble the exemplarity of Anne and Fanny. Moreover, similarly as the exemplary heroines, the fallible heroines also feel the injustice of the environment at certain point in the novel. Therefore, with regard to their rather complex characters, it would not be accurate to see Elizabeth, Emma, Catherine and Marianne as unequivocally fallible. According to Tanner, David Hume as well as Jane Austen are aware of the fact that a person needs to be “*both an experiencer and a reasoner*” as “the former without the latter is error-prone [and] the latter without the former is useless if not impossible.”<sup>145</sup> Austen puts her heroines into situations in which they have to experience, judge, reason and mature. This is the reason why especially the fallible heroines appeal to the reader. To conclude, a quotation of Tanner seems appropriate; “full human life is a complex affair, and Jane Austen makes us all well aware of this complexity.”<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> Tanner, Introduction to *Pride and Prejudice* 13.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

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## Czech Résumé

### Úvod

Bakalářská práce s názvem „Vyobrazení hrdinek v románech Jane Austen“ se zabývá rozborem hlavních hrdinek šesti dokončených románů Jane Austen. Ačkoliv je autorce často vyčítáno, že prostředí jejích románů je velmi omezené, byla by chyba toto úzké zaměření vidět jako nevýhodu. Svět Jane Austen je zajímavý právě především díky autorčině výstižnému popisu prostředí a společnosti, kterou dobře zná. Hrdinky jsou přímo ovlivněny prostředím, ve kterém se nachází a s ohledem na společnost, do které patří, následně řeší různé situace. Emma, Elizabeth, Catherine, Marianne, Anne i Fanny jsou hrdinky v mnoha směrech navzájem podobné a ačkoliv se jejich příběhy liší, mnohdy řeší vzniklé situace podobně. Práce pokládá otázku, zda je možné hrdinky rozdělit striktně do dvou skupin, a to na hrdinky příkladné a chybující. Příkladné hrdinky jsou zde vnímány jako ty, kterým prostředí nespravedlivě křivdí. Chybující hrdinky jako ty, které v knize prochází vývojem a díky zkušenosti se poučí ze svých omylů. Porovnání jednotlivých hrdinek je pak založeno na analýze klíčových pasáží knih a důležité události jsou rozebírány s ohledem na jejich chování.

Převážná část práce pojednává o hrdinkách chybujících a zaměřuje se na hledání podstaty jejich omylů a následně na porovnání situací, ve kterých si chybu uvědomí a poučí se. Filozofie osmnáctého století se zabývá právě otázkou vědění, či přesněji tím, jakým způsobem jsme dosáhli toho, co víme. David Hume mluví o prvotních dojmech, které vznikají náhle a bez použití rozumného uvažování. Právě chybné prvotní dojmy jsou důvodem, proč se hrdinky řadí do skupiny chybujících. Mylný úsudek je zde tedy hlavním problémem.

## Chybující hrdinky

K chybnému prvotnímu dojmu vedou různé cesty související s povahou a věkem hrdinek, či s prostředím, ve kterém se nachází. Catherine a Marianne jsou teprve sedmnáctileté, s čímž souvisí jejich intelektuální nezralost a nedostatek životních zkušeností. Jejich omyly jsou způsobeny přílišnou naivitou, nezralostí či bezmeznou představivostí. Elizabeth a Emma jsou ve svých dvaceti letech o něco starší a důvody k jejich omylům jsou jiné. Elizabeth je popisována jako dívka, která si pevně stojí za svými názory. Tato vlastnost hraje významnou roli při jejím rozhodování či usuzování. Emma se i přes svůj mladý věk ocitá v pozici, ve které vede domácnost svého otce. Ačkoliv se Emma se k této roli staví zodpovědně, dokáže svou pozici i zneužít. Díky svému dobrému postavení ve společnosti i finanční jistotě nemá Emma důvod hledat si bohatého manžela tak, jako ostatní hrdinky. Proto se v otázce vztahů zaměřuje na ostatní a staví se do pozice, ze které rozhoduje o vztazích druhých. Elizabeth příliš spoléhá se na svůj první dojem a zakládá si na tom, že poznávání povahy lidí je její silná stránka. Podobně jako Elizabeth, i Emma přecení svou víru v umění odhadnout charaktery lidí a navíc si zahrává s jejich city. Přílišné sebevědomí či víra ve vlastní úsudek tedy spojuje obě hrdinky.

Catherine a Marianne spojuje jejich dětská naivita a nezkušenost. Catherine je posedlá přílišnou láskou ke knihám a tato vlastnost způsobí její neschopnost odlišit fikci od reality. Je tak zabrána do své představivosti, že ztrácí kontakt s okolním světem. Její druhý velký omyl pak pramení z naivní představy, že všichni lidé jsou jednoznačně dobří nebo špatní tak, jako v románech. Není proto připravena na přetvářku a intriky Isabelly, které bezmezně věří. Marianne má romantickou povahu, pro všechno se ihned nadchne. Když se tedy nešťastně zamiluje do pana Willoughbyho, je mu bezmezně oddaná.

Neméně zajímavé je i porovnání jednotlivých pasáží, ve kterých si hrdinky své omyly uvědomí. Po přečtení dopisu od pana Darcyho, ve kterém je vše vysvětleno, nemůže Elizabeth

pochopit, jak mohla být tak lehce oklamána svou vlastní pýchou. Její úsudek o panu Darcym byl mylný, protože příliš věřila v první dojem. Elizabeth získává cennou zkušenost a zjišťuje, že umění přiznat chybu je její novou silnou stránkou. Emma a Catherine jsou také překvapeny svým zjištěním a stydí se za své chování. Emmu především hluboce mrzí, že zklamala pana Knightleyho. Catherine dovede její představitost tak daleko, že obviní Henryho otce z vraždy a právě Henry ji pak musí přivést zpátky do reality. Situace Marianne se od ostatních liší tím, že Willoughbyho odchod, tedy událost, která ji velmi zasáhne, není způsoben její vinnou. Marianne lituje své přílišné důvěry, která jí způsobila bolest. Mrzí ji také, že se sobecky uzavřela do sebe ve chvílích, kdy ji potřebovala její sestra Elinor. Všechny chybující hrdinky litují svého chování a na cestě k porozumění se ze svých omylů poučí.

### **Příkladné hrdinky**

Fanny a Anne jsou hrdinky spíše pasivního charakteru. Své myšlenky a pocity jen málokdy vysloví nahlas. Opravdu se dají považovat za jakési oběti, kterým okolí z nějakého důvodu křivdí. Ačkoliv Anne trpí v důsledku svého rozhodnutí, věří, že bylo správné. Fanny mlčí, aby neublížila ostatním, i přesto, že toto rozhodnutí ubližuje jí samotné. Podobně jako hrdinky chybující, i hrdinky příkladné prožívají jakýsi moment pravdy. Díky porovnání s Fanny a Anne je patrné, že příkladnost lze najít i u hrdinek chybujících. I ony jsou občas vystaveny nespravedlnosti ze strany okolí. V takovém případě si pak, stejně jako hrdinky příkladné, stojí za svými principy. Na druhou stranu, jak vyplývá z rozboru textů, hrdinky příkladné opravdu nikdy nechybují.

### **Závěr**

Pokud chtějí hrdinky něčeho dosáhnout, vždy berou ohled na pravidla a nedělají nic, co by společnost neakceptovala. V tomto směru jsou tedy všechny svým způsobem příkladné. U chybujících hrdinek se Jane Austen zaměřuje především na otázku jejich mylného úsudku a platí zde, že všechny se ze svých chyb poučí. Jakmile jsou chybující hrdinky vystaveny

křivdám okolí, projeví se u nich vlastnosti typické pro hrdinky příkladné. Díky této příkladnosti by byla chyba vidět je pouze jako přesné opaky hrdinek příkladných.

Chybný úsudek Emmy a Elizabeth je způsoben jejich přílišnou vírou ve vlastní schopnosti. V případě Marianne a Catherine naopak chybí zkušenosti potřebné k tomu, aby jejich úsudek mohl být správný. Zatímco první dvě hrdinky si myslí, že o světě vědí vše, druhé dvě chybují právě proto, že svět dostatečně neznají. Moment uvědomění se pak opakuje ve struktuře všech čtyř románů. Rozdělení hrdinek do zmiňovaných dvou kategorií je přínosné a představuje jeden z pohledů, kterým je možné na knihy Jane Austen nahlížet. Zatímco hrdinky příkladné jsou pasivní a bezchybné, hrdinky chybující se dostávají do zajímavých životních situací, ve kterých se učí správně rozhodovat a získávají zkušenosti. Jisté je, že Emma, Elizabeth, Catherine, Marianne, Anne i Fanny jsou hrdinky v dobrém slova smyslu komplikované a tím pro čtenáře zajímavé.