LOVE, SCANDAL, JEALOUSY, AND CONFESSION: A THEMATIC EXAMINATION OF THE PLACE OF LETTERS IN JANE AUSTEN'S SIX PUBLISHED NOVELS

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Abstract

This thesis examines Austen's use of letters within her six published novels: *Sense and Sensibility*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Mansfield Park*, *Emma*, *Persuasion* and *Northanger Abbey*. Letters were an essential part of Regency everyday life, and because they were a daily form of communication, they were inevitably an important part of Jane Austen's personal life and her fiction. This thesis traces the role of letters within her novels by analysing them according to four main themes: love; scandals and secrets; jealousy and envy; and confession. Through close reading of the letters, and analysis of their contexts, this thesis provides an original approach to Austen's letters and the integral role they play in her novels. I argue that, although Austen's novels are not epistolary in form, the letters within these novels underpin their plots and characterisation. Letters both enable the plots of the novels and bring the naturalness and complexity of their writers and readers to life.

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Note on the text

All references to Austen's novels are taken from *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Jane Austen* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005-2008). Full details of each individual edition are given in the Bibliography.

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Introduction

Jane Austen and letter writing

Jane Austen (1775-1817) published four novels within her lifetime and two posthumously: *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), *Mansfield Park* (1814), *Emma* (1816) and *Persuasion* and *Northanger Abbey* (1818). As well as unpublished fragments and juvenile writings, she also wrote many letters; it has been estimated that she probably wrote over 3,000 of them, of which only 161 survive today.[1] Communication via letter writing was a crucial part of life in Georgian England, especially for women, and letters were naturally a part of her daily life as well as incorporated into her fiction.

Most of Austen's surviving letters are written to her sister Cassandra and contain everyday musings, gossip, and family news. As Caroline Austen suggested of her aunt's letters, they 'detailed chiefly home and family events; and she seldom committed herself even to an opinion'.[2] Austen's fiction is constructed from the matter of everyday life; part of why she was such 'a pioneer in fiction', suggests Kathryn Sutherland, is because she saw that 'everyday events in ordinary places could be' the perfect recipe for fictional novels.[3] Part of this fictional effect was created by the techniques Austen used to show her characters' inner thoughts. The plethora of letters that are written between characters in her novels gives them a sense of real life and display the characters of the people that write them. The main aim of this thesis is to demonstrate through close study the ways in which letters in Austen's novels

[1] *Jane Austen's Letters*, ed. Deirdre Le Faye, 4th edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. xvii.
[2] Deirdre Le Faye, 'Letter' in *Jane Austen in Context*, ed. Janet Todd (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 33-40, p. 34.
[3] Kathryn Sutherland, 'Why Jane Austen's Novels Matter' < https://janeaustens.house/why-jane-austens-novels-matter-to-us/> [accessed 21 August 2023].

are an undervalued literacy device of hers that show us the different emotional states of their various writers, as well as their manipulations of this form.

Letters were not just important to Austen and others in her period, they were a way of life. There was an art in letter writing, which was demonstrated down to the very paper they used for different occasions; for example, when a person was in mourning the paper they used when writing would have a black border.[4] Letters encompassed everything to do with daily life, and this is prominent in Austen's use of letters within her novels. Austen's novels are not written in epistolary form, yet the letters are integral to the novels, as the narrative weaves around them. In her chapter on letters in *Reading Jane Austen*, Jenny Davidson points out that letters were written in order to share news and gossip; they could be written by one person or have several authors as well as several readers once received. It cannot be stressed strongly enough how important letters were in a time of no internet, no social media, no emails, telephones, television, or radio — all that was available to enable to stay in touch with anyone outside the home was via letters. In Austen's life and her fiction there is a 'sense that letters were often nearly everything' and that they were the 'only way of staying close to loved ones outside the house'.[5]

Sending letters was not a cheap business; the postal cost would often be paid by the recipient and would be charged by the sheet (not forgetting the actual cost of the paper), therefore, a letter would often be not just written from top to bottom but the paper would be turned and then written across it in between the lines (as Jane Fairfax does in *Emma*). The length of the letter would also be scrutinized; a long letter could be seen as a 'gesture of simultaneous

[4] Jenny Davidson, *Reading Jane Austen* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), p. 4.
[5] Davidson, p. 1.

generosity and aggression', just as too few words could be seen as a waste of money.[6] Realising that letters could be read by anyone, not necessarily just by the intended recipient, meant that Austen sometimes uses a 'simple code' for privacy, sometimes underlining certain words and or letters in order to inform the intended recipient of material that could not be shared.[7]

Letters can have a 'greater communicative power than speech', just as they do for Captain Wentworth when he writes his proposal to Anne Elliot at the end of *Persuasion*.[8] Austen's use of letters in all her published novels are important to the characters for many reasons, such as for sharing news, or staying touch, or even making declarations of love. However, letters can also 'reveal things that their authors don't intend', such as Lucy Steele's letter in *Sense and Sensibility* and those of Mary Crawford (*Mansfield Park*) and Isabella (*Northanger Abbey*); all disingenuous characters with hidden agendas.[9] Letters can change a character's opinion, as happens to Elizabeth Bennet after receiving Darcy's letter, and they can have life-altering consequences, as in the case of Marianne after reading Willoughby's dictated letter. Austen's letters in her novels can change the direction of the plot, they can be used as tools to inflict emotional distress, and, conversely, they can also be treasured items to be kept, read and re-read. The value and importance of Austen's use of letters in her novels needs further research and attention in terms of their thematic importance to her novels' structure and characters.

The importance of letters in Austen's novels

Letters give an insight into a person's thoughts and feelings at the time they are feeling them, and they also give a sense of time and personal presence. The letters used in the novels are

[6] Davidson, p. 4.
[7] Davidson, p. 5.
[8] Davidson, p. 6.
[9] Davidson, p. 8.

vital to the plots of her fiction as well as revealing much about her characters, intentionally and otherwise. A letter is a source of communication, usually written between two people, the author, and the recipient. Letters in this period were not confined to two people, though; as Sally Holloway observes in her work on Regency love letters: 'many writers were complicit in the practice of circulating their love letters among family and friends' in order to be scrutinised.[10] A letter could also be shared for amusement or simply shown to family or friends to share news. Each of the letters in Austen's novels is written in the style of the character's voice, which is weaved through her plots: '[t]he idiolect is all the more convincing in that the language of Austen's main characters even changes across time in ways that are typical of the natural language development of real-life speakers'.[11] The letters in Austen's novels give voice to her fictional characters. Dena Goodman, for example, argues that '[l]etter writing was the dominant practice through which men and women of the eighteenth century came to know themselves as individuals and developed such "human" relations'.[12] The letters Austen wrote, sent and received either in her personal life or in her fiction all related to personal feelings, opinions, news, gossip and desires.

Letters in the novels also allow for uninterrupted revelations crucial to the plotting of her fiction and the development of character. For example, Elizabeth at the height of her antipathy towards Darcy would not have listened to his explanations of events that she only partially understands. Instead, she reads (and re-reads) his seven-page letter sent to address the 'two offences…laid to his charge' (*P&P*, p. 218). This letter is just one of many in Austen's novels that is pivotal to the plot and the characters' development, altering

[10] Sally Holloway, *The Game of Love in Georgian England: Courtship, Emotions, and Material Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), p. 49.
[11] Ingrid Tieken-Boon, *In Search of Jane Austen: The Language of the Letters* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 3.
[12] Dena Goodman, 'Letter Writing and the Emergence of Gendered Subjectivity in Eighteenth-Century France', *Journal of Women's History,* 17: 2 (2005), 9–37.

Elizabeth's perception of Darcy, Wickham and herself. Without this letter Elizabeth would not know the true character of Wickham or Darcy as it changes Elizabeth's viewpoint and her former strong opinion of the narrative of their lives. The letter Darcy writes lays the foundations for the later plot development when Wickham elopes with Lydia.

These letters also compensate for the lack of physical manoeuvrability of the characters: where females and males cannot be chaperoned, a letter surpasses these obstacles of propriety. The exchange of letters allows for the characters to be at a distance, yet also to learn something or hear new information. This distance can also be metaphorical: Captain Wentworth and Anne Elliot in *Persuasion* are in the same room when he writes his love letter to her, yet he feels they are worlds apart. As social conventions of the time allowed for little privacy or intimate meetings between men and women, writing to one another was a way to overcome the obstacle of not being allowed to be alone with the opposite sex unchaperoned. It is not just the writing of the letter but also the process of 'writing, sending and receiving letters [that] are also given attention' in Austen's novels; it is not just the object of the letter it is everything that surrounds the letter which aids in Austen's plot and character development.[13]

It is believed that *Pride and Prejudice* and perhaps *Sense and Sensibility* were first written in epistolary form, but there are no surviving manuscripts to corroborate these claims. What we do have for evidence of *Sense and Sensibility* being in epistolary form is a testimony by Cassandra, supported by Austen's niece who wrote in a letter to James Edward Austen-Leigh: 'Memory is treacherous, but I cannot be mistaken in writing that *Sense and Sensibility* was

[13] Guyonne Leduc, 'Letters and Letter-Writing in Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* (1811)', *Études anglaises*, 68: 3 (2015), 296-315, p. 299.

first written in letters, and so read to her family'.[14] The epistolary novel in Austen's young life was a popular mode of fiction and Austen was an admirer of Samuel Richardson an English novelist and printer, who wrote and published three epistolary novels: *Pamela* (1740), *Clarissa* (1747-8) and *The History of Sir Charles Grandison* (1753-4). The epistolary form of the novel fell out of fashion, and it is suggested that Austen recognised this and therefore changed her first two novels into a narrative style but kept some of the letters. Austen may not have written any of her major fiction in the form of a novel-in-letters, yet the importance of letters in Austen's fiction is apparent in the number of them used throughout her novels: in *Pride and Prejudice* there are over 42 letters and notes mentioned compared to 40 in *Sense and Sensibility;* this compares with 60 mentioned or quoted in *Emma,* 26 in *Northanger Abbey*, in *Mansfield Park,* 56, and *Persuasion,* 16. The letters in these novels fall under different categories, although the letters often function under more than one category. As I will describe in detail at the end of this introduction, my thesis is arranged thematically, clustering these letters into four main sections: The first chapter in this thesis will examine love letters; Chapter Two will trace the use of letters that reveal or denote secrets and scandals; Chapter Three will document letters related to jealousy and envy; and Chapter Four explores the confessionary letter, where the author reveals, admits, apologises and confesses; revealing the 'truth' (or their version of it) to the recipient and the reader at the same time.

Critical review

There is a plethora of published texts regarding Austen, her life, personal letters, and works, however, studies of how Austen uses letters in her fiction are somewhat limited. Although a range of publications deal with Austen's letters, both her real-life correspondence and letters

[14] Leduc, p. 297.

in her fiction, there is no full-scale monograph devoted to the study of letters in her fiction in a literary sense. Further study is required for discovering more about the importance of letters in her writing, both as a plot device for changing the narrative direction of the story and in terms of characters changing the perception of themselves and others through writing, reading and distributing letters.

Deirdre Le Faye is one scholar who has written and researched extensively on Jane Austen and her letters in particular. Le Faye edited *Jane Austen's Letters* (the fourth edition appeared in 2011), which extended the corpus of letters that were printed in three previous editions, published by Austen's family members, including her nephew Revd James-Edward Austen-Leigh (1787-1874) and Lord Brabourne, son of Fanny Knight (1884).[15] Twenty years later John Henry Hubback (1844-1939), (a descent of Admiral Francis Austen), with his daughter Edith Charlotte, published *Jane Austen's Sailor Brothers* (1905), which published further letters by Austen. All these various publications of Austen's letters were 'not well received by reviewers' for various reasons: there were complaints that 'editorial comments were at once excessive and inadequate'; some of Austen's actual letters were not easily understood by 'modern readers'; and in Hubback's edition fault was found with the mixture of 'literary stuff with important naval narrative'.[16] The first proper biography of Austen was published in 1913 by William and Richard Arthur Austen-Leigh – *Life and Letters of Jane Austen* – containing previous unprinted letters and new extracts. Between these works and Le Faye's publications, R. W. Chapman's edited collection of 1932 was the first modern edition of Austen's letters. Chapman published a second version in 1952 with the addition of five extra letters which had surfaced in the meantime. It was not until 1950 onwards, therefore, that

[15] *Jane Austen's Letters*, ed. Deirdre Le Faye (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2014).
[16] Le Faye, pp. x, xi.

interest in Austen grew and her works and novels were studied more widely, with critics beginning to analyse extensively different aspects of her fiction, such as her use of 'grammar, vocabulary, literary influences' and 'social history'.[17] Whereas Austen's nephew Revd Austen-Leigh did not find her letters particularly interesting, from this point on, literary critics and scholars began to take note of any 'minute details of Jane's opinions, actions, family and friends'.[18] *Jane Austen's Manuscript Letters in Facsimile* edited by Jo Modert (1990) published reproductions of every known letter written by Austen as an updated and corrected version of Chapman's edition and documents a rising interest in the material aspects of these letters that continues today.

Le Faye suggests in her introduction to the fourth edition of Austen's letters that they 'fall into clearly defined groups which give examples of a variety of recipients and subjects and Jane's approach to both'. Le Faye's edition includes some 160 or so letters but she surmises that Austen must have written over 3000 letters in her lifetime to various correspondents.[19] Letters may one day 'surface as more family archives' are opened, she suggests, as 'Jane would have had reason to keep in touch with other old friends and connections in Kent, London, Hampshire, and Berkshire' as well writing to other friends.[20]

Though Austen's letters are now available in a reliable scholarly edition, and despite the fact that there has been so much research into Austen's personal life, the letters are only just beginning to receive in-depth scholarly attention. Ingrid Tieken-Boon van Ostade's work is a notable recent intervention in this area. Her monograph, *In Search of Jane Austen : The*

[17] Le Faye, p. xii.
[18] Le Faye, p. xii.
[19] Le Faye, p. xvii.
[20] Le Faye, p. xvii.

Language of the Letters (2014) is the first sociolinguistic analysis of Austen's language and examines the art and importance of her letter writing from a linguistic perspective. Tieken-Boon van Ostade discusses what Austen's letters reveal about the novelist and how the language she uses changed according to whom she was writing. Though my study is thematic rather than linguistic, I aim to build upon Tieken-Boon van Ostade's work in my interest in thinking about how the letters contribute to Austen's major published novels. Tieken-Boon argues, for example, that Austen's self-corrections and sometimes her own use of variable spellings 'present us with important evidence of the process by which Jane Austen formulated her sentences, frequently reconsidering the effect her letters might have on the addressee'.[21] Austen suited her language to the recipient of her letters in correspondence and in her novels, changing the tone, dialect and language in order to suit the character. Letters were carefully thought about and written and it was, as Tieken-Boon observes, 'considered impolite to dispatch letters with self-corrections'.[22] Handwritten letters were carefully considered in their construction linguistically, informatively, and emotionally and in Austen's novels letters are often an intrinsic part of her plot construction and the way in which she conveys character.

Another recent and rich source of inspiration has been Catherine Delafield's *The Life of the Author: Jane Austen* (2022). Delafield suggests that despite the small amount of Austen's letters that survive, we can still read 'a life in context without the letters becoming merely incidental'. So, too, as I will argue in this thesis, is Austen's use of letters in her novels not incidental; each one has been specifically written and used for purpose of character revelation and plot development.[23] Delafield also writes that Austen's letters 'reveal factual details but

[21] Ingrid Tieken-Boon Van Ostade, *In Search of Jane Austen: The Language of the Letters* (Oxford: Oxford Univeristy Press, 2014), p. 92.
[22] Tieken-Boon, p. 93.
[23] Catherine Delafield, *The Life of the Author: Jane Austen* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell), 2022. p. 10.

at the same time the medium of the letter with its detailed language and narrative economies supplements our knowledge of Austen's life', just as the letters in her novels reveal the same aspects of character through the medium of the letter.[24] Delafield argues that Austen knew full well that 'letters are the ultimate marginalia where' she 'has some control of space'.[25] Austen often uses letters within her novels to give her female characters a degree of power over their own situations and the shaping of their own narratives.

There are a fair number of articles and chapters that now exist on Austen's letters both in real-life and in her fiction. With the exception of the two books just mentioned, there is still lacking a book-length investigation, which analyses her use of letters within her published novels as well as her juvenilia, and unfinished works. Articles and books exist on the postal system of Austen's period, how the paper was made, the tools used to write the letters and studies on how her letters were folded. There are also articles on how to understand the art of letter writing, and its applicability to Austen's letters within her novels. One of these articles that made an important intervention is Cheryl L Nixon and Louise Penner's paper for the Jane Austen Society of North America, 'Writing by the Book: Jane Austen's Heroines and the Art and Form of the Letter'. In this article, Nixon and Penner discuss the letter-writing manuals that were used in Austen's period and how they were used as a teaching tool. One of their most insightful points is the suggestion that letter writing for women was a form of empowerment and a way for characters such as Marianne (*Sense and Sensibility*) and Fanny (*Mansfield Park*) to regain agency over their lives and their relationships. Nixon and Penner also suggest that letters offer confessional spaces for their male authors, such as Frank Churchill (*Emma*) and work to comic effect, such as in the letters of Mr Collins (*Pride and*

[24] Delafield, p. 12.
[25] Delafield, p. 185.

Prejudice). This thesis expands beyond the theme of perceived power by the characters, yet it is an important point which is explored throughout their article. In a more limited way, Guyonne Leduc's important study of 'Letters and Letter-Writing in Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility*', discusses the letters used as tools for purposes of interpreting characters. He discusses how the letters in the novel offer explanations, insights, and tools to aid understanding the novel's central characters. Leluc also discusses not just the letter but the process of writing and sending them and the art of reading of them and also suggests that letters are used for dramatic purposes; they often provide dramatic proof of emotions and feelings and proof of impropriety.

Several important studies of letter writing contributed to developing the ideas explored in this thesis, not least Clare Brant's study of *Eighteenth-Century Letters and British Culture* (2006), which is an important general summary of the background to the letter before Austen.[26] However, Sally Holloway's book, *The Game of Love in Georgian England*, was particularly useful and insightful. In her study of love letters in the period just before Austen's, Holloway emphasises the importance of letter writing during courtship, and the crucial elements of how a letter writer produced a letter and how this could determine the successfulness of courtship. Holloway discusses the importance of the exchanging of love letters and how they were not just letters but objects to be treasured and were symbolic of physically giving someone their love. Holloway discusses, not just the letter itself, but its symbolism and the emotions and processes of writing and receiving the letter. Holloway highlights the value placed on letters; building on this for the purpose of this thesis, I used the historical context which Holloway describes and applied it to the letters used in Austen's novels.

[26] Clare Brant, *Eighteenth-Century Letters and British Culture* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006). See pp. 332, 340 and 392 for comments about Austen's letters.

Given the range of critical writing on Austen's letters that I have summarised above, this thesis aims to provide a novel contribution to the literature surrounding Austen's letters within her novels in several ways. It builds upon the criticism already existing on Austen's letters (real and fictional) by examining the importance of letter writing to Austen herself, and how she used letters to develop characters and plots. Moreover, to my knowledge, no previous literature has examined letters across all of Austen's major fiction in a sustained way. Thus, although Austen's novels may not be in epistolary format, the letters within are crucial to their narrative development in various ways outlined in the course of this thesis.

Methodology

This thesis assesses a range of letters written by the characters in Austen's six published novels: *Sense and Sensibility*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Emma*, *Mansfield Park*, *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion* and identifies several themes that these letters cluster around. Due to the copyright protection expiring for each of these novels, any ethical issues in relation to copyright laws are not applicable. Due to time constraints and the practicality of setting the scope of this thesis I have made the conscious decision only to examine Austen's major novels. Austen's other work, such as her juvenilia, unpublished and/or unfinished texts are therefore not included within the scope of this thesis.

After making a database of all letters in Austen's major novels, I adopted a thematic content analysis approach to identify relevant themes within the letters used in Austen's novels. Braun and Clarke (2006) developed a six-phase approach to conducting thematic content

analysis, which I adapted for this thesis.[27] The steps are as follows, with examples from this thesis:

Step 1: Become familiar with the data corpus

Each novel was read in order of publication: *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), *Mansfield Park* (1814), *Emma* (1815), *Northanger Abbey* (1817) and *Persuasion* (1817). After the initial reading of the novels, all of the letters within them were mapped using Microsoft Word (version 16.75). These novels and the letters within them were read several times and annotated to make sure I truly understood each letter and the context surrounding it.

Step 2: Generate initial codes

To explore the letters fully, I adopted a list of key variables to extract from them, as follows: page number, letter/note, date, and address of letter/if letter inferred or written in full, letter recipient, letter sender, letter contents, and physical/emotional effect of letter. These tables can be found in my Appendices. I adopted an inductive approach in order to recognise themes that emerged from the letters. My initial interest was to examine the letters within the novels in the context of Austen's life, however, after further reading it became apparent that there were certain aspects of the letters which were more relevant to address my research questions than others. For instance: how the letters create an action and reaction to them; for example, Darcy's letter to Elizabeth is a recognisably significant letter, quoted in full in the text and apparently radically changing the protagonist's viewpoint, not only of

[27] Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, *Thematic Analysis: A Practical Guide* (London: Sage Publications, 2021).

herself but of Wickham and Darcy. For each code I assessed as important, I highlighted that text in Microsoft Word.

Step 3: Search for themes

Once the initial coding was completed, I identified several themes that were repeated throughout the letters in Austen's novels. Once a theme was recognised, each letter was re-read to analyse in more detail through close reading practices the relevance of the text to that theme. Table 1 identifies a sample of the preliminary themes that were identified in the initial process.

Table 1: Example of letters identified throughout the six published novels and the themes identified from them.

Novels						
	P&P	***S&S***	***MP***	***E***	***NA***	***P***
Themes						
Love	Darcy's letter to Elizabeth	Marianne's letters to Willoughby	Edmund's note with cross for Fanny	Jane Fairfax's trips to post office Harriet's marriage proposal	'My sweet love, do not be so abominably affected. What can her write about but yourself? You know he is over head	Captain Wentworth's letter to Anne

					and ears in love with you'	
News	Jane and Elizabeth's letters. Charlotte Lucas's letters	Letters between Marianne, Elinor and their mother	Letters about Sir Thomas and his trip abroad	Mr Elton's engagement	Something shocking will happen in London	Mary's letters.
Money	Mr Collin's letter (now the patronage of Lady C) Wickham's debts	Letter offering Barton Cottage	Fanny being sent home to Portsmouth Fanny's mother requesting financial help	Invitation to party not of social rank	You must write to me Catherine' she cried 'you must let me hear from you as soon as possible.' unchaperoned, Elinor gives her the money to get home	Mr Elliot's letter to Mrs Smith's husband
Jealousy	Caroline Bingley's letter to Jane	Lucy Steele's letter from Edward	Mary's letter to Fanny	Jane Fairfax's letter read aloud	Isabella's letter to Catherine	Mary's letters

Envy	Lydia envious of Darcy and Elizabeth wealth	Lucy referring to letters when Edward writes	Edmund's letter to Fanny regarding Mary C	Emma envious of JF	Isabella envious of Catherine's invitation to NA	Mary's letter – sore throats are worse
Confession	Darcy's letter to Elizabeth	Willoughby's visit to Cleveland	Edmund's letter to Fanny	Frank Churchill's letter to mother-in-law	Isabella's letter to Catherine, wanting to reunite with John	Wentworth's letter Mr Elliot's letter
Secrets & Scandals	Lydia's letter running off with Wickham	Marianne writing to Willoughby	Henry and Maria's affair – Mary's letter	Jane's gift of piano Secret engagement – Frank's letter	Isabella's affair with Captain Tilney	Mr Elliot's affair with Miss Smith.

Step 4: Review themes

During this stage I reviewed, modified, and developed the initial themes which were identified in Step 3. After discussions with my lead supervisor Dr Louise Curran, the themes were reduced to four main themes: love; jealousy and envy; secrets and scandals; and confessional letters. The themes were reduced and some combined in order to make the thesis more concise and focussed.

Step 5: Define themes.

During this phase the themes were finalised and refined with relevant letters and quotes. After reading Sally Holloway's chapter regarding Georgian love letters, I had more contextual knowledge of the process of writing love letters in the general period as well as their circulation and mediation. This chapter helped me understand and recognise the social conventions behind writing and receiving a love letter in Austen's fiction.

Step 6: Writing-up.

After the themes were refined and defined, they were written up in the chapters according to each theme.

Aims and objectives of this thesis

The overall aim of this thesis is to examine the importance in the use of letters in Austen's six published novels particularly focussing on the role of letters in plot and character development. This aim will be explored through three main research objectives, listed below:

Research objectives

1. How does the use of letters in Austen's novels change the characters' perceptions of others and themselves, their directions, thoughts, emotions, and loyalties?
2. How does the use of letters in Jane Austen's novels create narrative function, to drive and shape the plot?
3. How does the importance of letters in Jane Austen's novels aid in the naturalness and realness of the characters and narratives?

Structure of the thesis

This thesis contains four chapters in order to answer the above questions. The first chapter explores the theme of love letters. This is split into three sections looking at the letter from a variety of viewpoints, including: Captain Wentworth to Anne Elliot (*Persuasion*), the letter from Darcy to Elizabeth (*Pride and Prejudice*) and the letters from Marianne to Willoughby (*Sense and Sensibility*). This chapter looks at the role of the love letter in Austen's novels, how the letters help towards resolutions in the plots, as well as how they reaffirm and break relationships. This theme is significant because the overall structure of all of Austen's published novels is that of romantic love leading to marriage. Love is a prominent theme throughout all of Austen's novels where she portrays these different forms of romantic attachments in different ways (such as secret love, forbidden love, misguided love and reignited love) and Austen uses letters in way that resolves, proves, and establishes relationships.

Chapter Two explores the theme of secrets and scandals and the role of the letter in their sharing and discovery. This chapter has four sections: the first letter is one that Colonel Brandon receives regarding the disappearance of his ward Eliza (*Sense and Sensibility*); the second section looks at the letter Willoughby sends to Marianne (*Sense and Sensibility*) severing their relationship; the third section looks at the note that Edmund writes to Fanny Price (*Mansfield Park*) when gifting her a cross; the fourth section examines the letter from Jane to Elizabeth revealing the news that Lydia has eloped with Wickham (*Pride and Prejudice*). These letters change the direction of the plot and reveal an apparent truthfulness about the characters who write them and read them. These letters bring forth resolutions that are forced to happen, and they can change a character's position in the social order from an outsider to an insider. Just as love is a prominent theme in Austen's novels, so are secrets and

scandals and it is apparent that these are revealed through letters often to the shock of the character and us the reader.

Chapter Three explores the themes of jealousy and envy. There are four sections: the first section looks at the letter Lucy Steele (in *Sense and Sensibility*) uses from Edward to show Elinor they are engaged; the second section analyses the letter from Caroline Bingley to Jane Bennet; the third section looks at the letter from Edmund to Fanny Price (*Mansfield Park*); and the fourth section centres on a letter from Mary Musgrove to Anne Elliot (*Persuasion*). All of the characters that write and use these letters are motivated in some sense by jealousy and envy and their need to assert or regain power in their life. These characters use letters as either a weapon to inflict emotional distress and/or as a tool of leverage in emotional situations.

Chapter Four explores the theme of confessional letters. There four sections to this chapter: the first focuses on Isabella's letter to Catherine; the second section on Willoughby's visit to Cleveland; the third section explores Mary Crawford's letter to Fanny Price (*Mansfield Park*); and the fourth section analyses Frank Churchill's letter to his mother-in-law (*Emma*). The common link between these letters is that they are written from characters who are, to a varying extent, self-interested and hope to gain something from the recipient or the confessionary listener. As Nixon and Penner suggest, letters provide confessional spaces for the male characters in Austen's novels and in each of the novels there is a confessionary theme that brings resolution through letters.

In my conclusion, I summarise the parameters of this thesis and its main findings, and also suggest the avenues of research that might be pursued were I to extent my scholarly work.

Chapter One

'[S]uch means as are within my reach': Letters of love

This chapter will examine Austen's use of love letters in her six published novels. Romance, love, and sexuality exist in Austen's novels through 'every look, gesture and letter that passes between lovers'.[28] Austen's heroes, to whom she gives the longest and most detailed love letters, are 'constructed by a female author, and through Austen's use of free indirect discourse, are subsequently filtered through the eyes of female characters. As Meaghan Malone suggests, the 'female gaze thus becomes integral to the ideal of masculinity developed in Austen's novels through the visions of the female characters'[29] This might constitute a key part of the letters' romantic appeal: a woman has written them knowing and recognising what a woman wants to see, hear, read and feel from a romantic suitor. Austen sets the bar for what a romantic hero should be in the context of her romantic fiction; even Austen's rogues are somewhat charming and attractive to the heroines, at least at first.

Love letters played an integral role in a Georgian courtship; Austen's heroes who write letters to express their love thus do so within an accepted cultural tradition of sending and receiving such letters. Two love letters by men are particularly detailed, transcribed in full for the reader: the letters from Darcy to Elizabeth and Captain Wentworth to Anne Elliot. This chapter will discuss these as key examples of love letters. Darcy and Wentworth write their letters in their own narrative voices; their 'letters read like truthful, thoughtful testimonies to

[28] M. Zolfagharkhani, and H. Ramezani, '"Gaze" and "Visuality" in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*', *K@Ta*, 14.1 (2012), 1-5, p 1.
[29] Meaghan Malone, ' "You Have Bewitched Me Body and Soul": Masculinity and the Female Gaze In Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*', *At the Edge* 1 (2010), 62-91, p. 63.

their state of mind and condition the heart'.[30] Having considered the men's letters, this chapter turns to the letters from Marianne to Willoughby which, I argue, must also be considered and examined under the theme of love letters because Marianne believes herself to be in love with Willoughby. She believes they will marry and believes herself to be 'as solemnly engaged to him as if the strictest legal covenant had bound us to each other' (*S&S*, p. 214), and she believed he felt the same: 'He *did* feel the same, Elinor—for weeks and weeks he felt it. I know he did' (*S&S*, p. 214). Marianne writes her letters to Willoughby from a place where she is trying to regain control over a relationship which she has no power.

Perhaps the most prominent love letter in Austen's fiction comes in the final chapter of *Persuasion*, written and then published posthumously. Overhearing Anne Elliot's conversation with Captain Harville about who loves longest, men or women, Captain Wentworth 'can listen no longer in silence' (*P*, p. 257); he must write a letter to Anne in secret. In Austen's first draft of *Persuasion*, there is no love letter, and, unhappy with her manuscript, Austen changed this twice and finally drafted the final two chapters that are now in print. The addition of the letter is in the final draft. Austen realised that her original ending to *Persuasion* was 'tame and flat, and was desirous of producing something better'.[31] So, after leaving it for one night, she created something more fitting with her characters the following day. As Sarah Emsley suggests, Austen's original ending 'was an awfully quick and easy resolution to an eight and a half year problem'.[32] The final chapter in the first draft of *Persuasion*, is a sudden sprint to a resolution of Wentworth and Anne finally coming together.

[30] Elisabeth L. Lenckos. '". . . [I]nventing Elegant Letters" Or, Why Don't Austen's Lovers Write More Often?' *Persuasions On-Line*, 26. 1 (2005), <www.jasna.org/persuasions/on-line/vol26no1/lenckos.htm> [accessed 7 June 2023].
[31] Deirdre Le Faye, *Jane Austen: the World of Her Novels* (London: Frances Lincoln, 2003), p. 278.
[32] Sarah Emsley, 'Jane Austen at Work: The Revision of *Persuasion*'s Ending', <sarahemsley.com/2018/06/25/jane-austen-at-work-the-revision-of-persuasions-ending/> [accessed 13 June 2023].

Love letters in *Persuasion*

Persuasion is not just about how Anne and Wentworth come together at the end of the novel it is about showing how their characters change, how Anne evolves into the unpersuadable character. Anne, who was previously quiet, almost ignored, and always in the position of being the listener, changes. By the end of the novel Wentworth becomes the listener and Anne the talker. It is because Wentworth listens and overhears Anne and Harville's conversation that he is spurred into action to write the letter. Initially in the cancelled chapter, instead of the conversation and the letter, we have one sentence that ends with, 'They were re-united' Austen must have realised that this was not enough, that Anne's eight year turmoil of longing and regret as well as Wentworth nursing his broken heart for the same amount of time, their characters needed more, they deserved more than the simple ending of, 'They were re-united'.[33] The original draft of the conclusion of *Persuasion* lacked any object expressing or symbolising Anne and Wentworth's love. A letter is tangible to hold, read, and re-read as many of the characters do in Austen's novels. In Austen's time 'love letters played a guiding role on the path to matrimony, and were highly valued and carefully preserved, making them one of the key surviving genres of eighteenth- century letters';[34] love letters were prized and loved as much as the person loved the one whom they wrote to, they were a physical embodiment of the emotion. Wentworth's words are written with urgency and read with the same sense of urgency. Anne does not know that Wentworth has written this letter, she has no idea that he is constructing this letter or even knows if he still loves her; this letter is the point that finally explodes a tension that has long been bubbling under a reserved surface. It is therefore, a useful plot device and an excellent natural way for Wentworth to reveal his long pent-up feelings of frustration and love.

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[33] Edith Lank, 'Jane Austen's Writings—the Cancelled Chapters of *Persuasion*', *Pemberley.com*, (1997) <pemberley.com/janeinfo/pcanchap.html#:~:text=The%20original%20manuscript%20of%20the> [accessed 19 July 2023].
[34] Sally Holloway, *The Game of Love in Georgian England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018) p. 45.

‘Love letters provided a direct way to create emotional intimacy between two individuals who were sometimes hundreds of miles apart’; although Anne and Captain Wentworth are physically in the same room at the end of the novel, filled with the bustle of other characters, they begin miles apart metaphorically.[35] Although we only see one love letter in the novel written in full, this novel could be regarded as a sequel to a previous unwritten novel about their courtship and Anne being persuaded against his original proposal eight and a half years previously. We learn at the start of *Persuasion* that Anne ‘was persuaded to believe the engagement a wrong thing—indiscreet, improper, hardly capable of success, and not deserving it’ (*P*, p. 30). Not only can we imagine Captain Wentworth’s proposal letter as potentially recalling previous letters sent between them during their original courtship, we might also consider the whole novel as a form of written response to the narrative of that courtship and its end.

It is significant that Captain Wentworth’s love is written and not spoken, for, as Carol Houlihan Flynn writes: ‘Love declared on paper means far more than love declared orally’.[36] The letter Captain Wentworth writes gives assuredly evidential proof of the author’s love and continuing devotion: ‘I offer myself to you again with a heart even more your own than when you almost broke it, eight years and a half ago. Dare not say that man forgets sooner than woman, that his love has an earlier death’ (*P*, p. 258). Sally Holloway explains that ‘[c]ourtship letters brim with declarations of impatience and apprehension, as writers utilized epistolary conventions to craft a heightened emotional state of tension and agitation’.[37]

[35] Holloway, *The Game of Love*, p. 45.
[36] Carol Houlihan Flynn, *Samuel Richardson* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), p. 249.
[37] Holloway, *The Game of Love,* p. 48.

Captain Wentworth's letter is full of similar impatience: 'Tell me not that I am too late, that such precious feelings are gone for ever' and there are undoubtedly signs of his apprehensions and fears, too: 'I offer myself to you again with a heart even more your own than when you almost broke it, eight years and a half ago' (*P*, p. 258). Wentworth is extremely specific in declaring the time period lapsed, suggesting that he has literally been counting and reflecting on the time that has passed since his heart was broken. Wentworth could have written eight years ago, but he adds 'and a half' (*P*, p. 258). Wentworth's letter is written at the height of an emotional state; he puts aside the task of writing a commission for Captain Harville and writes his letter to Anne in secret and quick desperation as he listens to Anne and Captain Harville discuss the constancy or inconstancy of men versus women. Wentworth's heightened emotional state could have been fixed upon hearing Anne's declaration of her beliefs that although she does not 'undervalue the warm and faithful feelings of any of' her 'fellow creatures' and believes that men do understand 'true attachment and constancy' (*P*, p. 258). However, Anne suggests that men's attachment, love and constancy in their love only survives as long as the woman they 'love lives, and lives for you' (*P*, p. 256). Anne believes in everlasting love even after the separation of death, and that women love 'longest, when existence or when hope is gone' (*P*, p. 256). Captain Wentworth's letter therefore resurrects his and Anne's love, which both had believed lost.

Wentworth's letter is filled with tension and agitation, 'Dare not say that man forgets sooner than woman, that his love has an earlier death. I have loved none but you'. Wentworth transcribes all his feelings of love, desperation, and agitations and creates a love letter that is laced with romance and tension yet brings forth feelings of exquisite relief for Anne that he still loves her and always has: 'You have brought me to Bath. For you alone, I think and plan' (*P*, p. 258). Anne has pierced his soul and therefore Wentworth's heart has been damaged by

Anne with ‘a metaphorical weapon’, and these ‘injuries caused by these pointed weapons signified the beginning of love’.[38] He is ‘half agony, half hope’, and Anne must tell him that ‘he is not too late, that such precious feelings are gone for ever’. She must relieve his agony of fearing her gone forever from him, that she no longer loves him. Captain Wentworth has ‘loved none’ but her (*P,* p. 258). This letter from Wentworth finally binds them together ‘emotionally by providing a material vessel for the anxiety, suspense, and care’ through which he proves his commitment to love her and ultimately marry her.[39]

Unlike the ideal love letter, which would have been, according to Sally Holloway, ‘clearly structured, neatly presented on good quality paper and ran to several pages in length, followed by a series of postscripts’, Captain Wentworth's letter is short, because of the spontaneous circumstances of its composition.[40] Although this letter may not be considered in Georgian terms the ideal love letter by its length, the content, structure and his postscripts make it the ideal love letter. The Georgian love letter would normally be expected to be well structured, planned and crafted, they would be ‘neat and well presented’.[41] However, as Holloway suggests, in the second half of the century the format of the love letter would evolve into more intimate and familiar style. Wentworth’s letter may not be extensive, but he proves his sincerity in his declarations of love and just as Holloway suggests, Wentworth had to deviate ‘from the model letter’ as other writers did ‘depending upon their day-today activities, plus the physical and material realities of writing’.[42] The reality is Wentworth did not plan to write his letter to Anne, Austen had to show Wentworth's immediate anxieties and intense feelings as they overcame him, and the only way to do this was through his letter.

[38] Holloway, *The Game of Love*, p. 120.
[39] Holloway, *The Game of Love*, p. 49.
[40] Holloway, *The Game of Love*, p. 51.
[41] Holloway, *The Game of Love,* p. 53.
[42] Holloway, *The Game of Love*, p. 52.

Unlike a posted letter, this letter involved no financial outlay; it could have been as long as he liked, but Austen creates a pressured situation in which time and social exigences limit Wentworth's capacity to write at length. This allows for the extreme impact of his letter: had it been any longer, his imperative need to write his declaration of love would not have been made clear to a reader so strongly.

As Jane Austen's personal letters and other fictional letters within her novels show, postscripts were often added to eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century letters, sometimes deliberately in order to give the impression the writer does not want to leave the recipient and that they cannot tear themselves away from the letter. Other strategies suggesting a level of care and attention to detail which complimented the reader were also used. An ideal Georgian love letter should be crafted in the neatest possible handwriting and should be presented in a way worthy of the recipient; for example, a love letter might use particularly good quality paper, with gilded edges, to create a particular effect. However, this was not always be possible as letters would often reveal 'the writer's mood and situation at the time of writing' Captain Wentworth used the tools and the time he had available to him to write to Anne, and this is how Austen created a sense of urgency in his writing the love letter and declaring his love, as if time was of the essence. [43] Again, in its material aspects, Austen perhaps flouts expectations of a 'classic' love letter among her readers.

As we have seen, in Austen's initial ending, Wentworth writes no letter to Anne. Neither do the lovers meet at the White Hart. The conversation between Harville and Anne does not happen; there is no debate about love surviving death or the inconstancy of men versus women. Instead, Anne is coerced into visiting Admiral Croft's wife at their home, the

[43] Holloway, *The Game of Love*, p. 45.

Admiral leaves, and whilst Anne awaits Mrs Croft's arrival from upstairs, she finds herself unexpectedly in the company of Wentworth. Before the Admiral leaves, he speaks to Wentworth alone and suggests that he leaves him with something to talk about with Anne. Anne overhears part of their conversation, and the ensuing discussion happens as it does in the ending to *Persuasion* we now have, with Wentworth asking Anne if she and Mr Elliot intend to marry and move into Kellynch Hall. Once Anne has cleared away the rumour that she has no intentions of marrying Mr Elliot, Anne, as well as the reader, are rushed into a resolution, and instead of the love letter, we have: 'It was a silent, but a very powerful Dialogue; -- on his side, Supplication, on her's acceptance. – Still a little nearer – and a hand taken and pressed – and "Anne, my own dear Anne!' (*P*, p. 318) These five words, although filled with sentiment, are also rather anticlimactic and lack the dramatization of the love letter. It is a known fact that Austen herself was unhappy with this ending, as her nephew is reported as saying that she thought it, 'tame and flat, and was desirous of producing something better'.[44] The original version lacks the emotional spur that Wentworth needs to hear and feel in order to write the perfect love letter.

Austen uses the same style of writing letters in her novels as in her own private letters written to her sister Cassandra. There is no physical way she can speak to her sister while they are apart, but Austen uses her letters as if she is in the same space as her sister. =In a letter dated January 1807, Austen writes: 'Of your visit there I must now speak "incessantly"'.[45] Wentworth also conceptualises his letter as like speech: he writes, 'I must speak to you by such means as are within my reach' (*P*, p. 258). Captain Wentworth is in the same room as Anne, but he does not feel able to speak to her but wants to. This letter is therefore also, as

[44] James Edward Austen-Leigh, *A Memoir of Jane Austen: And Other Family Recollections*, ed. Kathryn Sutherland (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 125.
[45] *Jane Austen's Letters*, ed. Le Faye, p. 119.

Octavia Cox has observed, a 'representation of Captain Wentworth's internal struggle. The letter encapsulates the tension between the form (the written word) and his desire to speak'[46], and as Cox further suggests, Captain Wentworth's letter symbolises his current distance from Anne, yet he longs for a closer presence, that he wants to move forward and away from the formality of writing to physically speaking to her.[47]

As soon as Wentworth overhears Anne's debate with Captain Harville, he 'can listen no longer in silence' (*P*. p, 258); he must communicate with Anne, and his only way to do this is to write to her, and he must do it instantly. Wentworth writes his letter 'in extreme despair and as a last resort'.[48] This letter offers it readers an insight into Wentworth's mind and is a 'form of male Soliloquy';[49] it shows Wentworth at his most vulnerable and that Anne is the only person who can relieve him of his 'uncertain fate' (*P*, p. 258). It is not often in Austen's novels that men's thoughts are revealed in this way.

Wentworth's relinquishing of power to Anne in the letter could be seen as Austen writing her male characters from the perspective of the female gaze. Austen uses devices such as overhearing conversations in order to discover what men are thinking; in the rare times that men are given the opportunity to reveal their thoughts at first-hand it is often through their letter writing, and Austen orchestrates this opportunity for both Captain Wentworth and Mr Darcy. As we have seen, Wentworth's letter is notable for its passion and lack of verbal restraint. Darcy's letter to Elizabeth in *Pride and Prejudice* is constructed in a very different way; it is much longer in length, he has taken time to think, construct and write it, and on the

[46] Octavia Cox, 'Captain Wentworth's Letter to Anne Elliot: Jane Austen's *Persuasion*, writing style, & phonocentrism' < https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I8jwsxCJfEw > [accessed 29 August 2023].
[47] Cox, 'Captain Wentworth's Letter'.
[48] Lenckos, '"[I]nventing Elegant Letters"', unpaginated.
[49] Jacqueline F. Mijares, 'The Masculine Pen: Character and Correspondence in *Pride and Prejudice*' (2005), <https://jasna.org/essaycontest/2005/undergraduate.htm> [accessed October 25, 2022].

surface is much less obviously a love letter. It does not contain a proposal; rather, it follows up on a rejected proposal, a situation which might make us imagine it as the opposite of a conventional love letter. Here, too, Austen writes a very different kind of letter expressing love in a very particular way, which reflects closely the characteristics of her male character and responds to the situation in which he finds himself. Captain Wentworth's letter to Anne and Darcy's letter to Elizabeth are comparable: Captain Wentworth declares that his love for Anne has been constant and that he will 'supply the passionate ardour Anne longs for'.[50] Similarly, Darcy's letter shows that 'he respects Elizabeth and desires her good opinion despite his insulting proposal'[51]. Just as Wentworth's letter is a bid for Anne's heart, Darcy's letter is a bid for Elizabeth's favour; both letters flatter the recipient's pride and show them respect. Each letter corrects the recipient in a way that Anne and Elizabeth need. Anne is corrected in her belief that Wentworth no longer loves her, and assured that he still loves her, while Elizabeth is corrected in her opinions of Darcy and Wickham, and the flawed processes by which she has arrived at these opinions.

Pride and Prejudice and the risk of vulnerability

In writing his letter, Wentworth opens himself up to vulnerability and the possibility of rejection. Darcy (who has already experienced the stinging rejection of his initial proposal to Elizabeth) likewise must risk vulnerability and further rejection in contacting Elizabeth by letter. Just as Mijares described Wentworth's letter previously as a 'form of male soliloquy', we can consider Darcy's letter, too, in this way, despite its differences in composition and expression .[52] Darcy has the time and space to craft his letter and plan it carefully, while Wentworth's letter, as we have seen, is marked stylistically by the public and hurried

[50] Lenckos, '"[I]nventing Elegant Letters"', unpaginated.
[51] Lenckos, '"[I]nventing Elegant Letters"', unpaginated.
[52] Mijares, 'The Masculine Pen', unpaginated.

circumstances of its composition. Darcy expresses his thoughts about the Bennet family to Elizabeth; he informs her why he believes Jane is not suitable for his friend Bingley, as well as revealing later in the letter why he thinks Georgiana believed herself in love with Wickham and why Wickham tried to elope with her. This letter appears in chapter 35; Darcy seeks to earn justification from Elizabeth and demands that she listens to his explanations for why he has said and done what he has. Darcy needs Elizabeth to see that he has been right, just and reasonable in his previous actions towards Wickham and his interference between Jane and Bingley. What Darcy relays in his letter could only be related in this way; Elizabeth, at this stage in the novel, does not possess the capacity to listen to Darcy without prejudice and anger. Darcy too must decide what feelings he wishes to reveal and how best to express them. This letter is methodically constructed and written precisely, demonstrating that Darcy trusts Elizabeth implicitly. It allows the reader to glimpse into Darcy's innermost thoughts without mediation through Austen's narrative voice.

Darcy's letter to Elizabeth could be considered as written in two parts; in the first half, he explains his reasons why he separated his friend from her sister Jane and expresses his concerns and beliefs that Elizabeth's family's 'condition in life is so decidedly beneath' (*P&P*, p. 215) his own. In the second part of the letter, Darcy retells the true story about Wickham, reveals his real character and lays before her 'the whole of his connection with' Darcy's family (*P&P*, p. 222). Darcy, by virtue of his character, demands it of himself to explain clearly and address the 'two offences of a very different nature, and by no means of equal magnitude' (*P&P*, p. 218) that Elizabeth has charged him with. Darcy writes that he demands Elizabeth's 'attention' (*P&P*, p. 218); her reading this letter is the only way that he can speak freely without interruption. This letter is kept, read and re-read by her: 'it could not do; in half a minute the letter was unfolded again, and collecting herself as well as she could,

she again began the mortifying perusal of all that related to Wickham' (*P&P*, p. 227). Unlike Willoughby in *Sense and Sensibility*, Darcy commits his feelings to paper and therefore commits himself to Elizabeth. Darcy is proving his trust in Elizabeth and, despite his insulting proposal, he demonstrates that he trusts her with an important piece of family scandal.[53] Darcy confesses to preserving his friend from 'a most unhappy connection' (*P&P*, p. 221) to her sister Jane. He further acknowledges that he knew her sister Jane was in town but concealed it from Bingley; on reflection, Darcy admits that he does not 'reflect with satisfaction' (*P&P*, p. 221) on this aspect of his behaviour. For Darcy to admit this means he has thought about what he has done and reflected upon himself, and goes against his normal characteristic of being proud; by his own admission, Darcy is not too proud to admit that in this instance he has been wrong.

Up until this point, Elizabeth has crossed paths with Darcy on several occasions, and all have left Elizabeth little to like about his character or personality, yet after hearing Wickham's version of how badly Darcy has treated him, Elizabeth's views of Darcy are sealed, and she is committed to disliking him. At the novel's beginning, 'we share her initial dislike and perplexity' concerning Mr Darcy.[54] However, after this letter, and after Darcy addresses what happened between himself and Wickham, Elizabeth changes her opinion 'not only about him, but her idea of herself, breaking down the barrier of her prejudice' and thus opening the way for them to be united eventually.[55] Elizabeth now realises that everything Wickham has told her was a lie, and his true character has come into view, changing everything she thought she knew about Wickham and Darcy. This leads to a reappraisal of her own processes of judgement: Elizabeth 'grew absolutely ashamed of herself.—Of neither Darcy nor Wickham

[53] Lenckos, '"[I]nventing Elegant Letters"'. unpaginated.
[54] Lenckos, '"[I]nventing Elegant Letters"'. unpaginated.
[55] Lenckos, '"[I]nventing Elegant Letters"'. unpaginated.

could she think, without feeling that she had been blind, partial, prejudiced, absurd' (*P&P*, p. 230).

Darcy continues to assert why he has written this letter and apologises if she finds anything offensive or shocking in his explanation. Darcy uses alliteration to highlight his hurt feelings, for example, when he refers to the 'charges' Elizabeth has made against him, that he 'in defiance of honour and humanity' and '[w]ilfully and wantonly' (*P&P*, p. 218) cheated Wickham out of his inheritance. Darcy is offended and disgusted that he is considered dishonest and dishonourable. He is also offended at the accusation that he would blast 'the prospects' (*P&P*, p. 218) of a childhood friend and a favourite of his father, who had paid for his education and was brought up alongside himself. He continues to write formally and reiterates that he must explain why he separated his friend, Bingley, from her sister Jane. Darcy's letter is written in a matter-of-fact style; his formality takes an objective approach and relays the facts of the matters as he sees them. He reports, that 'I write without any intention of paining you or humbling myself, by dwelling on wishes, which, for the happiness of both, cannot be too soon forgotten' (*P&P*, p. 218). Darcy reflects on his and Bingley's move to Hertfordshire and the dance at Netherfield. He further comments that although he thought his friend was somewhat attached to Jane, it was not until he heard gossip from William Lucas suggesting an 'expectation of marriage' between them that he thought to take more notice and regard his friend's attentions to Jane seriously. Darcy explains that as Jane never appeared to show any 'particular regard' for Bingley's attentions that he believed her to be uninterested in him (*P&P*, p. 219). Therefore, her 'heart was not likely to be easily touched' (*P&P,* p.220). Darcy asserts that he took this decision impartially and was not biased in his 'hopes or fears' (*P&P*, p. 220) for his friend. However, as much as Darcy remarks that it 'pains him to offend her' (*P&P*, p. 220), he does not hold back. Darcy admits that any

connection with her family through marriage causes feelings of repugnance because of the 'want of propriety so frequently, so almost uniformly betrayed', by her mother, her three younger sisters and occasionally Elizabeth's father. (*P&P*, p. 220). After insulting Elizabeth's family, Darcy praises her and her sister Jane for having managed to 'avoid any share of the like censure' (*P&P*, p. 220) of their family.

As this summary suggests, initially it is hard to see this letter as one of love when compared with Wentworth's; however, Wentworth's letter appears at the end of the novel, and not just at the end of the novel; it appears after eight-and-a-half long years of both parties having been longing, regretting and yearning. Darcy's letter appears in the middle of a novel in which the protagonists meet for the first time at the start, and so far, only Darcy is the character yearning for the 'fine eyes' (*P&P*, p. 30) of Miss Elizabeth Bennet. Darcy does not use language that would pierce Elizabeth's soul, but it must be remembered that Anne Elliot and Elizabeth Bennett are very different in character. Darcy's letter is written because he loves Elizabeth and needs to earn her respect before she can love him. Darcy needs Elizabeth to think well of him and believe he has been just in all he has done.

After his rejection, Darcy's confidence suffers a blow, and he writes this letter to explain, tell the truth and justify his actions. Darcy is no longer confident about Elizabeth or that she will ever see him as worthy to be her husband. Darcy seeks an understanding of his actions, if not approval of them: 'This, madam, is a faithful narrative of every event in which we have been concerned together, and if you do not absolutely reject it as false, you will, I hope, acquit me henceforth of cruelty towards Mr Wickham' (*P&P*. p. 225). Darcy does not regret all his past actions, but he does admit that he is not satisfied with his decision to conceal from Bingley that Jane is in town. Darcy may not regret his decision when he writes the letter; however,

later in the novel, he apologises to Bingley for his actions, and this letter is the beginning of Darcy's redemption.

The more 'weighty accusation' that Darcy addresses in this letter regards his treatment of Wickham. Darcy relates the whole story of his connection with Wickham, concluding at the end of this section that: 'Detection could not be in your power, and suspicion certainly not in your inclination' (*P&P*, p. 225), implying that neither his own father nor Elizabeth had the characters to be suspicious of others. Darcy describes his father as 'excellent' (*P&P*, p. 223), and with suspicion not in Elizabeth's nature, he implies he thinks of her with the same respect as he did with his father. The information given to Elizabeth regarding Wickham's betrayal, deceit already shows a significant commitment and respect from Darcy. None of the scandal regarding his sister and Wickham has been revealed to anyone. Darcy has managed to keep his sister's near seduction a secret, but he trusts Elizabeth with this knowledge. Just as Captain Wentworth gives Anne power over his future, so does Darcy to a certain extent; there is nothing to stop Elizabeth from showing his letter to her family or friends, except for her own moral standards of secrecy and discretion. Should Georgiana's attempted elopement with Mr Wickham become public knowledge, Darcy's sister's reputation would be ruined. Darcy tries to explain and provide sympathetic excuses as to why his sister was easily persuaded to think herself in love with Wickham and to elope with him. Darcy believes it was because she was fifteen that she had an 'affectionate heart' and remembers Wickham's 'kindness to her as a child' (*P&P*, p. 224). Wickham's seduction of Georgina eventually fails and Darcy comes to believe that Wickham's true intention was to seek revenge on him and inherit her thirty-thousand-pound fortune. After Darcy's revelations 'like Elizabeth, we are forced to readjust

our prejudice against' him.[56] This is a love letter for Elizabeth as she appreciates the 'language of reason' and 'truthfulness' in which it is constructed.[57]

After this letter, Elizabeth begins to see Mr Darcy differently; until now, his character has been seen as proud, distant, arrogant, and unforgiving. This letter humanises Darcy and, as Lenckos suggests, is the turning point for the novel's plot. Darcy's letter is hand-delivered to Elizabeth by himself; he trusts no one else to hand over this knowledge. Delivering a letter personally, not leaving it to another, ensures that the letter is received in an uncompromised fashion. It is imperative that Darcy's letter is handed to Elizabeth by his hands into her hands; it is the beginning of a contract of trust and mutual respect between them. Darcy's letter is transparent and based on evidence, and although Elizabeth resents what he has done, she does find herself respecting this honesty: 'When she remembered the style of his address, she was still full of indignation; but when she considered how unjustly she had condemned and upbraided him, her anger turned against herself, and his disappointed feelings became the object of compassion' (*P&P,* pp. 235-6). Darcy's letter is not a love letter in the traditional sense of the term but he does make himself vulnerable. 'Darcy's confidence in Elizabeth's fidelity and discretion is quite remarkable, and shows his love for her'.[58] The fact that Darcy hand delivers this letter, protecting her from suspicion and any gossip that would be suggested if delivered by post, also suggests his sincere consideration for her feelings and reputation.

The content of this letter gives Elizabeth the power of knowledge about other characters and is a climatic point in the novel. Austen's use of this letter brings about the second half of the

[56] Lenckos, '"[I]nventing Elegant Letters"'. unpaginated.
[57] Lenckos, '"[I]nventing Elegant Letters"'. unpaginated.
[58] Mijares, 'The Masculine Pen', unpaginated.

novel, the change that is needed to continue the story and for Darcy and Elizabeth's relationship to develop. Although this letter lacks the romantic language of Wentworth's letter, 'Elizabeth treasures Darcy's letter as women in epistolary fiction do written declarations of love, reading it again and again and learning it by heart'.[59] This letter has other effects, too; it forces Elizabeth to keep a secret from her parents; it makes her aware of Wickham's true character; and Elizabeth sees how much Darcy would go through to protect those he loved. This letter reveals a part of Darcy that has been held back . Although Elizabeth already recognises the faults of her family and the way they behave in public, this letter forces her to see how much others judge her in society because of her family. Finally, this letter compels Elizabeth to address her own pride and readdress her prejudices: 'Till this moment, I never knew myself' (*P&P*, p. 230).

Darcy's and Wentworth's letters are the only two love letters in her six published novels which are produced in full and that are written by Austen's fictional romantic male characters. At the end of *Pride and Prejudice*, we find out that Elizabeth has kept her letter from Darcy; she responds to concern at her power to reread parts of it whenever she wants offering for it to be 'burnt, if you believe it essential to the preservation of my regard' (*P&P*, p. 409). In the Georgian era, love letters 'were highly valued and carefully preserved'[60]. They were used to create a greater understanding between writer and recipient and could be used in substitution for 'conversing, exchanging gifts, taking tea, dining together, strolling through public walks, gardens, and fairs attending assemblies and plays, and sitting up late talking'.[61] Wentworth's and Darcy's letters are both declarations of love, suitable to the characters they

[59] Lenckos, '"[I]nventing Elegant Letters"', unpaginated.
[60] Holloway, *The Game of Love*, p. 45.
[61] Holloway, *The Game of Love,* p. 46.

are written by and for. Both letters are successful in their aim of communicating and changing feelings. Austen's love letters written by women, however, have different outcomes.

***Sense and Sensibility*: 'How surprised you will be Willoughby, on receiving this'**

Writing of Wentworth's letter to Anne, Fiona Stafford notes that 'the letter is Wentworth's concise version of *Persuasion*, and in offering it to Anne, he brings her own narrative to an end'.[62] In *Sense and Sensibility*, Marianne's letters to Willoughby also function as a re-inscription of the novel's plot to date. Marianne's letters are a pinnacle point in the plot of *Sense and Sensibility.* They reveal the narrative of Willoughby and Marianne in summary form; a narrative which we, as readers, have only partially been able to perceive, since the two characters delight in escaping from bigger social occasions together, and the narrative does not always follow them. Until this moment in the plot, Austen has carefully kept back from revealing too much; Marianne is ignorant of Willoughby and his circumstances and naively believes that Willoughby has simply been kept from getting in touch with her, not that he is wantonly avoiding her. Elinor assumes, as does much of their society, that Marianne and Willoughby are secretly engaged because of their open displays of affection in public and because of Marianne writing to him. Marianne's letters reveal that she loves Willoughby, which she believes is returned. They show her anxiety when realising that Willoughby is not the romantic hero suitor she thought. Marianne's letters reveal her confusion, her reactions to his coldness at the ball, and her bewilderment about why he has not visited her.

The letters run in juxtaposition to the plot of the novel; Marianne meets Willoughby and falls in love; this is a brief section of the novel in juxtaposition to her first letter. Willoughby

[62] Fiona Stafford, 'Persuasion: The Gradual Dawning', in *A Companion to Jane Austen*, ed. Claudia Johnson and Clara Tuite (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), pp.143-153, p. 151.

leaves Marianne without a formal engagement and causes heartfelt pain and bewilderment; Marianne's second letter grows in length as she asks him for his assurance that everything is as it was between them. Marianne's third letter trebles in size as she realises that his sentiments are no longer what they were, and she admits she is suffering; ultimately, in the novel, Willoughby ends his relationship with Marianne, marries another woman, and Marianne suffers and faces near death. As Sally Holloway summarises: 'Until the Renaissance lovesickness was predominantly seen as a male illness' and so, inspired by Samuel Richardson's portrayal of Clarissa at the end of his seminal novel, Austen changed the way males and females dealt with love in novels previously.[63]

The first note Marianne writes after the initial relationship with Willoughby earlier on in the novel, is when she arrives in London; it is short, filled with excitement, anticipation and romantic hope that he will be delightfully 'surprised' to hear that she is in town: 'I wish you may receive this in time to come here to-night, but I will not depend on it. At any rate I shall expect you to-morrow' (*S&S*, p. 212-13); not once does this note reflect or assume that his surprise at hearing she is in town would be a concern or a disappointment to Willoughby. Until this point, Marianne has been the target of Willoughby; now, the situation is reversed, and he is now the object of Marianne's fervent feelings. Marianne is powerless; however, to regain some power in her relationship with Willoughby, she writes these letters and expresses her feelings in writing 'as an effort to regain control of her fate'.[64] Marianne writes that she expects him to visit her as soon as he receives this note; she naivety hopes that he will be as excited as she is at the thought of seeing each other again. Marianne ends the letter with, 'For

[63] Holloway, *The Game of Love*, p. 122.
[64] Cheryl Nixon and Louise Penner, 'Writing by the Book: Jane Austen's Heroines and the Art and Form of the Letter', *Persuasions On-line* 26.1 (2005) <www.jasna.org/persuasions/on-line/vol26no1/penner_nixon.htm> [accessed 14 June 2023].

the present, adieu' (*S&S,* p. 213). By using the French farewell, Marianne is 'emphasising fondness'; it was interpreted as 'kind wishes, or sorrow at parting' (see *OED*). Marianne has no idea that Willoughby has left her for good and has no intentions of seeing her again, especially romantically. Interestingly, Marianne signs off the letter 'M.D.'; she does not use her full name or sign off using her first name, Marianne, just as Jane Austen signs her own personal letters, 'J. A.'. The signing by just the initials infers an air of intimacy and informality between Marianne and Willoughby. We might compare with Captain Wentworth's 'F. W.' at the end of his letter to Anne, which likewise creates a tone of intimacy and emotional closeness.

Marianne's second note, written 'the morning after the dance at the Middletons' (*S&S*, p. 213), is double the length of her first note. This note is quite different from her first excited hope-filled one. Marianne opens with honesty; she expresses that she feels disappointed she has not seen him and writes of her 'astonishment at not having received' (*S&S*, p. 213) any communication from him. Marianne wants Willoughby to explain why he has not called upon her: 'Pray call again as soon as possible and explain the reason of my having expected this in vain' (*S&S,* p. 213). Marianne needs assurance from Willoughby that he has not 'altered' his feelings towards her, although her note indicates that she suspects this is the case.

Marianne's third note triples in size, matching the note's number. This is a note of desperation. After seeing Willoughby at the ball, the previous evening, Marianne no longer requests an explanation but instead: 'I demand an explanation of it' (*S&S*, p. 213). Marianne's confusion is amplified by his cold behaviour towards her at the ball. Marianne admits that there has been a familiarity and intimacy between them (*S&S*, p. 213), something Elinor has frowned upon, and others have remarked upon in the course of the novel. Their very open

flirtatious behaviour has not followed the rules or conventions for the period and has left them open to gossip. Elinor believes that the only acceptable circumstance for a woman to write to a man is under the belief and understanding that there is an engagement: as Sally Holloway writes, 'the exchange of love letters was…a sure sign of a forthcoming engagement'.[65] By writing to Willoughby, Marianne is seemingly 'modelling improper female behavior', and believing her sister incapable of this, Elinor's only conclusion is that Marianne must be engaged to Willoughby.[66] However, we learn that Marianne equates strength of feeling with a formally-made engagement: she believed herself 'to be as solemnly engaged to him, as if the strictest legal covenant had bound us to each other' (*S&S*, p. 214); in Marianne's opinion, she had written nothing to be ashamed of. Marianne used her love letters to navigate her and Willoughby's courtship as she understood it. 'The exchange of missives was an emotionally fraught period for both men and women, and was fundamentally important in fostering, gauging, and testing a romantic bond'.[67] Marianne's gauging and testing of her bond with Willoughby did not have the outcome that she believed it would. Willoughby dupes Marianne and she is deceived by him.

Marianne offers Willoughby excuses for his behaviour towards her, suggesting that perhaps he has been 'misinformed, or purposely deceived, in something concerning' her (*S&S*, p. 213). Marianne demands that Willoughby explain why his behaviour has changed radically. Marianne needs Willoughby to justify his behaviour towards her: 'I have passed a wretched night in endeavouring to excuse a conduct which can scarcely be called less than insulting; but though I have not yet been able to form any reasonable apology for your behaviour, I am perfectly ready to hear your justification of it' (*S&S,* p. 213). At this point in the novel and

[65] Holloway, *The Game of Love*, p. 47.
[66] Nixon and Penner, 'Writing by the book', unpaginated.
[67] Holloway, *The Game of Love*, p. 47.

through her letters, Marianne is a woman in love and in conventional terms might be the object 'of sympathy, whose misfortunes had been caused by [her] tender and feeling' heart (or 'sensibility' as the title suggests).[68] The general belief at that time was that 'women were susceptible to dying from love due to their tender and feeling hearts, which were unable to cope with extreme misery'.[69] But Marianne does not die. Austen goes against the beliefs and conventions of the time that a woman is more susceptible to die from lovesickness and, indeed, Marianne herself attributes her brush with death not to lovesickness but to her own willpower and agency: 'had I died, it would have been self-destruction' (*S&S*, p. 391). Instead, Marianne pulls through, sees the errors in Willoughby and herself, and overcomes all to love again and marry a man truly worthy of her heart.

In the end, Marianne desires Willoughby to return her notes and her lock of hair as a sign that his 'sentiments are no longer what they were' (*S&S*, p. 214). *Sense and Sensibility*, therefore, 'provides an indication of wider social practices, as readers would have recognized that the return of Marianne's letters and hair officially ended their connection'.[70] It was 'an important male duty to return a woman's letters and tokens to spare them additional suffering, before reintroducing themselves into society and resuming the search for a spouse'.[71] Austen's fictional character Willoughby therefore chooses to ignore this duty, further showing his dishonourable cowardice. Briefly, as if in a moment of clarity and desperation, Marianne does question if Willoughby had ever been sincere, asking if she will 'learn that you are not what we have hitherto believed you, that your regard for us all was insincere' (*S&S*, p. 214). It is not just about Willoughby's regard for herself that Marianne considers but questions his insincerity toward all of her family.

[68] Holloway, *The Game of Love*, p. 131.
[69] Holloway, *The Game of Love*, p. 131.
[70] Holloway, *The Game of Love*, p. 139.
[71] Holloway, *The Game of Love*, p. 142.

Unlike Darcy in the evidential transparency of his letter to Elizabeth, Willoughby is careful never to declare his love for Marianne verbally or written in a love letter; he leaves no proof or evidence or anything that can tie him to Marianne. Marianne, blinded by Willoughby's charm and her own sensibilities, knows little of Willoughby's character, yet everybody knows her feelings towards him; perhaps because, as Elinor says, Marianne's 'systems have all the unfortunate tendency of setting propriety at nought' (*S&S*, p. 66). Marianne does not conform to the acceptable standards or morals set at the time for behaviour; in effect, she is strong-willed and is driven by her feelings for Willoughby with no consideration for social consequences. Marianne does not hide her emotions or behave in a socially acceptable way. In the end, Marianne's letters to Willoughby are documents of a lover's desperation and are some of the most forlorn in any of Austen's novels.

Conclusion

Sally Holloway describes how love letters were a 'distinct stage of courtship, which was fundamental to the forming, securing, and testing of a romantic bond'; writing a letter showed a commitment, a promise from one person to another [72]; The love letters in Austen's novels do more than cement or break a relationship; they affirm without a doubt what the person feels for the one they are writing for. Written love letters are the embodiment of love given to another; they bring excitement, relief and, in some cases, healing qualities; they release tension; they address the anxieties felt by love and bring the hopes and dreams of a love-filled relationship together. All of the love letters in Austen's novels that really matter are written by lovers that place value 'upon their letters as treasured possessions and embodiments' of the sender; they all create a vital role in the plots of Austen's novels and

[72] Holloway, *The Game of Love*, p. 67.

provide something to look back upon and read with care and attention, if not always without regret.

Chapter Two

Letters, secrets and scandals

In Jane Austen's six published novels, secrets and scandals abound. According to the *OED*, the definition of scandal is 'Damage to reputation; rumour or general comment injurious to reputation' (*OED*, def. 'scandal'). Secrets and scandals are interwoven into all of Austen's plots in her six published novels, and these secrets and scandals transform the characters' lives for better or worse. In Austen's novels, the secrets are shared with the reader at the same time as characters learn of them, and at times we are as shocked as the characters. For example, when Elinor in *Sense and Sensibility* discovers from Miss Lucy Steele that Lucy has been secretly engaged to Edward for four years, readers simultaneously feel Elinor's dismay, shock and disappointment upon hearing this news. It is a similar situation when Elizabeth discovers that Lydia has eloped with Wickham. Austen often reveals these secrets and scandals through letters that bring about significant plot twists and changes often separating lovers, families and friends but letters are also the means to bring them together through grief, consolation, and resolution.

Austen's secrets and scandals in her plots often centre around affairs, engagements, liaisons, secret loves, and passions, with scandalous social misdemeanours also involved. Susanna Fullerton remarks that Austen lived in an era to 'become known as the Age of Scandal' for it became part of the political backdrop of her lifetime.[5] In 1813, for example, Austen openly admitted that she disliked the Prince Regent and sided with his estranged wife. She wrote in a letter to her friend Martha: 'Poor woman, I shall support her as long as I can, because she <u>is</u> a Woman, & because I hate her Husband'.[73] Austen 'thoroughly disapproved of the Prince's

[73] *Jane Austen's Letters*, ed. Deirdre Le Faye (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 217.

extravagant and immoral lifestyle'.[74] Deirdre Le Faye outlines how the Prince Regent was characterised in Austen's period by several commentators as, 'irresponsible and deceitful, gluttonous and drunken, squandering his princely allowance on fine clothes and expensive mistresses'.[75] The Prince Regent outcasted the Princess of Wales from society and allowed her only restricted access to her daughter Princes Charlotte, and she was also 'barred from her husband's and her own Coronation – with the Queen infamously turned away from both Westminster Abbey and Westminster Hall by servants of the King.'[76]The critic John Halperin states that 'Jane Austen was on Princess Caroline's side in the great debate between the Prince Regent and his wife', which was 'one of the greatest scandals in the already scandalous history of the House of Hanover' (they ultimately divorced after Austen's death).'[77] Not only was Austen aware of the adulterous affairs of the royals and other dignitaries, she was also aware of the affairs happening around her. She would remark on them in her letters to her sister, such as in a letter in 1808, where she writes about a Lieutenant- Colonel Thomas Powlett, a friend of the Austens, 'who took Viscount Sackbille to court over an adulterous relationship with his wife, Mary- Letitia Powlett'.[78] In 1801, she had pointed out that she 'had a very good eye at an adulteress' in a letter to her sister Cassandra, when she spoke of a ball she had attended, demonstrating her interest in and awareness of the social aspect of sexual or marital scandal and notoriety.[79] None of Austen's fictional characters ends up in court over extramarital affairs; however, she draws on contemporary understandings of divorce proceedings and their outcomes in *Mansfield Park,*

[74] Deirdre Le Faye, *Jane Austen and the World of Her Novels* (London: Frances Lincoln, 2003), p. 36.
[75] Le Faye, *Jane Austen and the World of Her Novels*, p. 44.
[76] Stuart Roberts, 'Long-Forgotten Poem by "Injured Queen" Uncovered', 3 May 2023, <www.cam.ac.uk/stories/queen-caroline-archive> [accessed 10 January 2024].
[77] John Halperin, *Jane Austen's Lovers and Other Studies in Fiction and History from Austen to Le Carré* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988), p.8.
[78] Susannah Fullerton, 'Jane Austen and Adultery' *Persuasions* (2002), 143–163, www.jasna.org/persuasions/printed/number24/fullerton.pdf [accessed 20 June 2023], p. 149.
[79] *Jane Austen's Letters*, p. 88.

when Mr Rushworth exercises his right not to proceed against his wife, Maria, following her affair with Henry Crawford.

Trying to keep sexually related scandals a secret would and could have proved problematic in Austen's time. Just as Mr Price in *Mansfield Park* reads about Maria Rushworth's extramarital affair in the newspaper, Austen 'would have had no difficulty in acquainting herself with the illicit affairs of the fashionable world'.[80] Austen seems sympathetic to some of her characters, such as Mr Darcy, who does manage to keep his sister, Georgiana's involvement with Mr Wickham in *Pride and Prejudice,* out of the newspapers and the public eye. Keeping Wickham's name out of the public domain for his offences ethically and morally could be considered unsound in its judgement to do so, for the reasons of keeping other daughters/sisters safe from him. However, socially disgracing him would mean socially disgracing Georgiana. Austen would have been aware of the social scandal at the time and the dilemma that faces Darcy in coming to this decision. For the purposes of the plot, Austen chooses to handle this situation in secret. Ultimately, Lydia's wedding to Wickham is not kept out of the press, but at least her elopement ends in a marriage. Maria Rushworth and Henry Crawford are not as fortunate in *Mansfield Park* as their scandalous affair becomes public knowledge. The scandalous affairs in *Emma* are not quite so dramatically upfront; it could be assumed that Harriet Smith's illegitimacy is the product of an affair as she is mysteriously well looked after; at the end of the novel, we discover that her father is a tradesman who is 'rich enough to afford her the comfortable maintenance which had ever been hers, and decent enough to have always wished for concealment' (*E*, p. 526).

[80] Fullerton, pp. 24-25.

Nevertheless, adulterous scandals are not far from Emma's mind as she often imagines that Jane Fairfax is having a secret affair with Mr Dixon, who is married to Miss Campbell. Emma even imagines that Mr Weston has 'half a dozen natural children, perhaps' (*E*, p. 429). Just as letters, secrets and scandals were a part of Jane Austen's life, they are a part of her fictional world. Her fictional seducers are not represented as outright villains but are charming characters, ordinary people from different levels of society, and as Halperin suggests, 'there is more sex in the Big Six than in the fifteen novels of Charles Dickens'.[81] The themes of secrecy, scandal and at times revelations of sexual affairs are revealed through letters. The letters in Austen's novels are allowing the characters and the reader to 'pry into a Secret which was intended to be kept from us' thus making the novel exciting and a guilty pleasure.[82] By reading other people's letters we are given glimpses into their lives. The appeal of reading other people's letters, like other people's diaries is the appeal of 'looking over someone's shoulder, seeing what we're not supposed to see',[83] reading personal letters is as guilty a pleasure as eavesdropping is, another literary device Austen uses in order to reveal definitive plot changes. Looking at the letters as important devices to relate information and change characters' perceptions of others and change the directions of the plot is the purpose of this chapter.

***Sense and Sensibility*: 'My brother had no regard for her; his pleasures were not what *they* ought to have been'**

Sense and Sensibility is a novel filled with secrets, secret loves, engagements, scandalous revelations regarding affairs and illegitimate children, and these often coincide with the

[81] Halperin, *Jane Austen's Lovers*, p. 7.
[82] *The Oxford Book of Letters*, ed. Anita and Frank Kermode (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. xvii.
[83] Spacks, Patricia Meyer, and Bruce Redford. ""How to Read a Diary."" *Bulletin of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, Vol. 56, No. 4, 2003, Pp. 45–62. JSTOR,* vol. vol. 56, no. 4, 2003, p. pp. 45–62. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/3824758. P. 48

writing, reading and sharing of letters. In *Sense and Sensibility*, the first sign of a secret and scandal is when a letter arrives interrupting a party's 'excursion to Whitwell' (*S&S*, p. 74). This letter is not written in full for us the reader to see. Colonel Brandon is visibly discomposed when after reading a post-delivered letter, he hurriedly leaves the party and the planned excursion to attend business in town and refuses to delay his 'journey for one day' (*S&S*, p. 75). Colonel Brandon leaves, giving little indication specifically as to where or why he is going. With much speculation and curiosity from his guests, there is little to go on for them to discover as Colonel Brandon refuses to reveal anything. Even before a letter has been opened, just the appearance of it can provoke gossip; with common knowledge that a letter has been written and sent with a purpose, there must be something in it worth reading and worth knowing. Mrs Jennings, the gossipmonger of the novel, is aware of Miss Eliza Williams (Colonel Brandon's ward) and mistakenly believes her to be the natural daughter of Colonel Brandon, which she shockingly declares only by 'lowering her voice a little' (*S&S*, p. 78). The fact that Mrs Jennings does not know the whole truth surrounding Miss Williams' and Colonel Brandon's true relationship indicates that he has managed to keep this secret well. Colonel Brandon must have been expecting news regarding the disappearance of his ward and, therefore, to ensure that no gossip ensues, he should have received and opened this letter in private; it was careless of him to receive and accept the post in front of his guests, but significant for plot development.

The other significant moment involving a letter in *Sense and Sensibility* occurs when Lucy Steele takes a note from her pocket and 'carelessly' shows it to Elinor (*S&S*, p. 154), who does not see its contents. Again, just the appearance of a letter is enough to induce curiosity and creates an emotional response. This showing of a letter is proof of a great secret that causes ongoing disappointment and pain for Elinor. Here, it is the letter as an object, rather

than the words it contains, which initially admits Elinor to this painful secret. After Lucy reveals her engagement to Edward Ferrars, Elinor is forced into keeping this secret from her family and acquaintances. The word 'carelessly' suggests her casual behaviour. However, her producing the letter is designed to ensure that Elinor knows that Edward belongs to Lucy Steele and is not free to be with or marry any other woman. Correspondence 'between them by letter, could subsist only under a positive engagement' (*S&S*, p. 154): the mere existence of the letter in Edward's hand is powerful proof of this engagement. Lucy Steele knows this and feels no scruples in using it to her advantage. Their engagement is secret, but the power of having and sharing this secret is in Lucy Steele's hands to use at her will and discretion, and the letter forms tangible proof of her claims, which can be displayed to others. However, once Lucy Steele shares this secret, she gives Elinor power. It is only down to Elinor's honourable nature and the fact that she secretly loves Edward that she does not divulge this secret to anyone.

Knowing that correspondence between a man and a woman could 'subsist only under a positive engagement' is, as we have seen in Chapter One, why Elinor believes that Marianne and Willoughby are secretly engaged later in the novel. Elinor believes that the only acceptable circumstance for a woman to write to a man is under the belief and understanding that there is an engagement. However, the fact that 'Marianne is corresponding with Willoughby in the absence of an engagement indicates that she is a rebel against the constraints of decorum'.[84] By writing to Willoughby, Marianne is seemingly 'modelling improper female behavior'.[85] When Marianne receives Willoughby's letter with her returned letters enclosed, she is distraught and gives them to Elinor and us to read. Penner and Nixon

[84] Paula Byrne, 'Manners', *Jane Austen in Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 297–305, p. 301.
[85] Nixon and Penner, 'Writing by the book'. unpaginated

suggest that in Austen's novels, 'when letters allow heroines to breach social convention in the interest of genuine affective self-presentation, readers are pushed furthest to empathize with that errant female character'.[86] In this novel, the letters Marianne writes encourage the reader to sympathise with her and, at the same time, further encourage the reader to disapprove of Willoughby's reckless behaviour, which includes involving Marianne in an inappropriately intimate correspondence.

Like Elinor and Marianne, we, as readers, are shocked to discover that Willoughby is engaged to another woman, Miss Grey, who has 'fifty thousand pounds' (*S&S*, p. 220). Up until this point in the novel, Elinor believes Marianne and Willoughby to be secretly engaged. It is, therefore, with a shock that Marianne declares that 'there has been no engagement' (*S&S*, p. 212). Willoughby has been careful never to declare his love for Marianne verbally or written in a love letter; he leaves no physical proof or evidence or anything that can tie him to Marianne. This contrasts with Edward, of course, whose 'physical proof' in the form of letters is what in fact ties him into continuing the engagement with Lucy. However, as careful as Willoughby has been, this falters when he carelessly returns her letters. When Marianne finally receives a letter from Willoughby, she grasps it with openness and eagerness, wearing her heart on her sleeve as Mrs Jennings points out: 'I never saw a young woman so desperately in love in my life!' (*S&S*, p. 206) Marianne's love for Willoughby should have been a secret or at least dealt with delicacy, as if their relationship were secret. It is a careful point of Austen's irony that it is generally believed that Marianne and Willoughby are secretly engaged, yet nothing about their relationship has been secret. Willoughby causes Marianne to doubt her sanity and her perception of their situation and even causes doubt of

[86] Nixon and Penner, 'Writing by the Book'. unpaginated

her memories and beliefs, 'Yes—no—never absolutely. It was every day implied, but never professedly declared. Sometimes I thought it had been, but it never was.' (*S&S*, p. 212).

Knowing how upset Marianne will be and the fact that scandal will abound after Willoughby's engagement to Miss Grey is announced, Elinor begs Mrs Jennings to 'caution Mrs. Palmer and Sir John against even naming M. Willoughby' and asks her to keep it from becoming 'public conversation' (*S&S*, p. 222). What happened between Marianne and Willoughby would have been an embarrassing social situation that would have repercussions on the entire family, not just the cause of continuing upset for Marianne. Marianne writing letters to Willoughby without being engaged is, in Elinor's view, scandalous behaviour. However, Marianne challenges 'her sister's sense of the letters as an exceptional breach of conduct: they are, in Marianne's eyes "nothing" exceptional'.[87] 'Polite society in Austen's time was predicated upon strict standards of decorum, particularly for women', which Marianne has erred against throughout her connections with Willoughby; it was vitally important that young unmarried women should not be 'alone in the company of a gentleman'.[88] Not only does Marianne ride about the countryside with Willoughby unchaperoned but she writes to him. 'The fact that Marianne writes three letters in succession to Willoughby' in the 'absence of an engagement indicates that she is rebel against the constraints of decorum'.[89] Marianne has behaved inappropriately, and these letters are the final manifestation of this.

***Sense and Sensibility*: 'I am much concerned to find there was anything in my behaviour…that did not meet your approbation'**

[87] Nixon and Penner, 'Writing by the Book', unpaginated.
[88] Byrne, 'Manners', p. 300.
[89] Byrne, 'Manners', p. 301.

The only letter Marianne receives from Willoughby, although signed by him, is not composed by him. Willoughby writes this letter, but his wife has dictated every word, as we discover later in the novel when Willoughby visits Elinor: 'What do you think of my wife's style of letter-writing?—delicate —tender—truly feminine— was it not?' (*S&S*, p. 372) Willoughby's letter is cold and dispassionate in severing all relations between them; the irony is that he is not the letter's author. The first obvious indication that Willoughby did not write this letter is that he has never written to her before. Willoughby does not commit to paper at any point. Every letter written in Austen's novels reflects its writer's individual voice; even if the letters were not signed, the reader would know who had written them. When Marianne receives this letter, with her letters included returned, Elinor shows doubt and disbelief that Willoughby has written the letter, she could not have 'supposed Willoughby capable of departing so far from the appearance of every honourable and delicate feeling—so far from the common decorum of a gentleman, as to send a letter so impudently cruel' (*S&S*, p. 209). The language used in the letter does not correspond with the Willoughby they have come to know.

This letter is dispassionate and devoid of Willoughby's character, which Marianne notices and acknowledges. This letter has been thoughtfully written and constructed with polite business-like calculation. As Norman Page suggests, there is a 'congruity between letter-writing styles and their authors'.[90] The style of this letter does not fit with the character of its author. Lucy Steele's calculating letters cause pain for Elinor and Edward, just as Miss Grey's dictated letter causes pain. In several other Austen novels, women are the authors of letters that, though outwardly polite, nevertheless instigate pain, shock and despair: Mary Crawford's letter to Fanny in *Mansfield Park*, regarding the affair between her brother and

[90] Norman Page, *The Language of Jane Austen* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1972), p. 176.

Maria is an instance of this, as is Isabella's letter in *Northanger Abbey* (both will be addressed later in this thesis).

There are three sections to Willoughby's letter, and the form of it is worth reviewing here. The first section is the formal acknowledgement of receiving Marianne's letter. In the beginning and end of this letter, Willoughby (or Miss Grey) addresses Marianne as Madam; there is nothing personal, no endearment or hint of the Willoughby that Marianne thought she knew. Peter Sabor notes that Willoughby's use of the title Madam is intended to hurt as to use such a formal address is 'rebarbative given Marianne's youth and her characteristic informality': this opening and ending of a letter would have been 'typically used for business' and 'correspondence between strangers'.[91] Initially, Willoughby formally thanks Marianne for her letter and follows with a long sentence declaring that he 'is at a loss to discover in what point I could be so unfortunate as to offend you' (*S&S*, p. 208). The irony here is that Willoughby knows precisely what he has done and how he has behaved. The second section is a formal apology for Marianne mistakenly thinking she ever had a relationship with Willoughby, and the ending then emphatically severs all connections to Marianne. The letter is polite and follows the rules and conventions of a formal letter; however, 'despite the conventions of style' in this case, this letter form provides for Miss Grey 'a unique position from which to assert a limited power over her fate' with Willoughby.[92] The power struggle in this novel is between Marianne and Miss Grey: Marianne writes to Willoughby in order to try and regain some power in their relationship, and Miss Grey dictates Willoughby's letter in order for her to gain control over Willoughby and dissolve any power that Marianne tries to gain. Without Marianne knowing she is corresponding with Miss Grey not Willoughby,

[91] Peter Sabor, 'Good, bad, and ugly letters in *Sense and Sensibility*' (2011) < https://jasna.org/persuasions/online/vol32no1/sabor.html?> [accessed 29 August 2023].
[92] Penner and Nixon, 'Writing by the Book', unpaginated.

Marianne lacks power over her relationship with Willoughby and power over her emotions. In this way, Marianne is similar to Fanny Price, who lacks power to shape the outcome of her secret desire for Edmund. However, unlike Marianne, Fanny is restrained and reserved, more similar to the character of Elinor in her secret love for Edward.

Letters and secrets of the heart in *Mansfield Park*

The most important secret, which is the main thread that runs through the novel *Mansfield Park* is that Fanny is secretly in love with her cousin Edmund. However, Edmund is in love with Mary Crawford, at least he believes himself to be, until he loses faith in her moral integrity. Fanny has grown up with her cousin Edmund after being sent to live with her wealthy aunt Lady Bertram and uncle, Sir Thomas Bertram. Edmund befriends Fanny through her desire to write letters home and he helps her to do so. Thus, the beginning of Fanny's love for Edmund is rooted in epistolary exchange and familial love.

Later in the novel, Fanny is gifted a cross by her brother William for her birthday, yet she lacks a chain to wear it by, which Edmund notices and he gifts her one. It is not a letter but a note with a few words written on a scrap piece of paper, clearly not written with a lover's intention. However, Fanny's response to the note reshapes its material significance into a form of love letter. Fanny seizes the scrap piece paper which Edmund had written on and treasures it 'beyond all her hopes, and reading with the tenderest emotion these words, "My very dear Fanny, you must do me the favour to accept" locked it up with the chain, as the dearest part of the gift' (*MP*, p. 307). This is the closest 'thing approaching to a letter she had ever received' from Edmund, and she realises she may never 'receive another' (*MP*, p. 308). This scrap piece of paper written on with very few words by an author unaware of how grateful the recipient will be is a piece of a letter that Fanny takes with the 'enthusiasm of a

woman's love': 'This specimen, written in haste as it was, had not a fault; and there was a felicity in the flow of the first four words, in the arrangement of "My very dear Fanny," which she could have looked at for ever' (*MP*, p. 308). The 'two lines' (*MP,* p. 308) that Edmund writes take on the significance of many more pages because of Fanny's emotional response.

This is a letter that Fanny must keep secret from her family. Throughout the novel, Fanny is reminded that she should know her place in the family's social order and is constantly recalled by her aunt Mrs Norris to remain grateful. 'Fanny Price is found wanting in all estimations of wealth, power, name, and prestige'.[93] Fanny marrying Edmund would be unthinkable until social disgrace and disorder devastate the family. Fanny's secret must also be kept from Edmund as he often uses Fanny as his confidant when he professes to love Mary Crawford and intends to marry her; he simply does not see Fanny as anything other than another sister. It is worth noting that Edmund (like Darcy, who protects Elizabeth from impropriety and gossip) never puts Mary Crawford in a position of impropriety. Edmund Bertram never corresponds with Mary Crawford, although he does consider writing to her to propose.[94]

During the novel, Fanny Price is sent back to live with her family in Portsmouth by her uncle to reflect upon her decision not to accept Henry Crawford's proposal. Fanny's only means of finding out news about Mansfield Park and the family connected to it is, during this time, by letters. Fanny corresponds with her aunt Lady Bertram, her cousin Edmund and Mary Crawford. The first letter with a hint of a scandal is the long letter from Mary Crawford

[93] Catherine A. Bodnar, '*Mansfield Park*: A Character Study' (2015) <jasna.org/publications-2/essay-contest-winning-entries/2015/mansfield-park-a-character-study/> [accessed 19 June 2023].
[94] Byrne, 'Manners', p. 301.

written to Fanny in Portsmouth in Volume III, Chapter 14. Mary writes that Maria (Mrs Rushworth) has been enjoying her Easter holidays with the Aylmers, who 'are pleasant people; and her husband away, she can have nothing but enjoyment. I give her credit for promoting his going dutifully down to Bath, to fetch his mother' and, notably, she adds that 'Henry is not at hand'. Before Mary finishes her letter Henry arrives ('I had actually begun folding my letter when Henry walked in'), and she adds that he admits to having seen Maria that morning (*MP*, p. 503-4). As was common at the time, letters were often left open and returned to before eventually being posted. Mary incessantly writes in her letters about how Henry is devoted to Fanny and 'cares for nobody' but her (*MP*, p. 504); however, he never actually writes or dictates this himself. As Anthony Mandal states, there is no doubt Henry Crawford desires Fanny Price, probably owing to 'her unimpeachable rectitude; however, he cannot access the appropriate moral lexicon'.[95] As an Austen anti-hero, he is akin to Willoughby in *Sense and Sensibility* as he never commits himself to paper, and he never actually writes a letter himself to Fanny declaring the devotion that Mary professes he has.

One of Austen's literary devices is the ability to reveal information so that letters can be re-read later and re-interpreted in the light of new knowledge. For example, after Maria has run away with Henry we can look back on letters that Mary has written to Fanny with the knowledge in hindsight of their attraction to each other. Mary writes to Fanny and expresses that she has enjoyed teasing Maria by arousing her jealousy of Henry's infatuation with Fanny: 'Shall I tell you how Mrs. Rushworth looked when your name was mentioned?' (*MP*, p. 456). After Maria has married Rushworth she moves into a large house which 'Henry could not have afforded her' (*MP*, p. 456), however, even at the time Mary writes this letter,

[95] Anthony Mandal, 'Language' in *Jane Austen in Context*, ed. Janet Todd (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 23–32, p. 25.

Fanny is acutely aware that 'there was great food for meditation in this letter, and chiefly for unpleasant mediation' (*MP*, p. 457) and it arouses her curiosity. Mary writes again, and in retrospect we see the clues when Mary mentions again that Henry 'will see the Rushworths, which I own I am not sorry—having a little curiosity— and so I think has he, though he will not acknowledge it' (*MP*, p. 483), the wording here could be suggestive, and an admission by Mary that she realises Henry is more curious about Maria than he should be or admits.

Fanny reads this letter from her position as an outsider and sees 'so much to condemn; the sister's feelings—the brother's conduct—*her* cold-hearted ambition—*his* thoughtless vanity. To have him still the acquaintance, the flirt perhaps, of Mrs. Rushworth!—She was mortified' (*MP*, pp. 504-5). During Mary's long letter to Fanny, she further writes that she should not 'make yourself uneasy with any queer fancies because he has been spending a few days at Richmond' (*MP,* p. 504). Previously Fanny is made aware that Henry has been visiting the Rushworths. The fact that Mary is asking Fanny 'not to make herself uneasy' implies that there is something to be uneasy about or soon will be. The implication that there is nothing to be concerned about regarding Henry and Maria only further forces Fanny to consider that Henry and Maria are involved in something of a scandal waiting to happen.

It is not long after this letter, a week later, that Fanny receives another short letter from Mary when the scandal has broken. It reads in full:

> A most scandalous, ill-natured rumour has just reached me, and I write, dear Fanny, to warn you against giving the least credit to it, should it spread into the country. Depend upon it, there is some mistake, and that a day or two will clear it up—at any rate, that Henry is blameless, and in spite of a moment's *etourderie*, thinks of nobody but you.

> Say not a word of it—hear nothing, surmise nothing, whisper nothing, till I write again. I am sure it will be all hushed up, and nothing proved but Rushworth's folly. If they are gone, I would lay my life they are only gone to Mansfield Park, and Julia with them. But why would not you let us come for you? I wish you may not repent it.
>
> "Yours, &c."
>
> (*MP,* pp. 506-7)

The insinuation made at the end of this letter becomes clearer later on when Mary suggests that if Fanny had accepted Henry's proposal, he would not have pursued Maria or had an affair with her. All of Mary Crawford's letters written to Fanny 'are not sent in affection or even in friendship but' have the sole 'intention of manipulating' her.[96] Her style of writing is deceivingly friendly and insidiously kind. When Mary is keen for Henry and Fanny to reconnect after Henry's affair with Maria and be seen publicly together, Fanny sees through this letter and is disgusted by it. Not only is Mary aware of what her brother Henry has been doing, but it becomes apparent that Mary's false concern for the ill Tom Bertram are a façade for what she truly desires, which is for Edmund to inherit the estate and an income: 'If he is to die, there will be *two* poor young men less in the world; and with a fearless face and bold voice would I say to any one, that wealth and consequence could fall into no hands more deserving of them' (*MP,* p. 502). The sentence is convoluted but the meaning does not escape Fanny.

The use of a French word in relation to scandal in this letter is noticeable. The French word 'etourderie' translates to 'Thoughtlessness, carelessness. Also: a thoughtless act, a blunder'.

[96] Sarah Emsley, 'Jane Austen at Work: The Revision of *Persuasion*'s Ending' (2018) <sarahemsley.com/2018/06/25/jane-austen-at-work-the-revision-of-persuasions-ending/> [accessed 13 June 2023].

(OED, def. ‘etourderie’). There are two ways to look at the reasons for why Austen has chosen to use this French word. One is that this use of the French softens Frank’s behaviour to suggest a romantic blunder; if Mary had written that her brother and Maria had been caught having an affair, it would give rise to stronger feelings of shock and resentment on Fanny’s part. The use of the euphemistic term ‘etourderie’ to denote adultery and sexual intrigue therefore overlooks what has truly happened. The second is that Austen is associating immoral behaviour with the French, especially as anti-French feeling ran high during the Napoleonic wars.

This scandalous secret affair cannot remain secret, and it is not long before it is announced in the press that ‘a matrimonial *fracas* in the family of Mr. R. of Wimpole Street’ has occurred involving ‘the beautiful Mrs. R.’ and ‘the well-known and captivating Mr. C.’ (*MP*, p. 509). The newspapers do not print Henry Crawford and Maria Rushworth’s names in full, but their identity is clear and the social scandal is irredeemable. Just as Lydia disappears with Wickham in *Pride and Prejudice,* so does Maria; Edmund writes to Fanny and delivers the news that ‘there is nothing to be done. They cannot be traced’ (*MP,* p. 512), and Edmund continues to relay the news, also, of Julia’s elopement. With the continuous horror of scandalous behaviour, it is Fanny that is asked to return home to Mansfield to offer comfort and restore moral and honourable harmony. It is not only Fanny that is asked to return but her sister Susan too, as if to imply that they are the virtuous moral replacements for the two sinning sisters. This letter from Edmund requesting Fanny return to Mansfield Park brings her utter joy, though ‘she felt she was, in the greatest of danger of being exquisitely happy, while so many were miserable’ (*MP*, p. 513).

When Fanny returns, she pieces together a fuller story of the scandal via 'some letters to and from Sir Thomas' (*MP*, p. 520), learning that he, too, had been warned of the possible scandal regarding Maria and had been urged by a friend in the city to go to 'London himself, and…put an end to the intimacy which was already exposing [Maria] to unpleasant remarks and evidently making Mr. Rushworth uneasy' (*MP,* p. 521). However, this letter was too late to stop the affair from exploding into a social scandal, for a letter not by post but by express arrives; this urgent letter sent by the same friend breaks the news of 'the almost desperate situation in which affairs then stood with the young people' (*MP,* p. 521). More letters arrive from London, yet, by now, Maria and Henry's affair is full public knowledge, and it becomes apparent that Mr Rushworth's mother's maid, with encouragement from Mrs. Rushworth senior, had 'exposure in her power' (*MP,* p. 521) and would not be hushed from revealing the scandal.

Scandals are hinted at and revealed in *Mansfield Park* through letters. Not only do letters reveal a scandal, they also are used by characters in order to try and manipulate other characters in the process. The letters in this novel full of gossip, scandal and rumour, and Mary Crawford's character is adept at using this aspect of correspondence for her own ends. At every turn, Henry and Mary use letters to attempt to manipulate Fanny Price, who is able to read past their conceits. Not only is Fanny tormented by letters she receives and reads from the Crawfords, but Edmund, too, unknowingly causes Fanny anxiety and dismay by what he writes to her.

***Pride and Prejudice:* 'something has occurred of a most unexpected and serious nature'**

Just as Fanny Price hears of scandal regarding family members through letters, so does Elizabeth Bennet. While Elizabeth is holidaying with her aunt and uncle in the Peak District,

she receives two letters from Jane, which both arrive simultaneously. The first letter was 'missent' (*P&P*, p. 301); therefore, Elizabeth reads this first, as it was written five days previous. The beginning of the letter is not written in total, but we are told it is full of regular news about 'little parties and engagements' (*P&P,* p. 301). However, as often with letters written in this period including by Austen herself, this letter is begun, then left aside, and then returned to with additional information. Jane's letter therefore begins with easy, familial matters but as events unfold they are related more anxiously. Just as Fanny Price and her immediate family feel the reverberations of Maria and Henry's scandal, so do Elizabeth Bennet's family. All are thrown into a position of shock, horror and are open to social scrutiny, however, unlike in *Mansfield Park* where Maria Rushworth's sexual misdemeanour is reported in the newspapers, Lydia and Wickham in *Pride and Prejudice* escape this. Both sexual scandals are reported amongst family members, yet Lydia and Wickham's only mention is the declaration of the marriage in the newspaper. These letters are not separated by format or information but instead flow through from familiar normalities to shocking discovery.

What follows from the usual news is entirely 'unexpected' and of a 'serious nature' (*P&P,* p. 301). Jane continues to relate that the distressing news is about Lydia. So, the drama unfolds for Elizabeth and us, the readers, simultaneously. Jane writes that an 'express' arrived at their house past midnight from Colonel Forster (with whom Lydia had been staying), informing them all that Lydia had 'gone off to Scotland' with Wickham (*P&P*, p. 301). Jane does remark quite pointedly that the younger sister Kitty does not look as surprised at the news and soon feels anger at this (we later find out that Lydia told Kitty in confidence and, therefore, she would not have felt obliged to share such knowledge). Jane expresses how the entire family feel shock and dismay regarding Lydia's behaviour and actions yet she remains

optimistic, and suggests that, perhaps, ‘his character has been misunderstood’. Jane is willing to believe that Wickham has been '[t]houghtless and indiscreet’; she also recognises that whatever the real reason for Wickham’s seduction of Lydia, he must know (as they all do) that Mr Bennet can offer nothing, and so Lydia is virtually penniless. It could be suggested that it is with guilt that Jane remarks they should ‘forget it ourselves’(*P&P*, p. 302) in terms of what they previously were told about Wickham’s true character. If this had been divulged, Lydia’s family may well have been somewhat guarded against Wickham.

After this reflection, Jane reverts to retelling all that has happened; from this letter, we know that Lydia has eloped with Wickham; their mother has retreated to her bedroom; and Lydia left a note addressed to Colonel Forster’s wife ‘informing her’ of her and Wickham’s intention to marry (*P&P*, p. 302). Here, the letter breaks, and Elizabeth rushes to open the second letter written a day later, which brings further bad news. Austen uses the delay in the postal system to add tension and a sense of urgency to the disclosures. The five-day delay in the letters arriving means Lydia and Wickham have been untraceable for this time and adds to the suspense for Elizabeth and us the reader. To reinforce the hurried and panicked state in which the letter was written, Austen offers material signs of how the letter is written at speed: ‘I am afraid you will not be able to make it out, but I hardly know what I have written’ (*P&P*, p. 302). It has become clear that Lydia and Wickham have not eloped and are not married. The revelation that they have not gone to Scotland is revealed via Denny (Wickham’s friend); not only have they not eloped, but Elizabeth and we, the readers, discover that Wickham never had any intention of marrying Lydia. This devastating news forces further action; Colonel Forster leaves his wife and regiment and searches for the couple. Colonel Forster manages to track them as far as them heading for London; at this point, he travels to

Hertfordshire, where he continues his quest to trace where they have been but to no avail. Finally, Colonel Forster returns to Longbourn and relates all his news in person.

Jane continues to write and wishes for her sister's return, and again reports that their mother has been taken poorly by the events and their father has never looked so distressed. At this point, it would appear that Jane finishes her letter and uses the affectionate French term 'Adieu!' (*P&P,* p. 304). As in *Sense and Sensibility,* Austen uses the French word, a heartfelt sorrow at parting, to emphasise fondness. Jane does not actually finish her letter here and instead returns writes a postscript where she begs Elizabeth, their aunt and uncle, to return home as soon as possible. Postscripts were often added to letters in the period to give the sense that the writer does not want to leave the recipient. Jane has received comfort in her writing to her sister and sharing the burden of all that has happened her, returning to her 'pen again' gives the reader a sense of urgency but they also convey the sense that writing the letter is also an act of consolation for the sisters (*P&P*, p. 304).

These letters are written as the mystery and shock of Lydia's disappearance become known. The reader, at the same time as Elizabeth, reads the news about Lydia. Just after Elizabeth learns of Lydia's elopement, 'she bursts into tears' in full view of Darcy, who looks on in 'wretched suspense' (*P&P*, p, 263). When Elizabeth receives and reads her first letter from Darcy she does this in privacy, although she shares the information within it with her sister Jane at a later date. This time Darcy is involved in her world and morally is forced to intervene in a sister's indiscretion. This letter has not only turned the Bennet's family's world upside down but his own too. When Darcy reveals his sister's secret scandal with Wickham, he writes in his letter that he feels 'no doubt in her secrecy' (*P&P,* p. 224). After Wickham has eloped with Lydia (with some irony), Elizabeth asks the same of Darcy (to 'conceal the

unhappy truth for as long as it is possible'). Darcy assures her 'of his secrecy' (*P&P,* p. 307). Darcy and Elizabeth are bound, not just by secrets they share, but scandals regarding both their sisters. The scandals surrounding Georgiana and Lydia are revealed in letters—despite the obvious fact that communication by letter was the only way logistically to convey news, these letters bring a 'greater sense of realism to the novel' as the events unfold in the haphazard way of real existence.[97]

The fact that Lydia leaves a letter to Colonel Forster's wife, Harriet, declaring her plans to elope and her belief that she will be soon signing her name as Lydia Wickham, demonstrates the naivety of her character, in terms of openly committing to paper details of this scandalous behaviour. Again, secrecy relies on the discretion of the recipient who reads the letter. This letter could have been destroyed or kept secret, and the Forsters could have pleaded ignorance to Lydia's thoughtless plans; then, their affiliation with the scandal would be kept at a minimum. Some relief is later gained in a letter that Mr Bennet receives from his brother-in-law Mr Gardiner. In this letter, we learn that Lydia and Wickham have been discovered; although they are yet to be married, Wickham agrees to marry Lydia if Mr Bennet performs some engagements and agrees to some conditions. Unknown to the Bennets at this stage, this relief has been brought about by Darcy, a secret yet to be revealed to Elizabeth. Without Darcy, Lydia and Wickham may not have ever been discovered; Wickham's debts would not have been settled, and their marriage doubtless would not have happened. While secrets bring about distrust, they can also privately resolve complex issues.

The discovery of Lydia and Wickham by Darcy, and his subsequent role in their marriage (which Lydia lets slip in a comment to Elizabeth) comes as a shock to Elizabeth, who writes

[97] Mijares, 'The Masculine Pen', unpaginated.

to her aunt asking for the truth: '[s]he could not bear such suspense; and hastily seizing a sheet of paper, wrote a short letter to her aunt, to request an explanation of what Lydia had dropt' (*P&P*, p. 353). The news of Lydia's scandal is revealed through Jane's letter to Elizabeth and this is how she also learns of Georgiana's attempted elopement with Wickham through Darcy's letter. Just as letters are used as realistic plots devices of the time to hear news good and bad, resolutions to the scandals are also revealed in letters. Elizabeth learns through a letter from her aunt, Darcy's exact involvement; and through her uncle's letter to her father, the family learns that Lydia and Wickham's marriage will take place under certain conditions. Letters communicate the worst and best of situations.

Conclusion

Like many letters written in full in Austen's novels, these letters create a reaction and action: the separation of Elizabeth from Darcy; the return of Elizabeth, her aunt and uncle to Longbourn; and, ultimately, Darcy searching for and finding Lydia and Wickham and forcing them into marriage. These letters are the precursor to the resolution of the plot as Darcy cannot marry Elizabeth until the scandal of Lydia and Wickham has been resolved. Lydia's elopement forces Darcy's hand and ensures that Elizabeth realises how much he loves her. The letters used to reveal secrets and scandals change the plot direction; they change the characters' perceptions of other characters, and loyalties are tested. Secrets and scandals, when brought into the open, bring about resolutions that are forced to happen; where one character is outcast, other characters are brought to the forefront and are brought inside to a family fold or connection. When a victim of a scandal has been powerless, once the scandal has been revealed and resolved, they change to a position of power, such as Fanny Price, who was an outcast yet now becomes an insider. Darcy, who was ostracised from Elizabeth's

family, becomes welcomed into the Bennet family. Marianne, outcasted by her indiscretions and impropriety, comes into a position of power when she marries Colonel Brandon.

Chapter Three

Letters of envy and jealousy

This chapter will study letters in Austen's novels that both result from feelings of jealousy and that are used purposely to invoke jealousy and envy. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, jealousy is 'vehemence of feeling against some person or thing; anger, wrath, indignation' (*OED*, 'jealousy'). In contrast, envy is 'the feeling of mortification and ill-will occasioned by the contemplation of superior advantages possessed by another' (*OED*, 'envy'). Whereas envy often requires two parties for the emotion to function in Austen's writing—for example, Mary Musgrove in *Persuasion* only has 'to hear of someone else's good fortune in order to feel herself excluded or ill-used in not having been a party to it', jealousy is often more complex[98]. No character shows this feeling better than Lucy Steele in *Sense and Sensibility* when, upon hearing Elinor's name mentioned by Edward, she seeks out Elinor to make sure she knows that he is not free to court anyone else. John Wiltshire observes that, '[t]here is not the smallest doubt that Lucy is viciously jealous' of Elinor and the fact that Lucy maybe losing Edward to Elinor.[99] Another character in *Sense and Sensibility* that uses the emotion of jealousy is Miss Grey; through her jealousy, Wiltshire argues, she is determined to 'wound the woman she' suspects Willoughby is in love with and more or less stands over him while he copies out a 'letter dictated by her jealousy'.[100]

In Austen's novels envy is often used with comic effect: Mary Musgrove's sore throats are always worse than others and Mrs Bennet is envious of Charlotte Lucas marrying before her own daughters. While Austen uses envy for comedy at times, her use of jealousy is darker and more sinister: Miss Grey's letter (conducted via Willoughby) to Marianne is the final

[98]E. M. Dadlez, 'Dense Insensibility: Humean Vices and Virtues in the Work of Jane Austen', *LSU Digital Commons*, 12: 10 (2022), 147–174, p 162.
[99] John Wiltshire, *The Hidden Jane Austen* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 40.
[100] Wiltshire, p. 44.

blow before Marianne's near death. Equally, Colonel Brandon's duel with Wickham, although in defence of his ward, might also be seen to result from jealousy of Wickham and Marianne. In *Pride and Prejudice*, Caroline Bingley's jealousy is obvious in her numerous attempts to win Darcy's approval. Emma is initially jealous of Jane Fairfax before Jane, in turn, becomes jealous of Emma and Frank Churchill's flirtations. *Mansfield Park* is filled with jealousies and so is *Persuasion*. In *Mansfield Park*, Fanny is jealous of Mary Crawford, Mr Rushworth is jealous of Mr Crawford, Maria and her sister Julia are jealous rivals for Mr Crawford, and Edmund is jealous of the world and its influence over Mary Crawford. In *Persuasion*, Captain Wentworth is jealous of Mr Elliot and his attentions towards Anne, Elizabeth is jealous of Anne because of Mr Elliot, Mary is jealous of anyone she believes is having a better time of things than herself, and Anne is jealous of Wentworth and his attentions towards Louisa Musgrove. According to Ramachandran and Jalal evolutionary psychological theory, the 'whole purpose of envy is to motivate you into action either by independently trying harder (envy) or by coveting and stealing what the other has (jealousy). This is why jealousy has an aggressive component'.[101] This can be perceived in *Sense and Sensibility* when Lucy Steele tries harder to regain her control over her engagement with Edward by pursuing Elinor and ensuring she understands that Edward is not free to engage himself to another woman. Miss Grey covets Willoughby and manages to steal him from Marianne with her fifty thousand pounds. Each of these women use and show their jealousy and envy with the use of letters. When Lucy Steele takes 'a letter from her pocket and carelessly' shows 'the direction to Elinor', as I have stated previously, there is nothing careless about Lucy's action of showing Edward's letter to Elinor; she does this out of jealousy to ensure Elinor knows exactly that Edward is engaged (*S&S*, p. 154). After seeing

[101] Vilayanur S. Ramachandran and Baland Jalal, 'The Evolutionary Psychology of Envy and Jealousy', *Frontiers in Psychology*, 8 (2017), p. 3.

Marianne's reaction to Willoughby at a ball, Miss Grey was made 'more jealous than ever' and thus her dictating the letter for Willoughby to send to Marianne severing all ties with her (*S&S*, p. 371).

Jealousy is often associated with the complex love situations that are a feature of each of Austen's published novels: in *Sense and Sensibility,* the love triangle is between Marianne, Willoughby and Colonel Brandon; in *Pride and Prejudice*, Elizabeth, Mr Darcy and Wickham; in *Persuasion*, Mr Elliot, Anne Elliot and Captain Wentworth; in *Emma*, Mr Knightley, Frank Churchill and Emma; in *Mansfield Park,* Fanny, Henry Crawford and Edmund; and, in *Northanger Abbey,* Catherine, Henry Tilney and John Thorpe. Jealousy often forces characters in Austen's fiction into an important action: Darcy's letter to Elizabeth, for example, is partially written out of jealousy for her close friendship with Wickham. Similarly, Captain Wentworth's letter to Anne is written partially in reaction to Mr Elliot's attentions to Anne, which Wentworth himself acknowledges: 'Jealousy of Mr. Elliot had been the retarding weight, the doubt, the torment' (*P*, p. 262).

The critic Thomas Williams suggests that jealousy can actually work in a character's favour and that 'Austen regularly portrays her jealous characters as more than ordinarily perceptive'.[102] In contrast, those characters who are 'least prone to jealousy are also often the most apt to commit moral blunders out of sheer inadvertence, because their moral vision is hazy'.[103] However, Williams further suggests that envy 'on the other hand, is certainly a vice. Far from sharpening one's moral perception, envy systematically distorts judgement.'[104] Jealousy and envy can cloud a person's judgement, make thoughts unclear and distort moral

[102] Thomas Williams, 'Moral Vice, Cognitive Virtue', *Philosophy and Literature*, 27: 1 (2003), 223–230, p. 233.
[103] Williams, p. 233.
[104] Williams, p. 223.

behaviours and, therefore, sound judgement 'requires disengagement'[105]. In this chapter, I will explore the tension between envy and jealousy as it relates to Austen's use of letters in her fiction by a series of different case studies from her novels. Austen recognised that jealousy was a complex emotion, often aligned with other negative traits. In a letter to her sister she comments of some women of her society: 'Miss Harrison is going into Devonshire, to attend Mrs. Dusantoy, as usual. —Miss J. is married to young Mr. Gunthorpe, & is to be very unhappy. He swears, drinks, is cross, jealous, selfish, and Brutal. The match makes her family miserable, and has occasioned his being disinherited.'[106] This sad anecdote suggests much about the very real misery that jealousy might inflict, suggesting in its brevity the themes Austen would pick up on in her fiction and that I will now go on to explore.

Jealousy in *Sense and Sensibility*: 'You know his hand…a charming one it is'

Envy and jealousy are emotions that Austen explores in compelling ways in *Sense and Sensibility*. In this novel, Lucy Steele uses her feelings of envy and jealousy in a calculated way and, in contrast, Elinor buries these feelings for the sake of others and herself. Elinor shows restraint throughout Lucy Steele's torments yet certainly succumbs to these unwelcome feelings. The first letter to deal with some of these issues occurs when Lucy Steele is determined to engage Elinor in a discussion about the Ferrars family; Lucy misses 'no opportunity of engaging' Elinor in conversation, despite the fact that Elinor finds her 'valueless' and tries to dismiss her every attempt (*S&S*, p. 147). Not to be deterred, Lucy pushes forward and drops the bombshell that she is very well acquainted with Edward Ferrars as they are engaged. When hearing this shocking news, Elinor does not have a 'hysterical fit' but remains calm and asks if their 'engagement is of long standing' (*S&S*, pp. 148, 149).

[105] Williams, p. 225.
[106] *Jane Austen's Letters*, ed. Deirdre Le Faye (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 126.

Elinor does not display any jealousy; instead, she hides her feelings of 'astonishment' (*S&S,* p. 148): Elinor shows excellent self-discipline and presence of mind not to give Lucy Steele any satisfaction of seeing her upset or shocked. To make sure that Elinor is fully aware of their engagement commitment and that they are both of a perfect understanding that Edward is already promised, Lucy takes a letter from 'her pocket and carelessly' (*S&S,* p. 154) shows it to Elinor. 'You know his hand, I dare say, a charming one it is', she remarks, and for Elinor, this is undeniable proof that Edward is secretly engaged to Miss Lucy Steele, for 'a correspondence between them by letter, could subsist only under a positive engagement' (*S&S*, p. 154). The contents of this letter are not shown. Neither we, the readers, nor Elinor are allowed to see what Edward has written to Lucy, but the addressed letter is enough proof, and we are left, as is Elinor, to surmise about what he may have written.

Elinor recognises that, as Sally Holloway summarises it, 'the exchange of love letters was therefore a sure sign of a forthcoming engagement, and made an attachment between a couple infinitely more difficult to end'.[107] Elinor often requires proof in the novel, for example, when Willoughby leaves for London she asks her mother for proof that Marianne and Willoughby are engaged '"I have had my doubts, I confess; but they are fainter than they were, and they may soon be entirely done away. If we find they correspond, every fear of mine will be removed."' (*S&S*, p. 93). Letters were undeniable proof of engagement and letters were used and highly valued as 'vehicles for stressing gendered virtues such as sincerity'; letters were more important than the spoken word or in this case more important than Willoughby's manners and attentions towards Marianne .[108] Unlike Marianne, Lucy

[107] Sally Holloway, *The Game of Love in Georgian England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), p. 47.
[108] Holloway, p. 47.

Steele has proof and is unapologetic in her use of Edward's letter to make sure that Elinor is under no illusion that she and Edward are engaged.

Lucy Steele has found herself in a position of envy and jealousy and admits openly to Elinor that she is 'rather of a jealous temper' by 'nature' (*S&S*, p. 169). She is determined to face and thwart any possible threats to her engagement with Edward and future prosperity. Lucy has no option; she must place herself in a position to meet and ward off Elinor in a discreet, socially acceptable setting. With unapologetic jealousy, Lucy continues to remind Elinor that Edward is still hers and uses the letter to advance her desires. She is, for example, 'particularly careful to inform her confidante, of her happiness whenever she received a letter from Edward' (*S&S*, p. 173). Lucy uses the letters she receives and has received from Edward as an evidential weapon against Elinor and in order to position herself as the object of envy to Elinor. She is, therefore, described in terms that emphasise how calculated she is in her movements and conversations. Lucy uses the letter as a tool to brand Edward as her property (by showing the letter to Elinor), but she also uses letters by design in other ways, such as to try and gain a living for Edward.

Later in the novel, Lucy writes to Elinor, who recognises that the letter she receives is really written for the eyes of Mrs. Jennings: 'As soon as Elinor had finished it, she performed what she concluded to be its writer's real design, by placing it in the hands of Mrs. Jennings, who read it aloud with many comments of satisfaction and praise' (*S&S*, p. 315). Lucy's letter is gloating about her happiness with Edward: 'though we have suffered dreadfully, we are both quite well now, and as happy as we must always in one another's love' (*S&S*, p. 314). The intention of Lucy's letter however is not just to gloat, but also to seek assistance from Mrs Jennings in finding Edward a living. Her writing to Elinor is a façade; her intention all along

is for Mrs Jennings to 'speak a good word for' them to 'Sir John, or Mr. Palmer, or any friend that may be able to assist us' (*S&S*, p. 315). Again, Lucy Steele is looking out for her selfish needs. Austen's use of irony in Lucy's letter is forefront and makes her character transparent through her letter: 'Poor Anne was much to blame for what she did, but she did it for the best, so I say nothing' (*S&S*, p. 315). Lucy is angry that her sister outed their secret engagement to Edward's family, yet the irony of her mentioning it and then remarking that she will say 'nothing' about it, highlights her duplicity. In another example in the same letter, Lucy professes that she offered Edward release from their engagement: 'I spent two happy hours with him yesterday afternoon, he would not hear of our parting, though earnestly did I, as I thought my duty required, urge him to it for prudence sake, and would have parted for ever on the spot, would he consent to it; but he said it should never be.' (*S&S*, p. 314). Lucy knows full well Edward's character and the power she holds over him with his correspondence as proof of their engagement, so that this pretence to set him free is another loosely veiled ploy to make it seem that she is offering Edward his freedom. As John Wiltshire comments of this scene, Lucy Steele lacks 'skill or training in self-command, in the concealment of her feelings, or in the techniques of genteel self-presentation, Lucy Steele is remorselessly exposed through her facial expressions and gestures' and in her use of letters.[109] However, Lucy is also without money or connections, so that her only way to forward herself in life and provide an income for herself is to 'claw her way upwards by her own efforts'.[110] Lucy's letters brings a sense of realness and naturalness to the novels, and is the only way that she can try to gain some power over her relationship and future.

Jealousy in *Pride and Prejudice* and *Emma*

[109] Wiltshire, p. 38.
[110] Wiltshire, p. 38.

The characters in *Pride and Prejudice* display feelings of jealousy and envy; and no character displays this better than Caroline Bingley. Jealousy as a literary plot device is usually used in the scenario of a love triangle and Austen plays with this in the relationships between Wickham, Darcy and Elizabeth. Caroline Bingley is not a central presence in the novel, yet her feelings of jealousy are employed in an articulated and calculated way, through thinly veiled politeness, flattery, and passive aggressive language. Caroline Bingley's letter to Jane announcing her family's departure from Netherfield is abrupt: 'the whole party have left Netherfield by this time, and are on their way to town; and without any intention of coming back again' (*P&P*, p. 130). Despite Darcy not wanting his friend to lower his standards and marry Jane Bennett (this being, we later find out, the main reason Bingley and the party leave Netherfield) it is credible that Caroline Bingley senses an attraction between Darcy and Elizabeth. Darcy and Bingley leave and do not write declaring their departure, but Caroline Bingley does, in a calculated manner disguised through flattery and friendship she wishes to make it known in no uncertain terms that Bingley and Darcy are marked for marriage. Caroline Bingley's character is similar to that of Lucy Steele in *Sense and Sensibility,* Isabella in *Northanger Abbey*, and Mary Crawford in *Mansfield Park*, in terms of how she plays a disingenuous game. Although all these characters remark upon their own sincerity, they all use letters to further their own ends. Just as Lucy Steele did not want any obstacles in her way of marrying Edward, Caroline wants Elizabeth removed from Darcy's presence and this letter aims to achieve this end. Caroline desires Darcy's love, property and wealth, she also desires that her brother Bingley marries Darcy's sister Georgiana therefore uniting the families in wealth and property. Elizabeth and Jane Bennet therefore stand in the way of Caroline Bingley's desires.

Caroline's letter is heavily insincere to the attentive reader: 'I do not pretend to regret anything I shall leave in Hertfordshire except your society, my dearest friend;' (*P&P*, p. 131) Jane is not Caroline's dearest friend, and has hated their society since they arrived at Netherfield; 'how insupportable it would be to pass many evenings in this manner,—in such society; and, indeed, I am quite of your opinion. I was never more annoyed! The insipidity, and yet the noise—the nothingness, and yet the self-importance, of all these people!' (*P&P*, p. 29). Caroline's disingenuous writing continues: 'but we will hope, at some future period, to enjoy many returns of that delightful intercourse we have known, and in the meanwhile may lessen the pain of separation by a very frequent and most unreserved correspondence' (*P&P*, p. 131). Caroline has never enjoyed her 'intercourse' with the Bennets and has no intention of their being engaged in regular correspondence. Elizabeth listens to Jane reading Caroline's letter aloud with 'all the insensibility of distrust' (*P&P*, p. 131), which Jane fails to comprehend. Caroline's jealousy is veiled in politeness and duplicitous language: 'Many of my acquaintance are already' in London for the winter, she writes, adding that: 'I wish I could hear that you, my dearest friend, had any intention of making one in the croud' (*P&P*, pp. 131-2). Caroline repeats again, 'my dearest friend' trying to persuade Jane that she genuinely means it however it is quite clear, because of her previous behaviour towards them and conversations we have been privy to between her and Darcy, it is not true. This sense of manipulation is implied in the excessive politeness of her letter-writing style. When she mentions Georgiana Darcy, whom Caroline hopes her brother will marry, she pointedly lists her qualities: 'I really do not think Georgiana Darcy has her equal for beauty, elegance and accomplishments' (*P&P*, p. 132). It is only Elizabeth that sees through Caroline's jealousy and puts it in her characteristically blunt terms: 'Miss Bingley sees that her brother is in love with you and wants him to marry Miss Darcy' (*P&P*, p. 133). Jane's innocence and naivety towards Caroline's duplicitous nature and intentions is painfully but artistically portrayed by

Austen by showing Jane and Elizabeth's characters very differently. Jane believes that 'Caroline is incapable of wilfully deceiving anyone' (*P&P*, p. 134), however, Elizabeth can read between the lines of her letter.

Caroline writes and sends this letter trying to exert power and take control of a situation. Just as Caroline Bingley removes their party (with the aid of Mr Darcy) from Netherfield, the character of Emma, also through her jealousy, removes her friend Harriet Smith to London after Harriet reveals her growing attachment to Mr Knightley. After Harriet is slighted by Mr Elton at the dance, and subsequently rescued from social disgrace by Mr Knightley she decides that his 'benevolence and generosity…begin to [help her to] feel how superior he was to every other being upon earth' (*E*, p. 442). Through Emma's jealousy and her envious fear that Mr Knightley might return Harriet Smith's affections, Emma sends her away by procuring an invitation from her sister Mrs. John Knightley. Because Harriet happens to have a missing tooth, Emma takes advantage of this, and, through her sister, Harriet is invited to London to visit a dentist. Thus, through a clever and timely use of letters, Emma removes Harriet from Highbury and Mr Knightley.

There are two types of female characters in *Emma* who deal with jealousy very differently: Emma decides to remove Harriet from Highbury, making sure her own path towards Mr Knightley is clear, and Jane Fairfax, who jealous of Emma and hurt by Frank Churchill's flirtations with her, decides to remove herself to Ireland to be a governess to a Mrs. Smallridge. Jane also uses letters to help her achieve her desires: determined to leave she spends all morning writing 'such long letters, you know, to be written to Colonel Campbell, and Mrs. Dixon' (*E*, p. 412). There are not many letters in Emma that are actually written by herself however the ones she does write are a way for her to regain control over her future

and regain some position of power by removing Harriett. Jane Fairfax has little control over her life or her secret engagement the only way for her gain power is for her to write letters and remove herself from a situation. The letters bring a sense of realness and naturalness to the novels.

Quiet jealousy in *Mansfield Park*

Letters are used to convey the complexities of jealousy and envy in *Mansfield Park* in deeper ways than in her previous novels. Fanny Price suffers from unrequited love for Edmund, who believes himself in love with the supercilious Mary Crawford. When she is banished to her original family home in Portsmouth by her uncle for refusing Henry Crawford's proposal, she receives a letter that is pivotal in the novel: 'Seven weeks of the two months were very nearly gone, when the one letter, the letter from Edmund, so long expected, was put into Fanny's hands' (*P*, p. 487). Fanny has been long desirous of a letter from Edmund, however, it proves to be deeply frustrating as Edmund is infatuated with Mary Crawford, whom he professes to love, and is seemingly determined to ask her to marry him. Edmund is indecisive as a character and this is apparent in his letter, which attends to his various anxieties. Edmund has to be told by Mary Crawford to write to Fanny: 'Crawford told me that you were wishing to hear from me'' (*MP*, p. 487). Edmund is 'blinded, and nothing will open his eyes' (*MP*, p. 492) to Fanny's love for him, to Mary's selfish nature, and to Henry Crawford's less appealing attributes. Edmund writes to Fanny, whom he treats as his confidant. This letter from Edmund causes Fanny frustration, envy and jealousy, and she wishes 'never' for such a letter again (*MP*, p. 491). Instead of a letter being a source of joy this letter is certainly not for Fanny, 'there was nothing in' it 'to soothe irritation. She was almost vexed into displeasure, and anger, against Edmund' (*MP*, pp. 491-2).

Edmund is a self-involved character and his letter-writing practice reflects this aspect of him. Edmund writes that, 'it will be of comfort to me to tell you how things are, and what are my present plans' (*MP,* p. 488); his letters are centred on his own thoughts and feelings and rarely turn outwards from these to address his recipient. It is ironic, that, just as Fanny looks for any small degree of affection or show of love from Edmund, so he does the same with Mary Crawford. Edmund constantly tries to justify Mary Crawford's behaviour or lack of attention towards him. He is arrogant in his justifications because she does not greet him as he expects on his 'first reception' with her in London; he blames the 'weak side of her character' (*MP*, p. 488). Edmund blames Miss Crawford's friends for encouraging and enjoying her 'high spirits'', as if Mary should be tamed (he wonders if she might be 'detached from them', inferring that if he could take her away from her friends and their possible influence) (*MP*, p. 488). Later in the novel, Edmund admits that the Mary Crawford he loved was the 'creature of [his] own imagination' (*MP*, p. 530). Correspondence surrounding either from, to or about Mary Crawford go hand in hand with the emotions of jealousy and envy. When Mary Crawford asks Fanny if she has heard from Edmund—'Was his letter a long one? Does he give you much account of what he is doing? Is it Christmas gaieties that he is staying for?' (*MP*, p. 334)—the questions are seemingly innocent, yet when they are followed by 'How many Miss Owens are there?", Mary is 'trying to appear gay and unconcerned' (*MP*, p. 334), however, this suggests that Mary is actually jealous of the Miss Owens.

In another letter from Mary to Fanny, emotions of jealousy and envy are again revealed. In this letter, Mary infers that Mrs. Rushworth is jealous of Fanny: 'Shall I tell you how Mrs. Rushworth looked when your name was mentioned?' Mary delights in her teasing of Maria Rushworth and using Fanny's name as a tool of torment and admits this in a disingenuous style: 'and as I have no desire to tease her, I shall never *force* your name upon her again'

(*MP*, p. 456). In another letter Mary writes to Fanny she again talks of envy, after seeing Mrs. Rushworth's house she notes that her friend 'Mrs Fraser, is made for such a house, and it would not make *me* miserable' (*MP*, p. 482). When Edmund writes to Fanny about Mary, he says that he has 'no jealousy of any individual. It is the influence of the fashionable world altogether that I am jealous of' (*MP*, p. 489) Mary is a jealous and envious character of others; Edmund, however, is jealous not of anyone else desiring Mary but of others' influence upon her.

Edmund describes Mary Crawford's friend, Mrs. Fraser, as a 'cold-hearted, vain woman, who has married entirely from convenience'. Edmund moves on to describe Lady Stornaway as 'mercenary and ambitious' (*MP*, p. 488). In both instances, Edmund fails to see obvious or potential parallels with Mary Crawford. Edmund sees Mary Crawford's friends as bad influencers; he is wholly naïve and blind in his arrogance that Mary Crawford must love him as he does her. Edmund repeatedly remarks on how Mary Crawford is 'fond' of Fanny, that they both are 'united in' their love of Fanny (*MP*, p. 488). Edmund is obsessed that Mary Crawford must love Fanny above her friends; he has romanticised her great attachment' (*MP*, p. 489) to Fanny. Edmund needs Mary Crawford to love Fanny and vice versa, as if loving Fanny will make her a better, more noble person. Edmund is infatuated with Mary Crawford and has mistaken this for love. Several times Edmund writes that he 'cannot give her up' (*MP*, p. 489) and can think of no other woman as a wife. However, he only sees her as being capable of being 'noble' (*MP*, p. 489) and does not hold back when declaring her faults, albeit he believes that these faults are because of the influences of others.

Edmund's letter to Fanny is informal and although letter writing between men and women was frowned upon unless there was an understanding of engagement, Edmund is writing to

his cousin and confidant. There is nothing romantic in the letter towards Fanny. This letter relates news and is written because it will be of 'comfort to' Edmund to relate to Fanny what his plans are and how 'things now are' with himself (*MP*, p. 488). Edmund does love Fanny but not in the way that she desires him to, and this letter is written in the style of close friendship. Edmund has a close family connection and relationship with Fanny and feels he can express himself and his feelings to her about Mary Crawford, and because they both know her, Edmund feels he has a freedom to speak to her without fear. Edmund uses the space of a letter to reveal and express his inner thoughts, hopes and fears regarding Mary, believing that Fanny is an impartial party; again, Austen's use of irony here is striking.

Edmund first becomes attracted to Mary Crawford at Mansfield Park. He subsequently follows her to London and sees her in a different environment, in London. At different points in Edmund's letter he indicates that he is suffering from conflicting emotions. Edmund is unsure of Mary Crawford and her feelings towards him because of her 'manner' and her behaving differently. Edmund is confused by her 'altered' character in London when surrounded by her friends. Edmund sees a difference in Mary's 'high spirits' and recognises that she is a 'very different creature', but he still loves her and 'cannot give her up' (*MP*, pp. 488, 489). His comment, 'I cannot give her up', and the adamant reaffirmation of his decision to propose to Mary Crawford, has a peculiar emphasis. The Mary Crawford Edmund believes he knows from Mansfield Park is very different from the Mary Crawford in London. John Wiltshire suggests that Edmund's letter-writing 'style comes close to suggesting a stream-of-consciousness mode and is surely one of Jane Austen's great passages of writing'.[111] He writes down his thoughts and fears as they come to him, allowing himself to speak freely and

[111] John Wiltshire, 'Some Names in *Mansfield Park*: A Critique of Margaret Anne Doody's *Jane Austen's Names: Riddles, Persons, Places*', *Persuasions*', *The Jane Austen Journal*, 42 (2020), 218-226, p. 225.

intimately to Fanny; writing this in its entirety in a letter to Fanny gives Edmund a sense of freedom and a sense of relief sharing his thoughts and fears with a close cousin. The effect of Edmund's style is that it becomes painfully clear to Fanny than he does not see her in the capacity of a lover, but as a friend, and the heart-breaking truth that he believes Mary Crawford is the only woman for him should she refuse him will take a 'few years' (*MP*, p. 489) for him to recover from. Edmund considers his options of proposing and writing to Mary Crawford; however, he is aware that letters are often not only read by the recipient and fears that Mary will consult Mrs. Fraser. Edmund knows that 'a letter exposes to all the evil of consultation' (*MP,* p. 490) and fears that Mary will be easily persuaded against his proposal.

In Edmund's true character, he talks himself out of his initial thoughts and decides against writing the letter; however, he changes his mind again and later drops in a comment that is out of context: 'I think I shall certainly write' (*MP*, p. 491). Edmund is indecisive, an overthinker and often very contradictory. However, he is aware that if he writes a proposal letter, he can be more truthful; by using a letter he would be able to be 'more intimate' and that proposing by letter could be easier than 'in a face-to-face conversation'.[112] Edmund admits that his long 'letter, full' of his own concerns, would be enough to 'tire even the friendship of a Fanny' (*MP*, p. 490). Edmund does not use the pronoun 'you' before writing her name 'Fanny'; he strips her away as a person for the purpose of his letter, and listening to his concerns, she is an object, a sounding board. At the close of his letter, Edmund discusses that he has seen his sister, brother-in-law and Mary's brother Henry Crawford. Just as Edmund is oblivious to Mary Crawford's failings, he is also ignorant of Henry's more

[112] Laura R. Rowe, 'Beyond Drawing-Room Conversation: Letters in *Pride and Prejudice*' (2005) <jasna.org/essaycontest/2005/highschool.htm> [accessed 25 August 2023].

dubious character traits. Edmund believes that Henry 'knows his own mind' and is of 'inestimable quality' (*MP,* p. 490); Edmund's inability to appreciate the character failings of Mary and Henry, means that he is either a terrible judge of character, extraordinarily naïve or on the level of Mr Collin's stupidity, but without the comic value. As John Halperin astutely suggests, Crawford is 'none of the things the unperceiving Edmund thinks of him'.[113]

This letter shows the values of Fanny; the fact that she observes others and recognises their unique weaknesses gives her character a depth of perception that Edmund lacks. This letter shows Edmund's inability to see others for who and what they are. The purpose of this letter is to give the reader a clearer understanding of the virtues of Fanny and the fickleness of Edmund. It shows that Fanny sees others for what and who they are unlike Edmund: 'So very fond of me!' 'tis nonsense all' is Fanny's succinct response to the suggestion that Henry Crawford is in love with her. Mary Crawford 'loves nobody but herself and her brother. Her friends leading her astray for years! She is quite as likely to have led *them* astray. They have all, perhaps, been corrupting one another', is a further observation that she makes (*MP*, p. 492). The only letter Fanny writes in full is to Mary Crawford, and it is short and direct in her meaning and intentions. Fanny leaves no misinterpretation of her meaning and is strong in making sure that Mary Crawford understands that she has no interest in her brother Henry Crawford; 'I have seen too much of Mr. Crawford not to understand his manners; if he understood me as well, he would, I dare say, behave differently' (*MP*, p. 355-6). This letter further cements Fanny's sense of being clear and understood; she is not fickle or hesitant nor is she easily as blindsided as Edmund.

Persuasion and the art of self-pity

[113] John Halperin, 'The Trouble with *Mansfield Park*', *Studies in the Novel*, 7: 1 (1975), 6–23, p. 17.

In *Persuasion*, Mary Musgrove's 'art of whining', as Jan Fergus memorably puts it, comes across in her letter writing. [114] The opening line of Mary's first letter to Anne (dated '1st February') in the novel is written with a self-pitying attitude. Mary 'makes no apology' for her silence and declares that she knows 'how little people think of letters in such a place as Bath' (*P*, p. 177); Mary is clearly jealous that Anne is in Bath and she is not. As Fergus argues, 'Mary's whines involve turning even Mary's greeting to her sister into an accusation'.[115] Mary is envious of Anne; she believes that Anne is happy and busy in Bath, it being the place of social activity, while Mary believes herself stuck in Uppercross, where she thinks that nothing happens worthy of writing about. In Austen's novels there are occasions where the narrator remarks on letters about nothing, and in a letter to her sister of 1808 she famously wrote: 'My dear Cassandra, Where shall I begin? Which of all my important nothings shall I tell you first?'.[116] In *Mansfield Park*, Mary Crawford admits in a letter to Fanny that she has 'no news' (*MP*, p. 482), however she still provides a letter of length. Indeed, a comment on Lady Bertram in that novel, makes an ironic point about letters based on 'nothings': 'Everybody at all addicted to letter-writing, without having much to say, which will include a large proportion of the female world at least, must feel with Lady Bertram that she was out of luck in having such a capital piece of Mansfield news' (*MP*, p. 493). There was little for women to write about except the news from home, gossip and minor trials and tribulations.

The letter from Mary to Anne has no opening sentences with the usual polite civilities. Mary only thinks of herself, and she makes no effort to ask about Anne. Mary continues in her self-

[114] Jan Fergus, '"My Sore-Throats, You Know, Are Always Worse than Anybody's": Mary Musgrove and Jane Austen's Art of Whining', *Persuasions*, 15 (1993), <https://www.jasna.org/persuasions/printed/number15/fergus.htm > [accessed 10 August 2023], unpaginated.
[115] Fergus, unpaginated.
[116] *Jane Austen's Letters*, p. 130.

pitying style, accusing Anne of being 'too happy to care for Uppercross' (*P*, p. 177), or rather too happy to care for Mary and what she has been doing. Mary blames the dullness of her Christmas on the fact that Mr and Mrs Musgrove did not have 'one dinner party'. Her letter is full of snobbish asides – she comments briefly on the lack of entertainment on behalf of the Musgroves and that she does 'not reckon the Hayters as anybody' (*P*, p. 177). Mary sees them as lower social rank, and, as Jan Fergus comments: 'We have to admire the way that Mary gets two of her habitual whines in here, one about not having enough company, and the other about having Henrietta's choice of a husband'.[117] Mary does not hide that she does not like Charles Hayter and detests that he intends to marry Henrietta. After remarking upon the Hayters as being nobodies of consequence, Mary launches another attack on Mrs Harville; however, this attack stems from jealousy that Mary's children have not received the attention that the Harville's have. Mary admits that 'Mrs Musgrove seems to like' (*P*, p. 177) the Harville children better than her own. Mary accuses Mrs Harville of being an 'odd mother' (*P*, p. 177) as she has been apart from her children for some time whilst they have stayed at the Musgroves. This line is written with irony, and Mary further shows her inconsistent and contradictory character when she later suggests that she can 'leave' her children 'for a month or six weeks' (*P,* p. 178).

Mary depicts herself in this letter as isolated and comments that she has 'not had a creature call' on her, 'except for Charles Hayter' (*P,* p. 177). Mary's letter is written like a stream of consciousness she flits from one subject (her own sorrows and feelings of abandonment) to discussing the weather, and even that subject is filled with envy: 'but Mrs Musgrove seems to like' the Harville children better 'than her grandchildren. What dreadful weather we have had! It may not be felt in Bath, with your nice pavements' (*P*, p. 177). The purpose of Mary's

[117] Fergus, unpaginated.

letter is to complain and express her feelings of being hard-done-by, yet, importantly, it also relays vital information regarding Louisa and her perceived pending engagement to Captain Benwick.

Despite this information, the length of this printed letter in the novel helps to construct a sense of Mary's character and, above all, her self-pitying nature. Mary is jealous that Anne is in Bath and she is not, but also that Anne is acquainted with Mr Elliot, and Mary wishes she were too. Mary writes that she is always the one who is always out of 'luck' and is 'always out of the way when any thing desirable is going on' and further complains that she is 'always the last of my family to be noticed' (*P*, p. 177). Mary craves attention; she is forthcoming about her feelings of isolation and lack of inclusion in the family; however, this is only prevalent when Mary feels she is missing out. Mary moves on in her attack of others and their inattention towards her when she writes about the Admiral and Mrs Croft. Mary is quite perturbed that they have not called on her or included her in knowledge about their plans and leaves the letter off with the fact that she 'sees nothing of them' (*P,* p. 178) and feels a gross amount of inattention. However, her distaste for her neighbours soon changes into admiration when she receives a note from Mrs Croft. Like other of Austen's personal letters and letters written in her novels, this letter is signed off but left open to continue, which Mary admits she is grateful that she did. Like Mary Crawford in *Mansfield Park*, she adds essential information after closing her letter to Fanny, which is imperative to the plot, as does Jane to Elizabeth in *Pride and Prejudice.* Postscripts were added to letters to give the impression that the author could not tear themselves away from the recipient they were writing to, and a letter often acts as 'an imagined dialogue between' two people, which would be continued and returned to.[118] Letters are left open for the simple purpose of adding

[118] Maggie Gover. '"A Very Pretty Hand": The Questionable Value of Using Jane Austen's Letters as a Means of Knowing Austen', *Lifewriting Annual*, 2 (2008), 1–25, p. 17.

information that the author simply does not know yet: 'I kept my letter open, that I might send you word how Louisa bore her journey, and now I am extremely glad I did, having a great deal to add' (*P*, p. 178). Anne is shocked and delighted to read that Louisa and Captain Benwick are engaged, therefore leaving Captain Wentworth free. Mary soon changes her feelings towards the Crofts and contradicts her earlier sentiments towards them by now commenting that she had received a 'very kind, friendly note indeed, addressed to me'. Now that Mary has been addressed personally and feels included, she reverses her opinion on her neighbours and even remarks that she cannot wait to have them return from Bath and that the 'neighbourhood cannot spare such a pleasant family' (*P*, p. 178). Mary has no problem with her inconsistencies and contradictory comments when she feels she has been consulted and had attention paid to her. Mary feels justified in her remarks and never apologises for saying how she feels or thinks of others. Now that the Crofts have offered to 'convey anything' (*P*, p. 178) for Mary to Anne, Mary can write more in her letter and not pay the added postage costs, as they will hand deliver it.

This letter is pivotal for the novel; it adds comic value at the expense of Mary's character, for her inconsistencies, jealousy, habitual whining, ironic attacks on others, and snobbery. This letter is vital to the novel; it brings Anne Elliot a piece of news that is an astonishment too 'wonderful' (*P*, p. 179) to believe, that Captain Wentworth is not to marry Louisa Musgrove. Mary writes this letter over several days and adds necessary information to Anne and plot development as she writes without the restraints of the cost of post Mary can write her 'letter as long as' she likes, knowing that it will be hand delivered. This is letter is an example of Austen's use of comedy at the expense of a character and at the same time it is imperative to the plot; it brings joy to Anne and hope knowing that Captain Wentworth is not engaged. This letter is the beginning of neatly tying up relationships. Mary's letter and character is

unintentionally comical. She is in a constant state of gloom and self-pity and insistent that everyone else is happier than herself: ‘you must be a great deal too happy to care’, she writes and adds various statements of indulgent self-pity: ‘I am always out of the way when any thing desirable is going on’; ‘my sore-throats, you know, are always worse than anybody’s’. Mary is clearly not ill when she suggests that she is, and nor does she miss out on parties or gatherings. Her letters attest to her constant sense of being slighted or overlooked in ways that are comically absurd.

Conclusion

Letters are sources of intimate communications between the author and the recipient, and through Austen’s use of letters in her novels the reader gets an intimate view of them when the character reads them and learns new information or comes to a realisation about the author or recipient (in the case of Lucy Steele) of the letter. As discussed in previous chapters letters are used as a source of power: Lucy Steele, Caroline Bingley, Mary Crawford, Emma, and Mary Musgrove all need to regain some power over a situation where they feel they lack control. They all use letters, whether written by themselves or others, as an instrument of power. Lucy brandishes Edward’s letter around Elinor in order to gain power of a relationship that she feels she is losing; Caroline Bingley needs to regain power over the situation growing between Elizabeth and Darcy, and needs to thwart any obstacles in her way for her plans to marry Darcy and Bingley to marry Georgiana; Mary Crawford writes several letters to Fanny Price, to control the fallout from her brother’s social misdemeanours and continue in her plans for social elevation; Emma needs to regain power over her own fate and in order to do so, via a letter, safely makes sure that Harriet Smith is removed from the equation; and, finally, Mary Musgrove feels so powerless by her envy of others and feelings of neglect that

her only way to reassert herself is to try and manipulate some feelings of sympathy from Anne.

Chapter 4

Letters of self-justification and confession

Each of Austen's six published novels features a moment of confession, whereby a character seeks forgiveness and absolution, or an opportunity to provide their version of events. This is usually in the form of a letter that brings about a climactic change or resolution, or, as in the case of Frank Churchill in *Emma,* a validation to the reader of what is already suspected. According to Nixon and Penner, letters in a novel 'provide…confessional spaces' for Austen's male characters to ask for forgiveness and answer any outstanding questions.[119] However, it is not just male characters that use this virtual space. For example, Isabella in *Northanger Abbey*, in her letter to Catherine, claims never to think of Captain Tilney, yet the majority of her letter considers him; therefore, her letter acts as a kind of revelation despite its protestations otherwise.

In this final chapter of my thesis, I trace the connections between the confessional act and the medium of the letter in a series of prominent examples from Austen's fiction. In particular, I focus on letters in *Northanger Abbey*, *Sense and Sensibility, Mansfield Park* and *Emma*. For example, in *Northanger Abbey* Isabella's letter of is one of indirect confession in which she tries to salvage a self-made disastrous situation into an advantageous one. In *Sense and Sensibility* there is an exception to the rule of the confession always being written in a letter. Willoughby, upon hearing about Marianne's ill health and possible imminent death, hastens to visit Cleveland in person, and so his confession and seeking of forgiveness is verbal rather than written. Willoughby seeks absolution and is repentant, albeit for selfish reasons. One

[119] Cheryl L. Nixon and Louise Penner, 'Writing by the Book: Jane Austen's Heroines and the Art and Form of the Letter', *Persuasions*, 26: 1 (2005) <https://www.jasna.org/persuasions/on-line/vol26no1/penner_nixon.htm> [accessed 10 August 2023], unpaginated.

reason Willoughby's confession is not in a letter is that he felt he needed to visit her in person and directly, fearing Marianne's imminent demise or (more likely) unable to commit to the women he seduces, he never actually writes a letter. In *Mansfield Park*, Mary's letter is similar in its theme of manipulation for self-advantage as Isabella's letter is marked more by lack of what she does not write and what she instead implies. Frank Churchill's letter is a defensive confessionary one; he tries to justify his secretiveness, his flirtations with Emma and other aspects of why he has behaved in the way he has.

'[F]earful of some misunderstanding': Isabella's confessional letter in *Northanger Abbey*

In *Northanger Abbey,* Isabella Thorpe's letter is an example of an indirect confession. Isabella denies that she has been 'taken in' by Captain Tilney and tries to explain that she has committed no moral crime. She states that she was never fooled by Captain Tilney and his flirtations with her and that she is innocent of any supposed impropriety; it was all down to Captain Tilney's attentions towards her. Isabella writes to Catherine, looking to her to help reconcile with her brother James; however, as soon as Catherine reads Isabella's letter, she recognises it as being full of 'inconsistencies, contradictions, and falsehood' (*NA*, p. 224). Catherine has already received a letter from her brother James explaining that Isabella has betrayed him with Captain Tilney and 'that everything is at an end between Miss Thorpe' and himself (*NA*, p. 207). James writes to his sister and asks to be acquitted of any blame; he looks to Catherine to absolve him from guilt at the end of his engagement to Isabella by her deceit.

Catherine (as does James) believes Isabella will soon be engaged to Captain Tilney. Therefore, when Catherine receives a letter from Isabella, she detects that Isabella's letter is premeditated to try and clear her path back into James' and Catherine's affections. After

Catherine learns from her brother that Isabella and James parted ways 'by mutual consent' (*NA*, p. 208) it is curious that when Isabella writes, she believes there to be no more than a misunderstanding between herself and James and that she is quite anxious to hear from him: 'I am quite uneasy about your dear brother, not having heard from him since he went to Oxford; and am fearful of some misunderstanding' (*NA*, p. 222). Of course, Isabella knows what she has done, and when her expectations of a more advantageous marriage to a Captain fail, she needs to reconnect with James. Isabella writes that it is 'very difficult to know whom to trust, and young men never know their minds two days together' (*NA*, p. 223); this suggests that Isabella has been duped and believed the Captain's flirtations with her indicated a more intimate footing. As the letter continues, Isabella plays this role of the victim, suggesting that she abhors the Captain and that he was the one who would 'follow and tease' and was quite her 'shadow'. Again, Austen plays with the discrepancy between Isabella's versions of events in her letter and other, more credible, suggestions; Isabella's remark that 'many girls might have been taken in' whereas she was not, has, therefore, the opposite effect of what is intended (*NA*, p. 223). As Carrie Write suggests, the 'Captain will suffer no such permanent consequences for exercising his patriarchal privilege or choice in flirting with' Isabella, but she may well suffer and already hints at having lost her reputation as she does not attend 'to the Rooms this age, nor to the Play' (*NA*, p. 223).[120] Isabella already recognises that with Captain Tilney's rejection, not only is her reputation in jeopardy, but she has a distinct lack of marital possibilities for herself and, therefore, a somewhat dubious future. Isabella's letter to Catherine is full of misdirection, and she writes to manipulate and construct a better truth of her version of events and happenings between herself and Captain Tilney. Isabella tries to portray herself as the victim rather than the villain, implying that she

[120] Wright, Carrie . 'Epistolary Machinations in the Female Gothic: *Northanger Abbey* and the "Horrid" Novels.' (2019) <jasna.org/publications-2/persuasions-online/volume-40-no-1/wright/#:~:text=The%20epistolary%20machinations%20in%20Northanger> [accessed 8 Aug. 2023].

must be forgiven and absolved from any wrongdoing. In this sense, Isabella is reminiscent of some of Austen's more duplicitous male characters. She prefigures characters such as Wickham and Willoughby; both easy conversationalists and selfish actors who look for financial gain and use letters to justify their ends. Her letter is an act of self-justification and confessional only in an indirect sense. Through it, she hopes to control the narrative of her behaviour and reclaim her control of the story, albeit in a rather misleading way.

Confessional letters in *Sense and Sensibility*

Letters and confessions interplay in curious ways in Austen's later novel, *Sense and Sensibility*. Willoughby arrives at Cleveland after being told that 'Marianne Dashwood was dying of a putrid fever' (*S&S*, p. 374). He arrives seeking Elinor to 'offer some kind of explanation, some kind of apology' and 'obtain something like forgiveness' (*S&S*, p. 361). Willoughby's order of nouns (explanation and apology, before forgiveness) further cement his self-centred personality. Willoughby's confession, as I have indicated above, is not in a letter format, but this is itself significant given how much of the ill-fated romance between Marianne and him is mediated through epistolary exchange and, finally, the manipulation of a letter. There are two ways of examining Willoughby's language here: 'some kind of' and 'something like' might be him expressing his depressed state in terms of his limited expectations for redemption, or it could be him recognising he can never be truly forgiven for his 'immoral behaviour'.[121] As previously suggested, Elinor is a character that needs proof, and Willoughby's confession 'is proof of how wrong he really' has been.[122] Willoughby does not take ownership of the consequences of his actions; his offer of a 'kind of apology' is a half-hearted attempt at redemption, and his 'kind of explanation' (*S&S*, p. 361) is not an

[121] C. Durning Carroll,'Willoughby's Apology', *Persuasions* < https://jasna.org/persuasions/on-line/vol30no1/carroll.html? > [accessed 2 Aug. 2023], unpaginated.
[122] Durning Carroll, unpaginated.

actual, detailed explanation,. Willoughby is trying to absolve his conscience and knows that he should not and does not deserve complete forgiveness, yet he attempts to gain half the idea of it. As C. Durning Carroll astutely comments: 'Willoughby's apology, though long and apparently sincere, will not alter his reputation as a libertine'; nothing will change what Willoughby has done, and nothing will change his reputation, and even Elinor later recognises that, '[t]he whole of his behaviour…from the beginning to the end of the affair has been grounded on selfishness' (*S&S,* p. 345).[123]

Like the characters in Austen's other novels, Captain Wentworth and Mr Darcy, who write their significant letters of disclosure in 'the spur of the moment, without a hint of premeditation', Willoughby's visit to Cleveland is not premeditated.[124] As his visit is spontaneous, it adds to the sense of urgency that he genuinely believes Marianne is on her deathbed, and he initially perhaps believes he must atone for his behaviour towards her. Upon his arrival, Willoughby wishes to know if Marianne 'is out of danger', and when he is told she is, he replies with an unfinished thought, 'Had I known as much half an hour ago—' (S&S, p. 360), inferring that he probably would not have visited and that instead of visiting physically he would possibly have written a letter. However, this lack of committing his true feelings, thoughts, confessions, and apology to a letter at any point in their relationship further shows Willoughby's lack of ability to write genuinely from his own heart.[125] Willoughby confesses all to Elinor, hoping that she will 'intercede on his behalf and seek Marianne's forgiveness'.[126] In this period, a gentleman would rarely endanger a woman's

[123] Durning Carroll, unpaginated.
[124] Lenckos, Elisabeth . '" . . . [I]nventing Elegant Letters," Or, Why Don't Austen's Lovers Write More Often?' <https://jasna.org/persuasions/on-line/vol26no1/lenckos.htm> [accessed 18 July 2023], unpaginated.
[125] Lenckos, unpaginated.
[126] Gillian Dooley and Charles Dufour, '"A More Gentle, Less Dignified, Forgiveness": Willoughby's Apology in the Context of Austen's Religious Beliefs', < https://jasna.org/publications-2/persuasions-online/volume-38-no-3/dooley-dufour/ >, 38: 3 (2018) [accessed 10 August 2023], unpaginated.

reputation by writing to her without the understanding of an engagement; however, if Willoughby was a gentleman and this was his reason for never writing, his concern for Marianne's reputation was of little thought to him when he was riding about the country with her unchaperoned. Marianne's reputation is jeopardised because of Willoughby; as well as conducting a clandestine correspondence, she is 'guilty of the social impropriety of riding in an open carriage with a young man she barely knows'.[127]

Willoughby arrives in a confessional state of mind and, as previously stated, this is not the first time Elinor is 'trapped into the role of confessor'.[128] She has been previously forced into hearing Lucy Steele's confession that she is engaged to Edward, as well as Colonel Brandon's confession about his ward and Willoughby's affair with her. As Rebecca Richardson suggests, the Colonel could have written to Elinor explaining all he knew about Willoughby and his ward Eliza in a letter, as Darcy does to Elizabeth; however, when speaking, the 'Colonel repeatedly edits and revises his own motivations and reasoning'.[129] If his speech had been on paper, it would have been full of blotting out and re-writes; therefore, as a letter, this would not have worked. The Colonel had to speak to Elinor to show his anxiety, his frustrations and physically see him wrestle with his conscience about how much he should divulge about his own circumstances and what he knows concerning Willoughby. Darcy, in contrast, is a more confident writer of his own narrative. Willoughby is a more slippery character than the upright Brandon or the proud Darcy, and his relationship with the written word in terms of conveying his version of events suggests as much. When Willoughby initially leaves Marianne, his excuse is that his aunt Mrs. Smith 'exercised the privilege of riches upon a

[127] Paula Byrne, 'Manners' in *Jane Austen in Context*, ed. Janet Todd (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 297–305, p. 301.
[128] Rebecca Richardson, 'Dramatizing Intimacy: Confessions and Free Indirect Discourse in *Sense and Sensibility*', *ELH*, 81 (2014), 225–244, p. 229.
[129] Richardson, p. 232.

poor dependent cousin, by sending [him] on business to London' (*S&S*, p. 88); he reveals nothing else. At this point in the novel, Marianne has no idea that Willoughby has left Colonel Brandon's ward, Eliza, with child. Nor does Marianne know that Willoughby has been given the opportunity by his aunt for his past to be forgiven and for him to make amends for his affair with Eliza, but only if he marries her; Willoughby refuses and is 'dismissed from her favour and her house' (*S&S*, p. 366). Having decided that he values money over morality, Willoughby leaves for London and leaves Marianne. Willoughby does not need to visit Marianne the day he leaves; he could have written his 'apology' to Marianne for breaking his engagement to see her but instead he decides to 'deliver it in person' (*S&S*, p. 366). Interestingly, Elinor questions this: 'a note would have answered every purpose. Why was it necessary to call?' (*S&S*, p. 367); Willoughby, we can infer, aimed to save his pride and divert suspicion from his affair. As a failed Austen hero, Willoughby does not commit his narrative to a letter; he cannot commit himself to Eliza or Marianne, therefore, would never commit ink to paper and confess.

Notably, the only letter that Willoughby seems to have written, ending the affair between himself and Marianne, is later suggested not to have been composed by himself at all (as we have seen, he accuses his wife of dictating it to him for him to write). Whilst Willoughby is breakfasting with his fiancée, Sophia Grey, Marianne's letter arrives, and Willoughby later remarks to Elinor on 'its size, the elegance of the paper, the hand-writing' (S&S, p. 371), all of which Sophia notices. Sophia is shrewdly observant and would have quickly realised what this letter signified, as 'the ideal love letter was clearly structured, neatly presented on good quality paper, and ran to several pages in length'.[130] Willoughby confesses to Elinor that he

[130] Sally Holloway, *The Game of Love in Georgian England: Courtship, Emotions and Material Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), p. 51. See, also, p. 31 of this thesis for more on the look and style of love letters in the period.

did not write the letter in which he ends his affiliation with Marianne and returns her letters and her lock of hair. As previously noted, Willoughby then asks Elinor what she thought of the look and style of the letter and Elinor guesses what his comment implies: 'Your wife!—The letter was in your own hand-writing' (S&S, p. 372). Willoughby then accuses his wife of dictating the letter to him because of her jealousy and her determination to injure Marianne and sever any relations he might have with her. Sophia Grey, like Lucy Steele, uses the mode and proof of a letter as a way of marking her territory.

'If he is to die': Confession and desire in *Mansfield Park*

The line between letters of confession and letters of manipulation runs finely throughout *Mansfield Park*. Mary Crawford writes the first letter of confession in *Mansfield Park* to Fanny, albeit her confession at 'trembling' at the news of Mr. Bertram's ill health is a thin veil for her selfish desires and demonstrates her shallow character (*MP*, p. 502). In this letter Mary writes to Fanny, she further exposes that she knows more than she openly writes, as do other Austen characters who are disingenuous, such as Caroline Bingley in *Pride and Prejudice*, Isabella in *Northanger Abbey*, Lucy Steele in *Sense and Sensibility* and Frank Churchill in *Emma*. The initial purpose of this letter is to ask about Tom Bertram's health after she hears that he is declining. Mary desires to know how well (or rather how poorly) Edmund's older brother is. This is a disingenuous and thinly-veiled attempt at showing concern, but in reality, she wants to know how near-death Tom Bertram is. It would suit Mary if Edward inherited the title of Sir and all that comes with it, believing that as he would no longer be the second son, he would give up the church profession and, in Mary's eyes, be more worthy marriage material. She openly suggests that should Mr. Bertram die, it would not be such a bad occurrence that his 'wealth and consequence' (*MP*, p. 502) would fall into

the hands of his brother Edmund. Therefore, she is easing the way for her to marry Edmund, whom she desires to marry but not as a clergyman with limited wealth.

Within this letter, Mary promotes herself as being 'philanthropic and virtuous' (*MP*, p. 503); however, Fanny knows very well that these are virtues that Mary lacks. Mary reveals her knowledge of the world around her and hints at its immoral tendencies: 'The Aylmers are pleasant people; and her husband away she can have nothing but enjoyment. I give her credit for promoting his going dutifully down to Bath, to fetch his mother' (*MP*, p. 503). The not-so-hidden context is that Mary and Fanny both suspect that Maria has potentially sent her husband away in order to have more intimacy with Henry Crawford. Mary asks Fanny not to 'make herself uneasy with any queer fancies' (*MP*, p. 503); because Henry has been spending time at Richmond, obviously in the company of Maria, why should Fanny worry? If Mary did not say this, Fanny would be none the wiser. Mary taunts Fanny as if she is preparing her for a scandal that is about to break. Mary has a plan for Fanny to marry her brother Henry and should Mr. Bertram die, she will marry Edmund. Mary's letter to Fanny does not enquire about her health or well-being (this is not familiar correspondence written between friends); instead, Mary is writing to find out gossip and knowingly or unknowingly confesses that she knows more than she openly writes. Initially Mary writes because she is alarmed at the fact that Tom Bertram 'has a bad chance of ultimate recovery' and has practically written him off as soon to be deceased, 'such a fine young man cut off in the flower of his days is most melancholy' (*MP*, p. 502). In one moment, Mary writes, 'I need not say how rejoiced I shall be to hear there has been any mistake' believing Tom Bertram is so poorly, yet in another, she writes: 'If he is to die, there will be *two* poor young men less in the world; and with a fearless face and bold voice would I say to any one, that wealth and consequence could fall into no hands more deserving of them' (*MP*, p. 502). Mary is quick to reinforce that Henry 'cares for

nobody but' Fanny (*MP*, p. 504). However, this declaration, along with the knowledge that Henry has been in the company of Maria, only reinforces Fanny's thoughts to the opposite. Mary's letter continues to confess more than she knows without openly confessing anything; just like Isabella's letter in *Northanger Abbey*, there is a sense of premeditation and deceitfulness set in motion to clear a path for their ends.

Mary continues with excuses for not writing before and blames this on her brother Henry, who has not spurred her on because of his absence. Mary suggests that her brother is 'devoted' (*MP*, p. 455) to Fanny yet also adds that there will be 'no three or four lines passionnées from the most devoted H. C. in the world' (*MP*, p. 455) added from him to the end of her letter because he is on business at his estate in Norfolk. This textual absence is significant. Henry never actually writes to Fanny and, like Willoughby in *Sense and Sensibility,* never commits on paper the grand passions to which his sister refers. Mary uses French expressions twice in this letter and once in a letter later in the novel when relating the shocking news of Henry and Mrs Rushworth's affair (the latter example I have discussed previously in this thesis). One way for Austen to hint at just how fashionably deplorable Henry and Maria's affair is, is for her to add this French phrasing. Austen (probably like many other people at the time) had an ambivalent relationship with French both because of the history of the French Revolution, and a genuine fear that this could happen in England, and the more recent history of the Napoleonic Wars: 'England was shaken politically by the French Revolution and drawn into a struggle for survival that lasted almost to the end of Austen's life', writes Warren Roberts.[131] Austen's view of the social hierarchy and the balance of her world as she knew it was being shaken. Avrom Fleishman pointedly argues that *Mansfield Park* appears at a 'crucial point in the transition of English society to the

[131] Warren Roberts, *Jane Austen and the French Revolution* (London: Athlone Press, 1995), p.3.

modern age'; there existed a genuine fear that the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars would have a great impact on English life.[132] Fearing that loose morals would lead to a decline in the way of English life and that England might potentially have a French Revolution, any and all immoral behaviour should be frowned upon and 'earnestness, sobriety, moral strictness' and self-discipline was to be encouraged. Though her novels, are far from simple works of moral didacticism, Austen was arguably influenced by contemporary attempts at stabilising and re-establishing 'individual duty and responsibility'.[133] The use of French words that Mary uses fits her fashionable and ultimately immoral character; she is flirtatious, witty, opinionated, and vivacious. Mary is more acquainted with the world, and the changing society than Fanny is, and although at times she knows a keenness for friendship, Mary also likes to say things that she thinks others will find shocking, particularly Fanny.

This letter is vital to the plot because it provides a deeper sense of the serious moral flaws of Mary's character; it lays the foundations for what is about to happen between Henry and Maria; and it proves to Fanny that she has been right all along in her observations of Mary and Henry. Mary is a social climber, practical in her approach to love and marriage, and Fanny sees through this façade. After Fanny reads this letter, she sees 'so much to condemn…She was mortified.' (*MP*, p. 505) In the traditional sense, this letter is not a letter of confession. However, Austen uses irony, allowing the character Mary Crawford to confess to more than she knows by her sense of implication and news of others' activities.

[132] Roberts, p. 6.
[133] Roberts, p. 201.

Frank Churchill's explanations

Just as Willoughby's confession brings Elinor's character to the forefront of the novel, so Frank Churchill's letter of explanation brings Emma back to the forefront of the novel. Indeed, Patricia D. Davis has argued that the letter is formative both of character and plot: 'Emma never loses sight of herself, and, with no little assistance from Frank Churchill's letters, the reader never loses sight of Emma'.[134] The role of letters in *Emma* plays a crucial part in the development of the story, especially in the case of Frank Churchill. It is only through his letter we are allowed to see his thoughts and reflections. Initially, it is a letter that announces Frank Churchill's arrival, and his letter at the end of the novel reveals his character in deeper ways. There is an initial hint of a love triangle in *Emma*, between Frank Churchill, Mr Knightley and Emma. Yet this love triangle does not exist, and the letter at the end of the novel reveals this. Mr Knightley's 'contempt for Frank's smooth, plausible, but insincere manners is highly revealing'[135]; Mr Knightley recognises the character of Frank Churchill for the insincere character he is in terms of this plot. Mr Knightley sees through Frank Churchill precisely because of something false about his letter writing.

Towards the end of the novel, Frank writes a letter of confession and explanation to his stepmother Mrs Weston, who in turn shares this letter with Emma. After reading the letter, Emma finds that she is 'more willing to forgive Frank Churchill his improprieties than she had been when she was informed of his engagement by the Westons'.[136] This letter does not move forward or change the novel's plot; instead, it is a letter of explanation, tying up loose

[134] Patricia D. Davis, 'Jane Austen's Use of Frank Churchill's Letters in Emma', *Persuasions* 10 (1998) < https://jasna.org/persuasions/printed/number10/davis.htm?#:~:text=In%20fact%20as%20subject%2C%20he,resurrects%20Frank%20Churchill%20as%20character.> [accessed 7 August 2023], unpaginated.
[135] U. C. Knoepflmacher, 'The Importance of Being Frank: Character and Letter-Writing in Emma', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 7: 4 (1967), 639-658, p. 641.
[136] Davis, unpaginated.

ends should anyone still be confused or curious about who sent the piano to Jane Fairfax and why Jane should be so intolerant or jealous of Emma. The purpose of Frank's letter, which is six pages long in a standard modern edition, is for him to explain his conduct and to confess to the secrets he has held.

In the opening paragraph, Frank declares that he has 'been forgiven by one who had still more to resent' (*E*, 476); Jane Fairfax has forgiven him, and his uncle has pardoned him. Frank Churchill, through this letter of confession, has already sought forgiveness, yet he seeks it from Mrs Weston and hints at seeking it from her friends too. Through this letter, Frank confesses to his secret engagement with Jane Fairfax. Frank openly admits that he should have visited her and his father before, yet he did not arrive until 'Miss Fairfax was in Highbury' (*E*, p. 477). He takes for granted with self-assurance that he will be forgiven by Mrs Weston. In Frank's letter, he confesses to keeping secrets, his engagement to Jane and their secret correspondence, his secret gift of the piano, and his open flirtations with Emma, all to guard his and Jane's secret romance. Frank confesses to deceiving his family and acquaintances all for his own benefit, albeit claiming that this was all because of love. Frank admits that his behaviour towards Emma was 'more than it ought' (*E*, p. 477) to have been and, like the character Edward in *Sense and Sensibility,* he believed that it was only his feelings at risk: 'The danger is my own; I am doing no injury to anybody but myself' (*S&S*, p. 417). Elizabeth Lenckos suggests that Frank risks nothing for the woman he professes to love, unlike Darcy and Wentworth, who go against social convention and write rapidly without premeditation; Frank 'keeps his engagement and his correspondence to Jane a secret because he desires to endanger neither the pleasure of her company not the privilege of his

inheritance'.[137] Frank only writes his letter after his aunt has died and therefore after he is secure of his uncle's permission to marry and knows his inheritance is secure.

In this novel, letters are integral to the secret relationship between Jane Fairfax and Frank Churchill. As L. Bao Bui observes: 'In Emma, as in real life, gossip, rumours, news, information, and personal secrets travel through the social networks both by word of mouth and by postal correspondence'.[138] Jane Fairfax's trips to the post office in the rain cause gossip and speculation, but her secret engagement with Frank Churchill is not revealed until the end of the novel when Frank writes to his mother-in-law and confesses all. Letter writing in *Emma* allows for sharing news and gossip and enables couples to 'conduct courtship (both public and clandestine'.[139] Letter writing and sending do not come without their perils: Bui points out that in writing and sending letters in secret, Jane Fairfax has the 'most to lose from a letter "carried wrong"' or being delivered into the wrong hands and read by people other than its intended recipient'. [140]

When Emma learns of Frank Churchill and Jane Fairfax's engagement Emma jumps 'with surprise; and, horror-struck, exclaims, '"Jane Fairfax!—Good God! You are not serious? You do not mean it?"' (*E*, p. 237). As the reader, we are as shocked as Emma upon this discovery of a secret engagement. This letter does not alter the plot of the novel; however, binds loose ends together and gives the reader (us or the characters within the novel) a chance to decide if he is a character that we sympathise with or should we judge him harshly because of his actions.[141]

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[137] Lenckos, unpaginated.
[138] L. Bao Bui, 'Epistolary Culture in *Emma*: Secrets and Social Transgressions', *Persuasions* 37: 1 (2016) < https://jasna.org/publications-2/persuasions-online/vol37no1/bui/#:~:text=In%20Emma%20epistolary%20culture%20manifests,%2C%20professional%2C%20and%20commercial%20contacts. > [accessed 8 August 2023], unpaginated.
[139] Bui, unpaginated.
[140] Bui, unpaginated.
[141] Davis, unpaginated.

Frank writes in his opening sentence to Mrs Weston that his letter 'will be read with candour and indulgence.' (*E*, p. 476). Frank is not giving her any other option but to do so, of course; he assumes that Mrs Weston and anyone else reading this letter will be open-minded and impartial and will pamper his need for the self-indulgence of explaining. In this sense, he writes with a conceited confidence in himself and his actions. His compliments are somewhat excessive: 'You are all goodness' (*E*, p. 476); indeed, Mr Knightley sardonically responds to the unnecessarily extravagant flourishes of his style: 'Humph!—a fine complimentary opening' (*E*, p. 485). He uses the pronoun 'I' nine times in as many sentences in the opening of his letter: I believe, I made, I have, I write, I may and, finally, in a short sentence ending with 'I shall not discuss it here.' (*E*, p. 476); this consistent use of the first-person pronoun reinforces that all his actions, behaviours and decisions have been about him, his happiness and his desires. Mr Knightley, argues Lynda A. Hall, 'exposes the letter's moral evasiveness' and at times 'severely condemns Frank's insincerities'; all of Austen's rogues are 'self-serving' and 'Frank Churchill, conversely does not have the moral character to see beyond his own wants and needs'.[142]

Frank refuses to justify why he feels he had the right to secretly engage himself, knowing that it must be kept a secret, and knowing that his family, namely his aunt, would disapprove of this engagement, yet he engaged himself to Jane Fairfax. Frank's securing Jane as his fiancée is more about his needs and feelings: 'Had she refused, I should have gone mad.' (*E*, p. 476). Again, Frank puts emphasis on the word 'I'; he suggests he would have gone mad, and adds nothing about what Jane may have felt or even if she fully understood why the engagement

[142] Lynda Hall, 'Austen's Attractive Rogues: Willoughby, Wickham and Frank Churchill', *Persuasions: The Jane Austen Journal* 18 (1996): 186-90 [accessed 19 July 2023], p. 189.

had to be secret. To further justify himself and seek an unspoken pardon for his behaviour, he lays his reasonings down to nature and the fact that he is his father's son: 'If you need further explanation, I have the honour, my dear madam, of being your husband's son' (*E*, p. 477); suggesting that he cannot help who he is, that he is the product of his father therefore ultimately he is unaccountable for his actions. Frank Churchill believes he automatically inherits his father's optimism for hope and again appeals to Mrs Weston's feelings for her husband, in the presumption that the love and softness she feels for her husband she must automatically feel for his son.

Frank openly admits to manipulating his father's feelings towards himself and that he failed to visit his father or even attend his wedding. 'I must work on my father's compassion, by reminding him that so long as I absented myself from his house, so long I lost the blessing of knowing you' (*E*, p. 477). Frank Churchill manipulates people and situations; even this confession letter attempts to manipulate people to view things his way. Emma is also arguably a manipulative character in the novel. Yet, though she persuades Harriet Smith against accepting Mr Martin's proposal and constantly encourages her to aim for higher social standing in a husband, this ultimately leads to her suffering towards the end of the novel.

To further highlight Frank's selfish nature, he only mentions Emma because of his father; Mr Weston has given him his opinion on his behaviour towards Emma and drops him a 'few words' (*E*, p. 477), and it is only because of this that Frank mentions her at all. So determined was Frank in his misdirection of feelings for Jane that his overindulgent flirtations with Emma were calculated; they were to help his 'concealment'. Emma was nothing more than an 'object' of plausible misdirection. (*E*, p. 477). There were no other

young women for Frank to use as a flirtation device; Emma was the obvious choice. Frank's further excuse for using Emma was that he was 'convinced of her indifference' (*E*, p. 477) towards him, just as Darcy was convinced of Jane's indifference to Bingley. Frank further explains that it was his 'wish' to believe this; therefore, should he be held accountable if she simply did not understand the rules of his game? Frank confesses that he was within a 'moment of confessing the truth' (*E*, p. 478) to Emma about his secret engagement, however, he did not as he 'fancied that she was not without suspicion' to 'some degree' (*E*, p. 478). The fact is, Frank had no idea that Emma did not know that he was just using her; otherwise, she would not have fancied herself in love with him for a short time. Again, Frank has satisfied himself with no consideration about the impact of his actions and behaviours on others. Frank explains the delivery of the pianoforte which he gifts Jane Fairfax, and again we see that he took control of this and admits that he gave her no option but to accept this gift, knowing full well that it would cause suspicion and gossip within the community around her. Frank indulged his needs and did not consider the consequences that would befall Jane. In the novel, Austen allows us to appreciate what Emma is thinking and Mr Knightley is vocal in his thoughts and opinions, but Austen is 'careful to present Frank Churchill through externals only', most obviously in this letter.[143]

There are times in the letter where Frank Churchill eulogises Jane and uses over-indulgent flattery of her, for example: 'no description can describe her', 'never was there a human creature who would so designedly suppress her own merit' (*E*, p. 479). Frank uses expressions of an unearthly nature; this pedestal he places Jane on is arguably not just from deep feelings of love but his more self-centred feelings to own such an unnatural being. It is not until Jane has reprimanded Frank that he sees the errors of his ways and he is forced to

[143] Knoepflmacher, p. 640.

reflect upon his actions. It is because Jane 'disapproved' of his actions, and only after she has told him this that he admits he has 'behaved shamefully' (*E*, p. 480). It is not until Frank pushes Jane too far with this over-flirtatious behaviour with Emma at Box Hill that his recklessness threatens his understanding with Jane, and she accepts a post in Ireland to end their engagement. Frank then pleads that his behaviour was because of his desire to keep their engagement concealed. Frank Churchill and Jane Fairfax's relationship in the novel is all connected through letters. We do not see what Frank writes to Jane or vice versa, but Jane's frequent visits to the post office are remarked upon, and again Austen uses the object of the letter to prove that there is an understanding of a relationship. The contents of their letters are concealed from the reader, just as their secret engagement is concealed from everyone in Highbury. They are not disclosed as part of the big revealment at the end of this novel but remain private.

The entirety of Highbury's social life exists and thrives on openness: letters and their contents are shared openly at gatherings and in some cases too much information is shared; as is the case of Miss Bates describing Jane Fairfax's letters in minute detail, much to the frustration of Emma. As David Wheeler has argued in an article on the postal service and privacy in this novel, 'Jane is determined that her romantic correspondence with Frank Churchill remain clandestine'.[144] Jane and Frank Churchill's engagement, romance, and correspondence is kept secret and this marks, argues Wheeler, a 'cultural transition in the nature of courtship from public, social ritual to a private matter' as everything about letters—writing them, receiving them, and posting them at the post office—was, in Austen's period, a predominantly social experience.[145] The post office was a public place where people gathered

[144] David Wheeler, 'The British Postal Service, Privacy, and Jane Austen's "Emma."' *South Atlantic Review*, 63: 4, 1998, pp. 34-47, p. 34.
[145] Wheeler, p. 35.

and exchanged gossip and when a letter arrives in Highbury it is shared and discussed and part of the public domain. In contrast, Jane and Frank's letters remain private. As readers, we are not privy to their correspondence, and we never get to read their letters. As Wheeler concludes: letters 'provide privacy for Frank and Jane and essentially define their relationship'.[146]

Conclusion

The confessional, apologetic or explanatory letter, or space as in Willoughby's case, serves a purpose as regards the plot and characters of Austen's novels. Austen uses this literary device to demonstrate a wide range of emotional responsiveness. She both shows the reader the inner thoughts and, at times, the turmoil of the writer, and in other cases, such as Isabella Thorpe's letter, merely reveals the disingenuity of character. Willoughby did not write his confession in a letter, possibly because he believed Marianne would die before he could write and send it. However, Willoughby's character never commits to anything or anyone that does not aid him in some financial or beneficial way, whether that is for self-gratification or advantageous reasons. To a degree, many confessions are only made so by characters who do so for self-interested purposes. Confessions can be relayed in detail by not saying or professing too much to try and sway the reader in their favour, as in the case of Isabella in *Northanger Abbey*. Frank Churchill's letter is in a sense a non-apologetic confession; he did what he did because he felt he had no other choice, regardless of the consequences to others. One common theme of all the confessionary letters or spaces is that all of them suffer from the human trait of selfishness, yet it gives the reader or listener a degree of power. After reading Isabella's letter, Catherine has the power to choose to believe her and reunite Isabella with her brother, but she chooses not to. Elinor is in a position of power after Willoughby's

[146] Wheeler, p. 37.

visit to decide what she believes and what she tells Marianne. Emma chooses to show Frank Churchill's letter to Mr Knightley, and she has the power to decide to forgive Frank Churchill or not. Fanny Price is often forced into being a confessionary listener and reader; she sees through other characters, and she remains morally virtuous; she rises to a position of power as a reward for her morals and principles.

These confessional letters and would-be letters are important to the plots and the characters in the novels, provoking actions and reactions to them. Often after receiving, reading, and writing a letter, characters are forced to analyse their behaviour and that of others around them. The course of the characters in the plots change directions and their opinions, however, Frank Churchill's letter does not change anything within the novel's plot as its mainly functions in terms of registering its recipients' reactions to his character as conveyed (as they interpret it) through his letter-writing style. Emma is forced to confront her own behaviour and her interpretations of Jane Fairfax and Frank Churchill. She is also forced to recognise how she has read letters primarily for her own gratification; for example, registering the delight of seeing her own name in Frank's letter. Austen wrote of Emma that she was a character whom 'no one but myself will much like'.[147] This letter may be a confession from Frank Churchill, yet Austen makes Emma's reaction to it at the forefront of the narrative impact of the novel. In letters of confession, it is the recipient of the letter that Austen emphasises as much as the initial letter writer.

[147] James Edward Austen-Leigh, *A Memoir of Jane Austen And Other Family Recollections*, ed. Kathryn Sutherland (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 157.

Conclusion

In this thesis I have traced the use of Austen's letters in her six published novels, in order of publication: *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) *Mansfield Park* (1814) *Emma* (1815), *Persuasion* and *Northanger Abbey* (1817). As Jenny Davidson suggests, letters were not just a 'universal tool for' Austen, they are a 'highly economical instrument for storytelling whose integration into third-person narration, sometimes in direct quotation but also often in summary or paraphrase, represents an essential component of Austen's fictional technique'.[148]

For the purpose of this research thesis, I looked at the letters in Austen's novels thematically, and grouped them into four main themes: letters of love; letters surrounding secrets and scandals; letters that concern jealousy and envy; and, finally, confessional letters. These four themes run through all of Austen's published works, and through the letters included in these novels they reveal more about the characters that write and read them and are also integral at times to important plot changes.

Austen uses the letter to show intimate feelings and predominantly as a method of saying on paper what a character would struggle to say in face-to-face conversation for one reason or another. The letter is also a physical object that can be treasured, held, touched, and even kissed, but it can also be used as a metaphorical dagger intent on injuring another just by the sight of it, without even considering its contents (as in the case of Elinor and Lucy Steele's interaction over a letter). A letter can be a mark of something beginning, such as an adventure

[148] Jenny Davidson, *Reading Jane Austen* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), p. 19.

or a relationship, but it can also mark an end. Austen's letters can reveal a person's character by what they say or by what they do not say, by the language they choose, the context it is written in, whether a letter has been thoughtfully planned or written in the heat of the moment.

Letter writing was a natural part of everyday existence to Austen as a way of communicating, with friends, family and loved ones. It was not just the writing of a letter but the anticipation of receiving one: waiting for a letter to arrive was a substitution for the sender of the letter to physically arrive; a letter was the embodiment of the person writing it. In the case of a love letter, this would show a level of commitment; it was a physical embodiment of a promise. Captain Wentworth writes his love letter to Anne in response to Anne's discussion of the mortality and immortality of love with Captain Harville; this letter is a contract that he will continue to love her even when all hope has gone. *Persuasion* is not an epistolary novel, yet the whole novel is written around this letter as the culminating moment of eight years of absence.

Many of the letters in Austen's novels force an action and reaction to them. When Darcy writes a letter and physically hands it to Elizabeth the letter, again, is symbolic of a contract of trust. This letter proves how much he loves her and how much he entrusts her with his secrets and past family scandal. This letter reveals to Elizabeth more about Darcy's character and lays a path for future plot developments. The revealing of a secret and or a scandal needs to have a resolution in order for the plot and the characters to have an ending. This ending may not always be the happy one a character desires, and there are often inequalities: Henry Crawford's life barely changes at the end of *Mansfield Park*, whereas Maria Rushworth is outcast and forced to live with her aunt Norris in isolation.

Letters often transfer power. In a period where women were limited in agency and control over their future, a letter might change this situation or be used to try and change and retake some form of control. For example, Lucy Steele uses a letter to ensure that there is no misunderstanding that Edward is her property, even though when married the situation would be very different for women. Through the female characters such as Lucy Steele, Caroline Bingley, Mary Crawford, Emma and Mary Musgrove, Austen demonstrates how women as writers and receivers of letters use them to try and change a perceived future. All of these characters feel the need to try and regain some control over their futures and they do this through the letter form.

Austen's novels are all written with letters weaved through them. Austen developed the so-called realism of the epistolary novel of writers such as Richardson but took it in a different direction. Through this thesis I have traced the ways in which Austen uses letters. I have argued that Austen's narratives evolve around a series of significant letters. Whether they are love letters, manipulative letters of jealousy and envy, confessionary letters or ones that shockingly reveal scandals and secrets, they are all integral to the novels in which they occur. If I were to extend the study of Austen's letters in her fiction that I have undertaken in this thesis, I would include all of Austen's juvenilia, as well as other unpublished and unfinished works. I would seek to examine these works for the way they use letters in character and plot development. I would also be interested in extending my range of themes and in thinking more about the links between Austen's real-life letters and her fiction. A book-length study of Austen's use of letters is required, not just from linguistic point of view but from the literary perspective of how letters are used across Austen's career as a writer to construct her narrative forms.

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Appendix I : Table of letters in *Sense and Sensibility*

Page no/no of letter	**Date, letter in full, note, letter inferred**	**Recipient**	**Sender**	**Purpose/Reason for letter**	**Impact of letter Effect/comments/action/theme**
29 1	Letter	Mrs Dashwood	Sir John Middleton A relation to Mrs Dashwood, and is a gentleman of consequence and property in Devonshire	Offering a 'small house, on very easy terms'. 'He understood that she was in need of a dwelling; and through the house he now offered her was merely a cottage, he assured her that everything should be done to it which she might think necessary.'	This letter means the Dashwoods can escape Fanny and have a place to live. After their step-brother refusing to honour his promise to his father and leaving the Dashwood's with no money, they were in fact destitute.
29 2	Letter	Sir John Middleton	Mrs Dashwood,	'she instantly wrote Sir John Middleton her acknowledgements of his kindness and her acceptance of his proposal and then hastened to shew both letters to her daughters'.	This is a relief to all. Despite Elinor realising she has feelings for Edward and must now leave.
68 3	Letters brought in October	Colonel Brandon	'From town and is merely a letter of business' Eliza	We find out on page 203, (later in the novel) this letter was from Eliza informing the Colonel that Willoughby had seduced her and left her in a distressed situation (pregnant), with no letter or word.	Leaves for town Creates gossip Secrecy/scandals
88 4	Mention of a letter that hasn't arrived.			'No letter from Willoughby came; and none seemed expected by Marianne.'	'Remember Elinor,' said she, 'how very often Sir John Middleton fetches our letters himself from the post, and carries them to it. We have already agreed that secrecy

					might be necessary, and we must acknowledge that it could not be maintained if their correspondence were to pass through Sir John's hands'.
132 5	Letter referred to	Lucy Steele	Edward Ferrars	'I heard from him just before I left Exeter', taking a letter from her pocket and carelessly shewing the direction to Elinor'. 'you know his hand, I dare say, a charming one it is; but that is not written so well as usual. – He was tired I dare say, for he had just filled the sheet to me as full as possible'.	Elinor realises that Edward and Lucy must be on some intimate terms as he has written to her. The letter shows how jealous Lucy is of Elinor already and wants to make sure she knows she has staked her claim on Edward. Jealousy/envy
149 6	Letters referred to	Lucy Steele	Edward Ferrars	'Lucy, who seldom missed an opportunity of introducing it, and was particularly careful to inform her confidante of her happiness whenever she received a letter from Edward'	Lucy continues to gloat in front Elinor with the intentions of making her aware of the attachment. Jealousy/Envy
157 7	Letters referred to	Mrs Dashwood	Elinor	'I am writing home,'	They have arrived in London and Elinor writes home to her mother. News
157 8	Letters referred to	Willoughby	Marianne	'she must be writing to Willoughby'	Elinor assumes that Marianne is writing to Willoughby and also assumes that there must be some agreement (between them). Letter inferred engagement
161 9	Lack of letter referred to	Willoughby	Marianne	'Has no letter been left here for me since we went out?'	Elinor: 'If she had not known him to be in town she would not have written to him, as she did; she would have written to Combe Magha: and if he is in town, how odd that he should neither

					come nor write!' Elinor is confused by the relationship between Marianne and Willoughby.
163 10	Letter referred to	Willoughby	Marianne	'she will write to Combe by the day's post' But if she did, the letter was written and sent away with a privacy which eluded all her watchfulness to ascertain the fact.	Elinor continues to be confused by Marianne's and Willoughby's relationship. There is a secrecy between the sisters, Marianne does not confide in Elinor and so she is left to surmise and assume.
165 11	Note Calling card	Mrs Jennings	Willoughby	Left a calling card	Marianne is distressed and cross that she missed Willoughby.
166 12	Note	Mrs Jennings	Lady Middleton	'Announcing their arrival in Conduit Street the night before, and requesting the company of her mother and cousins the following evening'	The invitation is accepted
168 13	Letter referred to	Mrs Dashwood	Elinor	'relating all that had passed, her suspicions of Willoughby's inconstancy, urging her by every plea of duty and affection to demand from Marianne an account of her real situation.	Letter writing interrupted by visit of Col. Brandon. Elinor pleads with her mother to see if she can find out what is actually happening between Marianne and Willoughby and see if there is an understanding.
169 14	Letter referred to	Willoughby	Marianne	Col. Brandon: accidently seen a letter in his hand, directed to Mr Willoughby in your sister's hand'.	Letters are left out and can be seen by anyone, nothing is secret, suggesting thatolonel Brandon knows Marianne's handwriting, that he is aware that she is writing to him, and therefore assumes there must be an understanding between them. Scandalous writing for a woman
176	Letter written in full	Marianne	Willoughby	Willoughby writes with apologies that	This letter is devastating for Marianne, Marianne had been

15	Bond Street, January			if he has been 'unfortunate as to give rise to a belief of more than I felt, or meant to express'. That his affections have long been engaged elsewhere and he is engaged to another. Willoughby returns her letters and her lock of hair Miss Grey actually writes this letter.	naïve and blinded by her love for Willoughby, him being attached to someone else is a complete shock. Willoughby never explained to Marianne why he left so suddenly and she continued to believe that he loved her, she did not understand his behaviour or his actions of ignoring her. This letter still does not explain why, just simply that he is engaged to someone else. Jealousy of Miss Grey
181 16	Letter written in full seeing what Marianne had written previously when arriving in London, Berkley Street, January	Willoughby	Marianne	Announcing her arrival in town and she expects to see him that night.	Reference back to the 1st of Marianne's letters to Willoughby announcing her arrival in London and her excited expectations to see him as soon as Love letter.
181/182 17	Second note that Marianne had written on the morning after the dance at the Middletons Written in full	Willoughby	Marianne	Marianne writes of her disappointment of having missed when he called and is bewildered why he hasn't written to her yet and asks why he wasn't at the dance which the Middleton's held.	Reference back to the 2nd letter Marianne writes to Willoughby, Marianne is still confused by this change in Willoughby towards her and his continued absence from her. Love letter more desperate
182 18	Third letter	Willoughby	Marianne	Marianne writes asking about his 'behaviour' the previous night at the ball, she demands and explanation. Marianne wants to understand why he has treated in such an insulting way	Reference to 3rd letter Marianne writes to Willoughby. Marianne demands an explanation of why he behaved the way he did to her at the ball? Marianne is still confused by Willoughby and still has no idea why he is behaving the way he is towards her. Desperation/Love

				and why he is so indifferent to her now.	
196 19	Letter	Marianne	Mrs Dashwood	Marianne's mother 'still confident of their engagement, and relying as warmly as ever on his constancy, had only be roused by Elinor's application, to entreat from Marianne greater openness towards them both. The letter was full of Willoughby	This letter crosses over with the returning of her letters from Willoughby and only upsets Marianne more. Mrs Dashwood is just as naïve and ignorant of Willoughby's true character as Marianne.
197 20	Letter	Mrs Dashwood	Elinor	Giving her mother an 'account of what had passed, and entreat her directions for the future'	Interrupted by Col. Brandon This interruption gives the reader the reasons why Willoughby is acting the way he is and gives an account of his true character and reveals what he has done and how he is marrying for money.
202 21	Letter referred to	Col. Brandon	Eliza	'came in a letter from herself, last October. It was forwarded to me from Delaford and received it on the very morning or out intended party to Whitwell'	Willoughby left Eliza promising to return; he neither returned, nor wrote, nor relieved her.'
206 22	Letters referred to	Elinor	Mrs Dashwood	'To give the feelings or the language of Mrs Dashwood on receiving and answering Elinor's letter' 'Long letters from her, quickly succeeding each other, arrived to tell all that she suffered and thought; to express her anxious	Mrs Dashwood encourages Marianne to find courage against her pain. That Marianne would be better of being anywhere than Barton Cottage where she would be reminded of Willoughby. Mrs Dashwood encourages them to stay with Mrs Jennings, that there would be more going on in London to hopefully distract Marianne from her woes and she may find some amusement that she would not find at Barton Cottage.

				solicitude for Marianne and entreat she would bear up with fortitude under this misfortune.'	
207 23/24	Letter referred to	Elinor and Marianne Mrs Dashwood	Mrs Dashwood Son-in=law	'She had yet another reason for wishing her children to remain where they were; a letter from her son-in-law had told her that he and his wife were to be in town before the middle of February, and she judged it right that they should sometimes see their brother.'	
223 25	Letter referred to	Edward Ferrars	Lucy Steele	'He dared not come to Bartlett's Buildings for fear of detection, and though their mutual impatience to meet was not to be told, they could do nothing at present but write.	Lucy continues to gloat to Elinor and insists on making her continually aware that Edward and herself are still very much in contact, alluding to the fact they are still very much in love.
224 26	Message/calling card	Elinor, Marianne and Mrs Jennings		Edward had called twice to Berkeley Street but had missed them	Elinor is pleased that he has called but also pleased she has missed seeing him.
245 27	Letter referred to	Miss Steele's	Fanny	'wrote the next morning to Lucy, to request her company and her sister's for some days, in Harley Street'	This note shown to Elinor, who begins to understand that this letter is sent in 'malice' towards herself as Fanny knew little of the Miss Steele's yet they would prefer to have them stay rather than their own relative.
266 28	Letter referred to that should be written	The Doctor	Miss Steele	Her cousins, 'they will tell me I should write to the Doctor, to get Edward the curacy of his new living'	Miss Anne Steele now needs to look for a husband herself

266/267 29	Letter written in full Bartlett's Buildings, March	Elinor	Lucy	Despite all the 'trials' and disagreements their engagement has brought on, Lucy writes that she and Edward are very happy. Lucy has met Edward and she suggested to Edward that they could be 'parted forever' should he 'consent to it' but Edward declined saying 'he did not regard his mother's anger, while he could have my affections'. Their prospects aren't great and that Edward is to be ordained soon. Lucy asks that Elinor and Mrs Jennings recommend 'him to any body that has a living to bestow' such as Sir John or Mr Palmer. Lucy blames her sister Anne for their secret engagement being announced.	Elinor, 'performed what she concluded to be its writer's real design, by placing it in the hands of Mrs Jennings' Mrs Jennings is completely taken in by Lucy and believes her to be a 'good-hearted' girl and remarks how 'prettily she writes'
278 30	Letter referred to and prepares to write	Edward	Elinor	Elinor is about to write to Edward informing him that Col, Brandon is to offer him a living a Delaford	Edward arrives and interrupts before letter is written. Elinor tells Edward about the offer of living the colonel is giving him and Lucy
298 31	Letters referred to	Mrs Dashwood	Elinor	Marianne was much improved.	Marianne is believed to be not much ill at first
301 32	Letter/note referred to	Mrs Dashwood	Elinor	That Mrs Dashwood should come as soon as	Marianne's health declines quickly and is told she may die.

33	Note/message	Mr Harris the Dr		she could as Marianne's health had declined. Col Brandon takes this message	
313 34	Letter referred to	Marianne	Willoughby	Willoughby 'whether I should write this apology, or deliver it in person, was a point of long debate' Willoughby is the object/the embodiment of the letter	Willoughby visits Elinor and Marianne when hearing she is ill. They discuss the letters Marianne sent to him and the letter that he sent to Marianne where Willoughby admits that although the letter is in his handwriting it was dictated to him by his wife. Willoughby asks 'Have I explained away any part of my guilt'. Willoughby confesses to and relates all that has happened and gives reasons why he has behaved in the way that he has towards Marianne.
319 35	Letter referred to	Sir John Middleton	Mrs Jennings	That 'Marianne was dying of a putrid fever'	Sir John Tells Willoughby of this letter and what has happened, this leads to Willoughby's visit and confession and him looking for forgiveness.
344 36	Letter referred to	Col. Brandon	Mrs Dashwood?	'When do you write to colonel Brandon, Ma'am? Was an inquiry which sprung from the impatience of her mind to something going on.' Elinor's mind?	Mrs Dashwood has written to him and expects to see him that day or the next. Suggestive that Mrs Dashwood and the colonel have a regular correspondence. They then see a figure on horseback and initially believe this to be Col. Brandon but it isn't, it's Edward.
350 37	Letter written in full	Edward	Lucy	Lucy writes to Edward to say that she has married his brother! 'Your brother has gained my affections entirely, and as we could not live without one another, we are returned from the altar', Lucy informs Edward	Edward hands this letter to Elinor to read. As soon as Edward lost all his inheritance Lucy switches her affections to his brother Robert. Lucy's real character is revealed through this letter. She refers to her own letters as 'scrawls' suggesting that her own letters were written carelessly without much thought and wrote hurriedly,

				that she has burnt all his letters and wishes him to 'destroy all my scrawls' but he can keep the ring with her lock of hair in if he wishes.	and in fact she didn't even regard them as letters.
356 38	Letters from town referred to	Elinor	Mrs Jennings	Mrs Jennings 'wrote to tell the wonderful tale, to vent her honest indignation against the jilting girl, and pour fourth her compassion towards poor Mr Edward.' Mrs Jennings writes how 'sly' Lucy has been and recounts that she was sat with her a few days ago for a couple of hours and Lucy never said a word about her leaving Edward for his brother. Anne, went crying to Mrs Jennings the day after as Lucy had taken all her money and left her sister with nothing as she eloped with Robert Ferrars. Mrs Jennings gave Anne five guineas to get her Exeter where she would stay with Mrs Burgess and tells Anne to 'fall in with the Doctor again'.	Mrs Jennings finally sees Lucy's true character and is horrified to have been duped by her and is disgusted by her behaviour.
356 cont.	Letter referred to	Elinor?	Mr Dashwood.	Mr Dashwood writes that 'Mrs	

39				Ferrars was the most unfortunate of women', 'Fanny had suffered agonies of sensibility', 'Robert's offence was unpardonable, but Lucy's was infinitely worse'. Their names were never to be mentioned to Mrs Ferrars and if by chance she should forgive her son she would never acknowledge Lucy. That Edward should write to his sister and in turn this letter shown to his mother as a way of opening up communication between them and that Edward should write an apology to his mother, 'a letter of submission'	
357 40	Letter referred to that should be written	Mrs Ferrars	Edward	That Edward should write a letter to his mother and ask to be forgiven	Edward decides to visit in person instead of writing this letter.

Appendix II: Table of letters in *Pride and Prejudice*

Page no/no of letter	**Date, Letter in full, note, letter inferred**	**Recipient**	**Sender**	**Purpose/Reason of Letter**	**Impact of letter/ effect/ comments/action/theme**
31 1	Letter	Jane Bennet	Caroline Bingley	Inviting Jane to dine with her and her sister Louisa, while her brother and the gentlemen are out dining with the officers.	Mrs Bennet refuses Jane the carriage as the weather looks as if it will rain, therefore she would be forced to stay at Netherfield and be thrown into Bingley's company.
41 2	Letter	Elizabeth	Mrs Bennet	Wishing her to come to Netherfield and see Jane	Jane is poorly and Elizabeth wishes her mother to come see her.
46 3	Letter	Mr Darcy	His sister Miss Darcy	General letter	Siblings writing long letters
58 4	Letter	Elizabeth	Her mother	Requesting a carriage to take both her and sister home from Netherfield	Elizabeth is desperate to be home and away from Darcy and Bingley's sisters.
58 5	Letter	Mrs Bennet	Elizabeth	Denying the request for a carriage for at least another week	Mrs Bennet wants Jane to stay as long as possible in the hope that Bingley will form an attachment to Jane
60 6	Letter in full	Mr Bennet	Mr Collins	Wishes to reconcile with Mr Bennet, now that his father has passed who had Mr Bennet had previously fallen out with. Mr Collins has recently been ordained and informs them he is under the patronage of Lady Catherine de Bourgh. Mr Collins discusses the fact that he is in line to inherit Longbourn. Mr Collins offers an olive branch and informs	Mr Collins is looking for a wife and also knows he is to inherit Longbourn. During this visit, Mr Collins embarrasses the Bennet family and asks Elizabeth to marry him. After declining his proposal Mr Collins switches his affections to Charlotte Lucas who he later marries. Comical

				them that he is intending to stay with them.	
114 7	Letter see bits of	Jane Bennet	Caroline Bingley	Informing Jane that Bingley and all have left Netherfield and gone to town with no intention returning that winter and that Miss Bingley is in hope of Mr Bingley marrying Miss Darcy and therefore taking away Jane's hope of marrying Bingley herself.	Jane is upset by this news and is forced to see that she is not of acceptable status to marry Bingley … Bingley's sister makes it quite clear that they wish for him to marry Miss Darcy. Caroline is jealous/envious
122 8	Letter	Mr Bennet	Mr Collins	Thanking them for allowing him to stay	
126 9	Letter	Caroline Bingley	Jane	Hoping to see her again, sends a reply to her letter.	
126 10	Letter	Mr Collins	Mr Bennet	Letter of thanks and informing them of his engagement to Miss Lucas	
137 11	Letter	Mr Collins	Mr Bennet	Promising another letter of thanks	
138 12	referred	Mrs Gardiner	Jane and Elizabeth	Refers to correspondence	Swapping of news
139 13	referred	Jane	Miss Bingley	Refers to them corresponding	
144 14		Charlotte Lucas	Elizabeth	Now that Charlotte is married and moving she Mentions about depending on hearing from her friend very often. And mentions letters they write to each other	
144	Referred	Elizabeth	Jane	Safely arrived in London	

15					
144 16		Elizabeth	Charlotte	They swap many letters, Charlotte informing Elizabeth about her new life, home and Lady Catherine.	Elizabeth is curious about her friend's new life and is anxious see receive and read all her letters.
145 17		Jane	Elizabeth	Notes that she has heard nothing from Miss Bingley but she plans to call on her.	
145 18		Jane	Elizabeth	Jane calls on Caroline and Mrs Hurst but her visit is kept very short as they were going out, Jane enquires after Bingley but is told he was very busy with Mr Darcy.	Caroline says that she never received Jane's letter and therefore did not know of her being in London
145, 146 19	Letter in full	Jane	Elizabeth	She has been deceived by Caroline and how she honestly feels about herself. Jane is upset about Caroline and how she has treated her. Jane also writes that Mr Bingley must now know that she is in town and it would appear he is ignoring her too. Jane writes about her visit from Caroline and admits she was duped by Caroline and her regard for her. Jane is informed that Bingley never intends to return to Netherfield.	Elizabeth is proved right in her opinion of the Bingley sisters. Caroline showed no pleasure in seeing Jane and behaved very differently towards her. Jane is led to believe that Bingley does know of her being in town but is far too preoccupied with Miss Darcy.
147 20		Elizabeth	Mrs Gardiner	Elizabeth tells her aunt the news of Wickham and his talked of engagement to Miss King, Elizabeth tells her aunt that she wasn't much in love with Wickham and is interested to watch on and see what happens, however Kitty and Lydia are very upset by this news and	Elizabeth looks at her feelings for Wickham and decides that although she liked him she did not love him and bears him or Miss King no ill will.

				explains that they do not yet understand that 'some young men must have something to live on as well as the plain ones.'	
149 21		Charlotte	Elizabeth	Suggested letter regarding the plans for her visit	
149 22		Mr Bennet	Jane	Wants her to write often	
169 23		Lady Catherine De bough	Miss Darcy	Is to write a letter telling her to practice her music	general
173 24	Referred	Elizabeth	Jane	Mr Darcy interrupts her writing when he visits her	Interrupted - action
178 25		Jane	Elizabeth	Elizabeth is re-reading Jane's letter, when she meets Fitzwilliam	Re-reading
185 26		Jane	Elizabeth	Elizabeth re-reads all of Jane's letters when she is interrupted by Mr Darcy	re-reading
190-197 27	Letter in full	Mr Darcy	Elizabeth	The letter explains and defends himself by putting across what had happened with Wickham and also admits to not telling Bingley of Jane being in town. Elizabeth learns of Wickham's attempt to seduce Georgiana and their attempt at eloping being foiled by Darcy. Wickham's true character is revealed and his lies about wishing for a living in the church and about Darcy paying him off. Darcy	Elizabeth is shocked to read about the true account of Wickham and all of Mr Darcy's dealings with him. Darcy admits to hiding the knowledge of her sister being in town to Bingley. Darcy believed that Jane was indifferent to Bingley. Jane recollects how her family have behaved and reflects on her own behaviour, there is a lot of feelings of shame, anger and clarity … realising Wickham's true character is a stark revelation.

				reveals that he noticed Bingley preferring Jane to any other woman, however he decided that Jane did not seem that bothered therefore would not be injured by Bingley no longer being connected with her and the fact that her family were an embarrassment, in manners, behaviour and status.	Love letter? Confessional? Scandal/secrets
205 28		Mr Bennet	Elizabeth	Asking for her return to Longbourn	
222 29		Mrs Forster	Lydia	Inviting her to Brighton	
230 30		Lydia	Mother	Telling her in short lines what she was doing and buying in Brighton	News
230 31		Lydia	Kitty	Longer letters with 'lines written not to be made public'	Hints there is secrecy and behaviour that is not acceptable
230 32		Mrs Gardiner	Elizabeth	Informing her their trip to the Lakes wasn't to happen due to Mr Gardiner having business but they would now visit Derbyshire	Elizabeth is disappointed at first but soon comes round to the idea that the Peaks will be just as nice.
260 33/34	In full letters	Jane	Elizabeth	2 letters arrived as the first had been misdirected, informing Elizabeth of Lydia disappearing with Wickham	Elizabeth is distraught for her sister and the family's reputation. Elizabeth is caught unawares by Darcy and tells him everything, Elizabeth believes she will never see Darcy again and anxiously awaits to return home. Scandalous news
272 35		Mr Gardiner	Jane	That he had arrived safely in London and would write again when he had news	
276		Lydia	Kitty	Lydia tells her sister she was in love with Wickham	Love/secrets

36					
276 37		Lydia	Mrs Foster	A note, Lydia is intending to go to Gretna Green with Wickham and finds it all very amusing. Lydia asks for her excuses to be made to Pratt for not dancing that evening with him at the ball and asks for her a slit to be repaired in her muslin gown also that she will send for her clothes from Longbourn.	Elizabeth is shocked by her sister's actions and learns more from Jane all that happened in the house.
280 38		Mr Gardiner	Mrs Gardiner	He had found his brother and Mr Bennet was keen to search all hotels however Mr Gardiner saw little success in this but went along with it. Also Mr Gardiner has written to col Forster asking if Wickham had any friends that could perhaps shed light on where Wickham might be. Then eludes to the question that Elizabeth might know?	News/scandal/action
281 39				'the most anxious part of the day was waiting for the post. Through letters, whatever good or bad was to be told, would be communicated'	Anxiety for letter
281/282 40	In full letter	Mr Collins	Mr Bennet	To console with the family on what has happened with Lydia and the disgrace and the fact that the death of Lydia would have been better. And that because of Lydia's actions all the family will partake in her disgrace. That Lydia was spoilt.	Letter within a letter mentioned by Mr Collins informing him of Lydia

				That they should cut all ties with her.	
282 41		Elizabeth and Jane	Mr Gardiner	Telling of Mr Wickham's debts and he was a gambling man and that Mr Bennet would be returning home as they couldn't find Lydia	Shocking/scandal/gossip
283 42	referenced			Letter?	
285 43	In full 2 August	Mr Bennet	Mr Gardiner	Lydia has been found not married. If Mr Bennet could secure an equal share of the £5000 upon his and his death and until then £100 per annum. They are to be married and Mr Bennet believes that his brother in law is paying off all of Wickham's debts.	Shocking/scandal/gossip
296 44	In full Letter	Mr Gardiner	Mr Bennet	Mr Wickham is to quit the militia and will joining the regulars far away, yet his debts need settling in which he has included a list of all he owes money too. And that would they be welcome for a visit on the way to his new regiment.	Outcome - resolution
297 45		Mr Bennet	Mr Gardiner	Wickham and Lydia may visit	
302 46	Letter in full	Elizabeth	Mrs Gardiner	Asking if what Lydia said is true and how much of a part did Mr Darcy play in finding and securing Wickham into marriage.	
304-308	Letter in full	Mrs Gardiner	Elizabeth	She recounts all that Mr Darcy has done for Lydia and Wickham. That	Confessionary/relevations

47				Mr Darcy found them and that Lydia refused to leave Wickham. Mr Darcy explains himself to her aunt and uncle and precdeds to right the wrong of not showing what Wickham's real character was, Mr Darcy secures all of Wickham's debts in bribing him to marry Lydia.	
307 48		Jane	Mrs Gardiner	Letter within a letter mentioned	
312 49		Mrs Bennet	Lydia	Asks her to write to her often	
313 50				Netherfield receives orders to reopen	
327 51		Jane	?	Writes a letter	
341 52	Partial	Mr Bennet	Mr Collins	Congratulating on Jane's engagement and informing him that he has heard a rumour that Elizabeth would soon be married to Mr Darcy and that Lady Catherine does not approve of the match.	
348 53				Darcy and Elizabeth discuss the letter that he wrote to her and asks her to burn it.	
361 54		Mr Darcy	Catherine his aunt		
361 55		Elizabeth	To her aunt	Telling of her happiness and engagement to Mr Darcy	
362 56		Mr Bennet	Mr Collins	Telling him of Elizabeth's engagement	

362 57		Miss Bingley	Jane	Congratulating her on her marriage to Bingley	
365 58	In full - short	Lydia	Elizabeth	Wishes her joy and asks for money since she is marrying a man with money	Can she send them money
367 59		Lady Catherine	Darcy	Abusive towards Elizabeth.	

Appendix III: Table of letters in *Mansfield Park*

Page no/ No of letter	**Letter, note, date, address, inferred, written in full**	**Recipient**	**Sender**	**Purpose of Letter/ content**	**effect of letter Notes In context of Theme**
6 1	Reference to a letter	Mrs Price	Mrs Norris	Mrs Norris wrote a 'long and angry letter to Fanny, to point out the folly of her conduct, threaten her with all its possible ill consequences, Mrs Price in her turn was injured and angry; and an answer which comprehended each sister in its bitterness, and bestowed such very disrespectful reflections on the price of Sir Thomas as Mrs Norris could not possibly keep to herself, put an end to all intercourse between them for a considerable period.'	Miss Maria Ward married well with only £7000 married Sir Thomas Bertram, her sister, Miss Ward, married Rev. Mr. Norris and was given a living on Sir Thomas's estate, Miss Frances married a Lieutenant of marines who 'had no education, fortunes or connections' Mrs Price never wrote before her wedding.
6 2	Reference to a letter	Lady Bertram	Mrs Price	After 11 years Mrs Price couldn't afford the luxury to 'cherish pride or resentment' or to lose any 'connection' that could help her. Her husband like to drink was disabled from active	The letter 're-established' connections between them, 'Sir Thomas sent friendly advice and professions, Lady Bertram

				service and they had a very small income. 'She addressed Lady Bertram in a letter which spoke so much contrition and despondence, such a superfluity of children, and such a want of almost every thing else, as could not but dispose them all to a reconciliation. She was preparing for her ninth lying-in, and after bewailing the circumstance, and imploring their countenance as sponsors to the expected child, she could not conceal how important she felt they might to the future maintenance of the eight already in being.'	dispatched money and baby-linen, and Mrs. Norris wrote the letters.' After this letter Mrs Norris still wishes to help her sister and suggests to Lady Bertram that they take in the older child of 9 (Fanny Price), who agrees. Sir Thomas sees it fit that Fanny lives with Mrs Norris who at length states that it would not be possible and that the child should live with them.
9 3	Letter referred to	Mrs Price	Mrs Norris	'I will write to my poor sister to-morrow, and make the proposal; and, as soon as matters are settled, I will engage to get the child to Mansfield, you shall have no trouble about it.'	This letter is the beginning of the entire novel, inviting Fanny to live with them at Mansfield Park
12 4	Letter referred to	Mrs Price	Mrs Norris	'It will be readily believed that Mrs. Norris did not write to her sister, in vain. Mrs Price seemed rather surprised that a girl should be fixed on, when she had so many fine boys, but accepted the offer most thankfully, assuring them of her daughter's being a very well-disposed, good-humoured girl, and trusting they would never have cause to throw her off.'	Mrs Norris manipulates all around her for her own advantage, Fanny Price will be engaged to become more of a servant to herself than for the benefit of anyone else.
16 5	Letter referred to	William	Fanny Price	Fanny is upset about being dragged from her home and sent to live with relatives she does not know and strikes a friendship with her cousin Edmund who tries to comfort her. Fanny talks about her brother William to Edmund who she misses, and he suggests that she writes to him however she does not have any paper, Edmund addresses this and finds her paper and equipment	Writing letters to her brother is Fanny's great comfort and one consolation in her turned upside-down life.

				to write the letter and says that he will give the letter to his father to frank and post and that it will cost William nothing. Edmund also 'wrote with his own hand his love to his cousin William, and sent him half a guinea under the seal.'	
32 6	Letter referred to	William	Fanny Price	Sir Thomas asks that Fanny write to her brother and invite him to Mansfield as 'soon as the squadron to which he belonged should be known in England.'	Fanny is very close to her brother and is delighted by this invitation.
33 7	Letter referred to	Attorney	Edmund	Since Sir Thomas had left Lady Bertram was 'soon astonished to find how very well they did even without his father, how well Edmund could supply his place in carving, talking to the steward, writing to the attorney, settling with the servants, and equally saving her from all possible fatigue or exertion in every particular, but that of directing her letters.'	Edmund takes on the role of his father, which should be the duty of Tom, the eldest son.
38 8	Letter referred to, wrote in April		Sir Thomas	'He wrote in April, and had strong hopes of settling every thing to his entire satisfaction, and leaving Antigua before the end of the summer.'	Sir Thomas agrees to the match of his daughter Maria and Mr Rushworth but wishes them to wait for the wedding until his return. This match has been brought about by Mrs Norris, and Edmund comments on Mr Rushworth 'If this man had not twelve thousand a year, he would be a very stupid fellow.' This letter brings news from afar and this is how the reader and the characters find out how Sir Thomas is doing.
46 9	Letters referred to			Mr Bertram: 'When Anderson first introduced me to his family, about two years ago, his sister was not *out*, and I could not get her to speak to	Discussing a girl's behaviour before and after 'she is out'.

				me. I sat there an hour one morning waiting for Anderson, with only her and a little girl or two in the room – the governess being sick or run away, and the mother in and out every moment with letters of business'	Mary Crawford wishes to know if Fanny is out? Where does Fanny lie in the social status is she a servant? A part of the family? Note: The "coming out" of a young woman represented a change in her status from child to adult and her "introduction" to society
56 and 57 10	Letter referred to	Edmund	Mr Bertram	Miss Crawford: 'Now, Mr Bertram, if you write to your brother, I intreat you to tell him that my harp is come, he heard so much of my misery about it.' Mr Bertram: 'If I write, I will say whatever you wish me; but I do not at present foresee any occasion for writing.' Miss Crawford: 'No, I dare say, nor if he were to be gone a twelvemonth, would you ever write to him, nor he to you, if it could be helped. The occasion would never be foreseen. What strange creatures brothers are! You would not write to each other but upon the most urgent necessity in the world; and when obliged to take up the pen to say that such a horse is ill, or such a relation dead, it is done in the fewest possible words. You have but one style among you, I know it perfectly, Henry, who is in every other respect exactly what a brother should be, who loves me, consults and confides in me, and will talk to me by the hour together has never yet turned the page in a letter; and very it is nothing more than, 'Dear Mary, I am just arrived. Bath seems full,	Note: There is a suggestion from Austen that men write differently to women, hinting that there is a difference in gender styles of writing. This could further be a statement as a proof of who wrote the letter, suggesting that without signing the letter the reader would know who sent it by the style of the letter, a woman would write long letters filled with information whereas a man would write shorter and to the point letters. However, this is contradicted when Fanny says that William writes long letters, so perhaps this is more telling us not so much about gender roles but the revelation of characters and true personalities whether they are the sort of character with depth of feeling and a trueness or if they are shallow?

				and every thing as usual. Your's sincerely.' That is the true manly style; that is a complete brother letter.' Fanny: 'When they are at a distance from all their family… they can write long letters.'	The letters to Fanny from William bring news of all his adventures and are form of escapism for Fanny?
61 11	Reference to letter and previous conversation			Fanny: 'except as to his writing her such short letters. She made me almost laugh; but I cannot rate so very highly the love or good-nature of a brother, who will not give himself the trouble of writing any thing worth reading, to his sisters, when they are separated. I am sure William would never have use me so under any circumstances. And what right had she to suppose that you would not write long letters when you were absent?'	
67 12	Letter referred to			Mrs Norris: 'I was talking to Mr. Green at that very time about your mother's dairymaid, by *her* desire, and had promised John Groom to write to Mrs Jefferies about her son, and the poor fellow was waiting for me for half an hour.'	Mrs Norris likes to make herself seem important to all could not be disposed of, John Groom 'Groom' could be meaning is a servant and cannot write?
100 13	Letters referred to			'The day at Sotherton, with all its imperfections, afforded the Miss Bertrams much more agreeable feelings than were derived from the letters from Antigua, which soon afterwards reached Mansfield. It was much pleasanter to think of Henry Crawford than of their father; and to think of their father in England again within a certain period, which these letters obliged them to do, was a most unwelcome exercise.' 'November was the black month fixed for his return. Sir Thomas wrote of it with as much	With their father's return for Maria this means an end to her flirtations with Henry and brings forward her marriage to Mr Rushworth. The letters from their father come with a feeling of impending doom, authority and reminds them that once their father is home, there are strict rules to abide by and a marriage to happen, the letters from the father bring a reality check.

				decision as experience and anxiety could authorise.'	
101 14	Letters referred to			'Mrs Norris gave the particulars of the letters'	Mrs Norris tells Miss Crawford about the return of Sir Thomas
107 15	Letters referred to			'The approach of September brought tidings of Mr. Bertram first in a letter to the game-keeper, and then in a letter to Edmund; and by the end of August he arrived himself.'	Miss Crawford since Tom Bertram's absence no longer likes him and sees him as a potential husband she now prefers Edmund. Tom talks of races, parties and friends, and notably writes to the game keeper before his brother.
141 16	Letters referred to	To Fanny	From William	'a small sketch of a ship sent four years ago from the Mediterranean by William, with H. M. S. Antwerp at the bottom, in letters as tall as the main-menu.'	Fanny enjoys, looks forward to and revels in her brother's letters they are a source of joy and love.
172 17	Letters referred to	To Sir Thomas		"Mr and Mrs Crawford were mentioned in my last letters from Mansfield. Do you find them agreeable acquaintance?"	Mr Thomas' style of writing is short and to the point, questioning?
187 18	Letter referred to			'Had Sir Thomas applied to his daughter within the first three or four days after Henry Crawford's leaving Mansfield, before her feelings were at all tranquilized, before she had given up every hope of him, or absolutely resolved on enduring his rival, her answer might have been different; but after another three or four days, when there was no return, no letter, no message – no separation – her mind became cold enough to seek all the comfort that pride and self-revenge could give.'	Henry Crawford is now left and Maria is disappointed Maria receiving no letter from Henry is proof and evidence to her that he does not love her and will not commit to her, that his verbal words meant nothing and nor did his flirtations.
Ch 20 19				But they had seen no one from the Parsonage, not a creature, and had heard no tidings beyond a friendly note of congratulation and inquiry from Mrs. Grant to Lady Bertram.	

208 20 Ch 23	Letters referred to			Henry: "Mr Yates! – Oh! We hear nothing of Mr. Yates. I do not imagine her figures much in the letters to Mansfield Park; do you, Miss Price? – I think my friend Julia knows better than to entertain her father Mr. Yates,'	
Ch 24 21	Letter referred to	To the Admiral	Henry	Henry Crawford had quite made up his mind by the next morning to give another fortnight to Mansfield, and having sent for his hunters, and written a few lines of explanation to the Admiral, he looked round at his sister as he sealed and threw the letter from him, and seeing the coast clear of the rest of the family, said, with a smile, "And how do you think I mean to amuse myself, Mary, on the days that I do not hunt? I am grown too old to go out more than three times a week; but I have a plan for the intermediate days, and what do you think it is?"	This is just before Henry declares that he is going to make Fanny fall in love with him. 'he looked round at his sister as he sealed and threw the letter from him,'
215 22	Letters referred to	To Fanny	William	'She had a letter from him herself, a few hurried happy lines, written as the ship came up Channel, and sent into Portsmouth, with the first boat that left the Antwerp, at anchor, in Spithead; and when Crawford walked up with the newspaper in his hand, which he had hoped would bring the first tidings, he found her trembling with joy over this letter, and listening with the glowing grateful countenance to the kind invitation which her uncle was most collectedly dictating in reply.'	This letter brings joy to Fanny that her brother is at Portsmouth and that she will soon see him. The letter precedes the newspaper and takes away Henry's idea and hope of being the first to tell Fanny her brother has arrived.

215 23	Letters referred to	To Fanny	William	‘his direct holidays might with justice be instantly given to his sister, who had been his best correspondent through a period of seven years’	The letters are evidence and proof of the loving relationship that Fanny has with her brother William.
241 24	Note referred to	To Fanny	Edmund	Edmund is found at Fanny’s writing desk after going to look for her and not find her he decides to write her note, when she enters and ‘You will find the beginning of a note to yourself; but I can now speak of my business, which is merely to get your acceptance of this trifle - a chain for William’s cross’	‘she seized the scrap of paper on which Edmund had begun writing to her, as a treasure beyond all her hopes, and reading with the tenderest emotion these words,
245 25	Reference to note previously written	To Fanny	Edmund	‘locked it up with the chain, as the dearest part of the gift. It was the only thing approaching a letter which she had ever received from him; she might never receive another; it was impossible that she ever should receive another so perfectly gratifying in the occasion and the style. Two lines more prized had never fallen from the pen of the most distinguished author – never more completely blessed the researches of the fondest biographer. The enthusiasm of a woman’s love is even beyond the biographer’s. to her, the hand-writing itself, independent of any thing is may convey, is a blessedness. Never were such characters cut by any other human being, as Edmund’s commonest hand-writing gave! This specimen, written in haste as it was, had not a fault; and there was a felicity in the flow of the first four words, in the arrangement of “My very dear Fanny,” which she could have looked at forever.’	‘she **seized the scrap of paper** on which Edmund had begun writing to her, as a **treasure** beyond all her hopes, and reading with the tenderest emotion these words, **"My very dear Fanny**, you must do me the favour to accept" locked it up with the chain, as the dearest part of the gift. **It was the only thing approaching to a letter which she had ever received from him; she might never receive another;** it was impossible that she ever should receive another so perfectly gratifying in the occasion and the style. Two lines more prized had never fallen from the pen of the most distinguished author—never more completely blessed the researches of the fondest biographer. The enthusiasm of a woman's love is even beyond the **biographer's**. To her, the handwriting itself, independent of anything it may convey, is a blessedness.

					Never were such characters cut by any other human being as Edmund's commonest handwriting gave! This specimen, written in haste as it was, had not a fault; and there was a felicity in the flow of the first four words, in the arrangement of “My very dear Fanny,” which she could have looked at for ever.’ Fanny realises the truth that this is just a scrap of a note yet she yearns and dreams and uses her imagination to makes it something akin to a love letter in her mind.
Ch 27 26				and though this offer of Mr. Crawford's would rob her of many hours of his company, she was too happy in having William spared from the fatigue of such a journey, to think of anything else. Sir Thomas approved of it for another reason. His nephew's introduction to Admiral Crawford might be of service. The Admiral, he believed, had interest. Upon the whole, it was a very joyous note. Fanny’s spirits lived on it half the morning, deriving some accession of pleasure from its writer being himself to go away.	Fanny is wary of Henry and seems to be the only one who can see through him and see his true character yet she knows his connection to the Admiral could do her brother well and get him a promotion.
262 27	Letter referred to	Sir Thomas	Julia	Asking for permission to go to town with Maria and Mr Rushworth	Which is granted.

265 28	Letter referred to	Sir Thomas	Edmund	Mary: 'Was this letter a long one? – Does he give you much account of what he is doing? – Is it Christmas gaieties that he is staying for?' Fanny: 'I only head a part of the letter; it was to my uncle – but I believe it was very short; indeed I am sure it was but a few lines. All that I heard was that his friend had pressed him to stay longer, and that he had agreed to do so, a few days longer or some days longer, I am not quite sure which." Mary: "Oh! If he wrote to his father – But I thought it might have been to Lady Bertram or you, But if he wrote to his father, no wonder he was concise. Who could write chat to Sir Thomas? IF he had written to you, there would have been more particulars. You would have heard of balls and parties,—He would have sent you a description of every thing and every body. How many Miss Owens are there?'	Jealousy Mary is desperate to hear of Edmund. Mary is jealous of the Miss Owens and wants to know as much as possible about what he is doing. Note: Alluding to the fact that men write only facts to each other they are short and to the point, not how a man would write to a woman.
273 29	Note referred to		Fanny	Henry talking to Mary about Fanny: 'her colour beautifully heightened as she leant over the work then returning to her seat to finish a note which she was previously engaged in writing for that stupid woman's service'	Infers that Fanny is more Miss Norris servant than a relative of equal station.
275 30	Letters referred to			Henry: 'He is made. Your brother is a Lieutenant. I have the infinite satisfaction of congratulating you on your brother's promotion. Here are the letters which announce it, this moment come to hand. You will, perhaps, like to see them?' Fanny takes the letters.	Note: Three ships of the Royal Navy have borne the name HMS "Thrush", after the Thrush, a type of bird: *HMS|Thrush|1806|6 was an 18-gun brig-sloop, previously the Revenue brig "Prince of Wales". She was renamed HMS "Thrush" in 1806, was used as a powder

				‘The first was from the Admiral to inform his nephew, in a few words, of his having succeeded in the object he had undertaken, the promotion of young Price, and inclosing two more, one from Secretary of the First Lord to a friend whom the Admiral had set to work in the business, the other from that friend to himself, by which it appeared that his Lordship had the very great happiness of attending to the recommendation of Sir Charles, that Sir Charles was much delighted in having such an opportunity of proving his regard for Admiral Crawford, and that the circumstance Mr, William Price’s commission as second Lieutenant of H. M. sloop Thrush, being made out, was spreading general joy through a wide circle of great people.’	hulk from 1809 and was wrecked in 1815 and subsequently sold. Fanny is delighted for her brother’s promotion. This is Henry’s way of trying to engage Fanny through her brother and his deed of securing him a promotion.
276 31	Letter about William still be discussed			Henry makes it clear that it was his doing that William got this promotion and discusses how ‘late the post was’ and he was delayed in telling her and giving her these letters	Henry is desperate to please Fanny and since she has succumbed to his charms Henry sees that his only way forward is through her brother and believing her gratitude will make her love him.
280 32	Letter written in full	Fanny	Mary Crawford	‘Mr dear Fanny, for so I may now always call you, to the **infinite relief of a tongue that has been stumbling at Miss Price** for at least the last six weeks-I cannot let my brother go without sending you a few lines of general **congratulation, and giving my most joyful consent and approval. -Go on, my dear Fanny, and without fear, there can be no difficulties worth naming.** I chuse to suppose that the assurance of my consent will be	Mary is manipulative and cannot see why Fanny would not accept her brother’s proposal. Henry writes through his sister and tries to manipulate Fanny.

				something; so you may smile upon him with your sweetest smiles this afternoon, and send him back to me even happier than he goes. Yours affectionately. M.C.'	
283 33	Letter written in full	To Mary	Fanny	'I am very much obliged to you, my dear Miss Crawford, for your kind congratulations, as far as they **relate to my dearest William**. The rest of your note **I know means nothing**, but I am so unequal to anything of the sort, that I hope you will excuse my **begging you to understand his manners**; if he understood me as well, he would I dare say behave differently. I do not know what to write, but it would be a great favour of you never to mention the subject again. With thanks for the honour of your note, I remain, dear Miss Crawford,	'Quite unpractised in such sort of note-writing, had there been time for scruples and fears as to style she would have felt them in abundance: but something must be instantly written; and with only one decided feeling, that of wishing not to appear to think anything really intended'
328 34	Letter referred to	Edmund		Fanny and Edmund are discussing the Crawfords and Edmund is surprised to see them still at Mansfield. Edmund '… What a difference it might have made. Those five or six days more at Lessing by might have been felt all my life.' Fanny: 'You were near staying there?' Edmund: 'Very. I was most kindly pressed, and had nearly consented. Had I received any letter from Mansfield, to tell me how you were all going on, I believe I should certainly have stayed; but I knew nothing that had happened here for a fortnight, and felt that I had been away long enough.'	Having had not letter or news Edmund returns to Mansfield to see what is happening.

337 35	Correspondence referred to			Mary: '… I have two favours to ask, Fanny; one is your correspondence. You must write to me…'	
344 36	Letter referred to	Fanny's mother	Fanny	'The next step was to communicate with Portsmouth. Fanny wrote to offer herself; and her mother's answer, through short. Was so kind, a few simple lines expressed to natural and motherly a joy in the prospect of seeing her child again, as to confirm all the daughter's views of happiness in being with her…'	Fanny writes home to say she is returning to them.
344 37	Letter referred to	Fanny	Mrs Price	'By the time Mrs. Price's answer arrived, there remained by a very few days more to be spent at Mansfield; and for part of one of those days the young travellers were in a good deal of alarm on the subject of their journey, for when the more of it came to be talked of, and Mrs Norris found that all her anxiety to save her Brother-in-laws's money was vain…'	
346 38	Letter referred to			'Lady Bertram had been telling her niece in the evening to write to her soon and often, and promising to be a good correspondent herself;'	
346 39	Letter referred to			Edmund" 'And I shall write to you, Fanny when I have any thing worth writing about; any thing to say soon from any other quarter.'	Note: Importance of letter bringing unwanted news, Edmund referring that he is going to ask Mary to marry him
348 40	Letter referred to	To Fanny		'She had reason to suppose herself not yet forgotten by Mr. Crawford. – She had heard repeatedly from his sister within the three weeks which had passed since their leaving Mansfield, and in each letter there had been a few lines from himself, warm and determined like his speeches. It was a correspondence which Fanny found quite unpleasant as she had feared. Miss	Mary writes to Fanny constantly but these letters are meant for Edmund to hear and see more than Fanny. Fanny does not want to hear about Henry or his constant professions on love. Note: these letters are unwelcome and make Fanny feel uncomfortable and upset.

				Crawford's style of writing, lively and affectionate, was itself an evil, independent of what she was thus forced into reading from the brother's pen, for Edmund would never rest till she had read the chief of the letter to him and then she had to listen to his admiration of her language, and the warmth of her attachments. – There had, in fact, been so much of message, of allusion, of recollection, so much of Mansfield in every letter, that Fanny could not but suppose it meant for him to hear; and to find herself forced into a purpose of that kind, compelled into a man she did not love, and obliging her to administer to the adverse passion of the man she did, was cruelly mortifying. Here under the same roof with Edmund, she trusted that Miss Crawford would have no motive for writing, strong enough to overcome the trouble and that at Portsmouth their correspondence would dwindle to nothing.'	Once Fanny is in Portsmouth and no longer under the same roof as Edmund she hopes that Mary's correspondence 'will dwindle to nothing'.
359 41	Message referred to	Mrs Price	Aunt Norris	'Fanny had indeed nothing to convey from aunt Norris, but a message to say she hoped her god-daughter was a good girl, and learnt her book.'	
360 42	Letter referred to	Fanny's aunt	Fanny	'Could Sir Thomas have seen all his niece's feelings, when she wrote her first letter to her aunt, he would not have despaired; for though a a good night's read, a pleasant morning, the hope of soon seeing William again, and the comparatively quiet state of the house…'	At the beginning of the week when Fanny returns home she is shocked by the noise, the smallness of the house, the chaos within it but she is pleased to be home at first, however over a period of a week this changes and she almost wavers and considers Henry's proposal so as to live a life she has been accustomed too.

365 43	Letter referred to and partially written out	Fanny	From Mary	‘There was some time before Mary wrote again, as Fanny thought there might be, but instead of dreading the letter Fanny finds herself pleased to be in receipt of it, ‘Mary’s next letter was after a decidedly longer interval than the last, but she was not right in supposing that such an interval would be felt a great relief to herself. - Here was another strange revolution of mind! – She was really glad to receive the letter when it did come. In her present exile from good society, and distance from everything that had been wont to interest her, a letter from one belonging to the set where her heart lived, written with affection, and some degree of elegance was thoroughly acceptable. – The usual plea of increasing engagements was made in excuse for not having written to her earlier, “and now that I have begun,” she continued, “my letter will not be worth your reading, for there will be no little offering of love at the end, no three or four lines passionees from the devoted H.C. in the world, for Henry is in Norfolk business called him to Everingham ten days ago, or perhaps he only pretended the call, for the sake of being travelling at the same time that you were. But there he is, and, by the bye his absence may sufficiently account for any remissness of his sister’s in writing, for there has been no ‘well Mary, when do you write to Fanny? – is not it time for you to write to Fanny?’ to spur me on. At last, after various attempts at meeting, I have seen your cousins,	Missing Mansfield Park and after not hearing any news from Mary for a while, Fanny is pleased to receive a letter.

				‘dear Julia and dearest Mrs Rushworth;’ they found me at home yesterday, and we were glad to see each other again. We seemed very glad to see each other, and I do really think we were a little. – We had a vast deal to say. – Shall I tell you how Mrs Rushworth looked when your name was mentioned? I did not use to think her wanting in self possession, but she had not quite enough for the demands of yesterday. Upon the whole Julia was in the best looks of the two, at least after you were spoken of. There was no recovering the complexion from the moment that I spoke of ‘Fanny,’ and spoke of her as a sister should.- But Mrs Rushworth’s day of looks will come; we have cards for the first party on the 28th. – Then she will be in beauty, for she will open of the best houses in Wimpole Street. I was in it two years ago, when it was Lady Lascelle’s. and prefer it to almost any I know in London, and certainly she will then feel – to use a vulgar phrase – that she has got her pennyworth for her penny. Henry could not have afforded her such a house. I hope she will recollect it, and be satisfied, as well she may, with moving the queen of a palace, though the king may appear best in the back ground, and as I have no desire to teize her, I shall never force your name upon her again. She will grow sober by degrees. – From all that I hear and guess, Baron Wildenhaim’s attentions to Julia continue, but I do not know that he has any serious encouragement. She ought to do better. A poor	

				honourable is no catch, and I cannot imagine any liking in the case, for, take away his rants, and the poor Baron has nothing. What a difference a vowel makes! – if his rents were but equal to his rants! – Your cousin Edmund moves slowly; detained, perchance, by parish duties. There may be some old woman at Thornton Lacey to be converted. I am unwilling to fancy myself neglected for a young one. Adieu, my dear sweet Fanny, this is a long letter from London; write me a pretty one in reply to gladden Henry's eyes, when he comes back – and send me an account of all the dashing young captains whom you disdain for his sake.'	
370 44	Letter referred to	Fanny	Aunt	'In this occupation she hoped, moreover, to bury some of the recollections of Mansfield which were too apt to seize her mind if her fingers only were busy; and especially at this time, hoped it might be useful in diverting her thoughts from pursuing Edmund to London, whither, on the authority of her aunt's last letter, she knew he was gone.'	Fanny looks for something to occupy her time in Portsmouth and distract her thoughts from Mansfield and Edmund.
Ch XLI				'Either his going had been again delayed, or he had yet procured no opportunity of seeing Miss Crawford alone, or he was too happy for letter-writing!'	Fanny considers why Edmund has written to her and comes to three conclusions
372 l43				Mary has no time to write	
382 45	Letter referred to			Henry: 'Indeed, you shall not, it shall not be in your power, for so long only as you positively say, in every to Mary 'I am well.' – and I know	Fanny cannot lie.

				you cannot speak or write a falsehood, - so long only shall you be considered as well.'	
383 46	Letter referred to			Fanny asks that if Henry sees Edmund he should mention to write to her, 'Certainly; and if he is lazy or negligent, I will write his excuses myself –'	
385 47	Letter written in full	To Fanny	Mary	'I have to inform you, my dearest Fanny, that Henry has been down to Portsmouth to see you; that he had a delightful walk with you to the Dock-yard last Saturday, and one still more to be dwelt on the next day, on the ramparts; when the balmy air, the sparkling sea, and your sweet looks and conversation were altogether in the most delicious harmony, and afforded sensations which are to raise ecstasy even in retrospect. This, as well as I understand, is to be the substance of my information. **He makes me write,** but I do not know what else is to be communicated, except this said visit to Portsmouth, and these two said walks and his introduction to your family, especially to a fair sister of your's, a fine girl of fifteen, who was of the party on the ramparts, taking her first lesson, I presume, in love. **I have not time for writing much, but it would be out of place if I had, for this is to be a mere letter of business, penned for the purpose of conveying necessary information,** which could not be delayed without risk of evil. My dear, dear Fanny, if I had you here, how I would talk to you! – You should listen to me till you were tired, and advise me till you were tired still more; but it is	Fanny is pleased that there is not mention of an engagement between Mary and Edmund "I had almost forgot (it was Edmund's fault: he gets into my head more than does me good) one very material thing I had to say from Henry and myself—I mean about our taking you back into Northamptonshire. My dear little creature, do not stay at Portsmouth to lose your pretty looks. Those vile sea-breezes are the ruin of beauty and health. My poor aunt always felt affected if within ten miles of the sea, which the Admiral of course never believed, but I know it was so. I am at your service and Henry's, at an hour's notice. I should like the scheme, and we would make a little circuit, and shew you Everingham in our way, and perhaps you would not mind passing through London, and seeing the inside of St. George's, Hanover Square. Only keep your cousin Edmund from me at such a time: I should not like to be tempted. **What a long letter!** one word more.

				impossible to put an hundredth part of my great mind on paper, so I will abstain altogether, and leave you to guess what you like. **I have no news for you.** You have politics of course; and it would be too bad to plague you with the names of people and parties, that fill up my time. I ought to have sent you an account of your cousin's first party, but I was lazy, and now it is too long ago;…' Mary continues to write about the part Maria gave and 'that her own dress and manners did her the greatest credit.' Mary is to travel to a 'Lady Stornaway after Easter', 'She seems in high spirits, and very happy. I fancy Lord S. is very good-humoured and pleasant in his own family, and I do not think him so very ill-looking as I did, at least one sees many worse. He will not do by the side of your cousin Edmund. Of the last-mentioned **hero,** what shall I say? If I avoided his name entirely, it would look suspicious. I will say, then, that we have seen him two or three times, and that my friends here are very much struck with his gentleman-like appearance. Mrs Fraser (no bad judge), declares she knows but three men in town who have so good a person, height and air; and I must confess, when he dined here the other day, there none to compare with him, and we were a party of sixteen. Luckily **there is no distinction of dress now a days to tell tales,** but – but -but. Finishes letter, then starts again.. Mary talks of Edmund saying he 'gets into my head more than does me good'. Mary suggests	Henry, I find, has some idea of going into Norfolk again upon some business that *you* approve; but this cannot possibly be permitted before the middle of next week; that is, he cannot anyhow be spared till after the 14th, for *we* have a party that evening. The value of a man like Henry, on such an occasion, is what you can have no conception of; so you must take it upon my word to be inestimable. He will see the Rushworths, which own I am not sorry for—having a little curiosity, and so I think has he—though he will not acknowledge it."

				to Fanny that she and her brother take her back to Northamptonshire and that she should not stay in Portsmouth to 'lose her pretty looks', Mary offers to show Fanny Everingham and the inside of St George's Hanoever Square in London. Mary informs Fanny that Henry is to visit Norfolk on business and visit the Rushworths. Mary continues to praise her brother.	
390 48	Letter written in full	To Fanny	Mansfiel d Park Edmund	7 weeks have passed since Edmund writes, Crawford passed on her message to write, but that he had nothing to write to tell her about, he returns to Mansfield Park with less hope that when he left about Miss Crawford, Edmund knows that Mary writes to Fanny and says that he will not ask her anything that she writes but wishes to confide in her and that he is happy that he and Mary are 'united in their love' for Fanny. Edmund has seen Mary in London a few times however she is very much changed from the person he knew at Mansfield, 'she was in high spirits, and surrounded by those who were giving all the support of their own bad sense to her too lively mind, I do not lie Mrs Fraser. She is cold-hearted, vain woman, who has married entirely from convenience, and though evidently unhappy in her marriage, places her disappointment, not to faults of judgement or temper, or disproportion of age, but to her being after all, less affluent than many of her acquaintance, especially than her sister, Lady Stornaway.' Edmund believes Mary to have been under their bad influence for years.	Note: Edmund repearts 'I cannot give her up' Edmund 'I could better bear to lose her, because not rich enough, than because of my profession' Note: "I never will – no, I certainly never will wish for a letter again," was Fanny's secret declaration She looked over the letter again. " So very fond of me!' tis nonsense all, She loves nobody but herself and her brother' 'Oh! Write, write. Finish it at once. Let there be an end of this suspense. Fix, commit, condemn yourself." 'It was a letter, in short, which she would not but have had for the world, and which could never be valued enough. This was the end of it.'

				Edmund tells Fanny that, 'I cannot give her up, Fanny. She is the only woman in the world whom I could ever think of as a wife.' Edmund believes that Mary does hold some 'regard' for him and this gives him hope. Yet he fears rejection from her and suggests to Fanny that he shall write to Mary **'I think a letter will be decidedly the best method of explanation. I shall be able to write much that I could not say, and shall be giving her time for reflection before she resolves on her answer,' however Edmund realises that writing this in a letter she may show it to Mrs Fraser and then be talked out of accepting him. 'A letter exposes to all evil of consultation,'** Edmund sings Henry's praises to Fanny and tells her he is 'more and more satisfied with all that I see and hear from him', Edmund recalls what Fanny told him about his sister and Henry but Edmund says he sees nothing of it now that his sister was 'remarkably cold' towards Henry. Edmund says that his sister Maria seems happy but Edmund can't stand to be in his brother-in-law's company too much, and that 'Julia is enjoying London'. Edmund says that his mother talks every hour of Fanny and she is very missed and asks her not to make this a yearly visit to Portsmouth, and that his father plans to fetch her himself after Easter when he has business nearby. Edmund wants her opinion on 'Thorton Lacey' and promises to write again, and that the Grants are leaving.	'Every body at all addicted to letter writing, without having much to say, which will include a large proportion on the female world at least, must feel with Lady Bertram, that she was out of luck in having such a capital piece of Mansfield news, as the certainty of the Grants going to Bath, over at a time when she could make no advantage of it, and will admit that it must have been very mortifying to see it fall to the safe of her thankless son, and treated as concisely as possible at the end of a long letter, instead of having it spread over the the largest part of a page of her own. – For Lady Bertram rather sone in the epistolary line, having early in her marriage, from the want of other employment, and the circumstance of Sir Thomas's being in Parliament, for into the way of making and keeping correspondents, and formed for herself a very creditable, common-place, amplifying style, so that a very little matter was enough for her; she could not do entirely without any; she must have something to write about, even to her niece, and being so soon to lose all the benefit of Dr. Grant's gouty symptoms and Mrs. Grant's morning calls, it was very hard upon her to be deprived of one of the last epistolary uses she could put them to. There was rich amends,

					however, preparing for her. Lady Bertram's hour of good luck came. Within a few days from the receipt of Edmund's letter, Fanny had one from her aunt …'
395, 396 49	Letter, partially written in full	To Fanny	Aunt, Lady Bertram	My dear Fanny, I take up my pen to communicated some very alarming intelligence, which I make no doubt will give you much concern." 'This was a great deal better than to have to take up the pen to acquaint her with all the particulars of the Grants' intended journey, for the present intelligence was of a nature to promise occupation for the pen for many days to come, begin no less than the dangerous illness of her eldest son, of which they had received notice by express, a few hours before.' Tom had been partying in London with friends he drank too much and had taken a fall, his friends left him alone with servants to recover, but fell very ill that he asked his physician to have a letter dispatched to Mansfield. Edmund goes to attend to his brother and bring him home. 'Her aunt did not neglect her; she wrote again and again; they were receiving frequent accounts from Edmund, and these accounts were as regularly transmitted to Fanny, in the same diffuse style, and the same medley of trusts, hopes, and fears, all following and producing	'Fanny's feelings on the occasion were indeed considerably more warm and genuine than her aunt's style of writing.' Fanny: 'She could just find selfishness enough to wonder whether Edmund had written to Miss Crawford before his summons came…'

				each other at hap-hazzard. It was sort of playing at being frightened.' 'Then, a letter which she had been previously preparing for Fanny, was finished in a different style in the light language of real feeling and alarm; then, she wrote as she might have spoken.'	
396 50	Letter written out (although partial)	To Fanny	Aunt, Lady B	Tom is very ill and the aunt is 'shocked' to see him and her aunt wishes her niece were there with her.	
397 51	Letters mentioned			'Lady Bertram wrote her daily terrors to her niece, who might now be said to live upon letters, and pass all her time between suffering from that of to-day, and looking forward to to-tomorrow's	
398 52	Letter/note mentioned	To Fanny	Edmund	'The fever was subdued; the fever had been his complaint, or course he would soon be well again; Lady Bertram could think nothing less, and Fanny shared her aunt's security, till she received a few lines from Edmund, written purposely to give her a clearer idea of his brother's situation, and acquaint her with the apprehensions which he and his father had imbibed from the physician, with respect to some strong hectic symptoms, which seemed to seize the frame on the departure of the fever.'	
399 53	Letter mention	To Fanny	Edmund	'even in the sick chamber, the fortunate Mary was not forgotten. Edmund's letter had this postscript. "On the subject of my last, I had actually begun a letter when called away by	

				Tom's illness, but I have now changed my mind, and fear to trust the influence of friends. When Tom is better, I shall go."	
402 54	Letter written in full	To Fanny	Mary	Mary writes asking for forgiveness that she hasn't written in a long time, but demands to know 'the state of things at Mansfield Park' Mary writes that she hears Tom is very ill and has little chance of recovery, Mary further suggests that if Tom does die it would not be such a bad thing that Edmund would be better off financially for it that Edmund would 'do more good with all the Bertram property, than any other possible 'sir'.' Mary informs Fanny that Maria 'has been spending the Easter with the Aylmers at Twickenham' and 'Julia is with the cousins, who live near Bedford-Square'. 'The Aylmers are pleasant people; and her husband away. She can have nothing but enjoyment. I give her credit for promoting his going dutifully down to Bath, to fetch his mother. But how will she and the dowager agree in one house? Henry is not at hand, so I have nothing to say from him. Do you not think Edmund would have been in town again long ago, but for his illness?...' Then carries on (so two letters) "I had actually began folding my letter, when Henry walked in; but he brings no intelligence to prevent my sending it.' Mary writes that Henry saw Maria that morning, 'now do not make yourself uneasy with any queer fancies, because he has been spending a few days at Richmond.'	Fanny is disgusted by this letter, and is determined not to help in bringing Mary and Edmund together, however she is tempted by the offer to be taken home, but declines. Fanny:' she saw so much to condemn; the sister's feelings – the brother's conduct – her cold hearted ambition – his thoughtless vanity. To have him still the acquaintance, the flirt, perhaps, or Mrs Rushworth! – she was mortified. She had thought better of him.

				‘He cares for nobody but you.’ ‘wild to see you’ Mary asks her to write to her and again suggests picking her up from Portsmouth and taking her back home. ‘I have not time or patience to give half Henry’s messages; be satisfied, that the spirit of each and every one is unalterable affection.’	
404 55	Letter mentioned	Mary	Fanny	‘She thanked Mrs Crawford, but gave a decided negative. – “Her uncle, she understood, meant to fetch her; and as her cousin’s illness had continued so many weeks without her being thought at all necessary, she much suppose her return would be unwelcome at present, and that she should be felt an incumbrance,’	
406 56	Letter written in full	Fanny	Mary	‘A most scandalous, ill -natured rumour has just reached me, and I write, dear Fanny, to warn you against giving the least credit to it, should it spread into the country. Depend upon it there is some mistake, and that a day or two will clear it up – at any rate, that Henry is blames, and in spite of a moment’s etourderie thinks of nobody but you. Say not a word of it – hear nothing, surmise nothing, whisper nothing, till I write again. I am sure it will be all hushed up, and nothing proved but Rushworth’s folly. If they are gone, I would lay my life they are only gone to Mansfield Park, and Julie with them. But why would not you let us come for you? I wish you may not repent it.	Fanny has heard nothing, Fanny assumes it has something to do with Wimpole Street and Mr. Crawford. Fanny is only concerned for ‘the parties concerned and Mansfield’ Fanny did think that Henry or had ‘begun to think that he really loved her, and to fancy his affection for her something more than common.’
410 57	Letter mentioned			‘Miss Crawford’s letter stampt it a fact.’	

411 58	Letter written in full	Fanny	Edmund	Edmund writes that 'there is nothing to be done.' Maria and Henry "they cannot be traced' and Julia has eloped to Scotland with yates. His uncle has asked him to write to Fanny and ask her to return to Mansfield for his mother's sake. Edmund will collect her and his father wishes her to invite Susan with her for a 'few months'	After receiving this letter Fanny is extremely happy although aware that others are suffering misery but she is wanting to return home to Mansfield. Julia's elopement has surprised her, but she doesn't dwell on it
417 59	Letters mentioned			Fanny learnt from her, all the particulars which had yet transpired. Her aunt was no very methodical narrator; but with the help of some letters to and from Sir Thomas, and what she already knew herself, and could reasonably combine, she was soon able to understand quite as much as she wished of the circumstances attending the story.	We learn that Mrs Rushworth went to Twickenham for Easter holidays and stayed with a family she knew well, Mr Crawford had 'constant access' to this house. Mr Rushworth had gone to Bath to see his mother and fetch her back with him, Julia was away to Wimpole Street visiting relations of Sir Thomas, where Julia had arranged to elope with Mr Yates.
418 60	Letter mentioned			'Sir Thomas had received a letter from an old and most particular friend in London, who hearing and witnessing a good deal to alarm him in that quarter, wrote to recommend Sir Thomas's coming to London himself, and using his influence with his daughter, to put an end to an intimacy which was already exposing her to unpleasant remarks and evidently making Mr. Rushworth uneasy.' 'Sir Thomas was preparing to act upon this letter, without communicating its contents to any creature at Mansfield, when it was followed by another, sent express from the same friend, to break to him the almost desperate situation in which affairs then stood with the young people.'	Maria left her husband, and the servant of Mrs Rushworth was threatening to tell all. Sir Thomas and Edmund went to London,

418 61	Letters mentioned			‘Sir Thomas set off; Edmund would go with him and the others had been left in a state of wretchedness, inferior only to what followed the receipt of the next letters from London. Every thing was by that time public beyond hope.	‘The servant of Mrs Rushworth, the mother, had exposure in her power, and, supported by her mistress, was not to be silence.’
419 62	Letter mentioned	Lady Bertram	Sir Thomas	‘His letters expressed how much he deplored it.’	Maria’s open affair and her leaving her husband and Julia’s elopement with Mr Yates.
421 63	Note mentioned	Edmund		‘He had seen Miss Crawford. He had been invited to see her. He had received a note from Lady Stornaway to beg him to call;’	Edmund sees Mary for her true nature as she blames Fanny for not accepting Henry and this is why he has an affair with Maria. Note: Mrs Norris, tries to get Maria to return to Mansfield, as she is her favourite, and also blames Fanny for this indiscretion, Mrs Norris is sent away to live with Maria in Europe, they are banished from the family.

Appendix IV: Table of letters in *Emma*

Page no/no of letter	**Letter, note, inferred, written in full, date**	**Recipient**	**Sender**	**Purpose of letter**	**Effect on character, plot**
18 1	Inferred and mentioned	Mrs Weston	Frank Churchill	‘handsome letter’ Congratulations of their marriage, Mrs Weston and Mr Weston	Introduction of Frank Churchill’s character, this letter is shown around proudly and since Frank is not there in person for himself to be

					praised, the way he writes is praised
49 2	Letter mentioned	Harriet Smith	Mr Martin	Proposal of marriage 'was a very good letter' and 'he wrote as if he really loved her very much but she did not know' 'it would not have disgraced a gentleman, the language though plain, was strong and unaffected, and the sentiments it conveyed very much to the credit of the writer'	Emma is appalled at the thought of her friend marrying into a society that she sees below herself, Harriet is a project to Emma and has set her sites on her marrying Mr Elton. Harriet looks to Emma for guidance and is easily persuaded in a subtle way that she should not be accepting a proposal from Mr Martin, this is not for Harriet's benefit but that of Emma. Yet Emma does seemed surprised by the strength and education Mr Martin must have in writing such a letter.
54 3	Letter mentioned	Mr Martin	Harriet	Refusing his proposal	Harriet has been persuaded to refuse Mr Martin,
91 4	Letters mention	Mrs John Knightley	Emma	'and just as I hoped it was from your letters. Her wish of shewing you attention could not be doubted.'	Mr Woodhouse feels the loss of Mrs Weston greatly since she has married however Mrs Weston even though she is married still visits Highbury and shows them great attention.

92	Letter mention Ref to previous letter on page 18 Written from Weymouth, Sept 28th	Frank Churchill	Mrs Weston	He wrote a letter ‘to congratulate her, and a very proper, handsome letter it was.’	
98 5	Letters mentioned	To Emma’s father, Mr Woodhouse	Mrs Knightley	Discussing the Bates	They discuss ‘letters’ and return to what was said about the Bates
132 6	Note	To Mr Woodhouse	Mr Elton	‘a long, civil, ceremonious note’ sending ‘best compliments’ ‘that he was proposing to leave Highbury the following morning in his way to Bath’ where he was to spend a few weeks visiting friends.	After Emma’s refusal of Mr Elton, he takes himself off to Bath in order to find a wife, Emma is relieved by this, Harriet is very upset due him openly not interested in proposing to her, and Emma believes by him being away it will save her some embarrassment and remove the object of Harriet’s affections giving her time to get over him.
136 7	Letter inferred	Mrs Weston	Frank Churchill	Letter of excuse that he ‘could not be spared to his very great mortification and regret; but still looked forward with the hope of coming to Randalls at no distant period.’	Frank again makes no appearance and it would appear he is governed by the whim of his aunt, yet does not show a great deal of effort to visit.
140	Letters referred to			Mr Knightley discussion Frank Churchill’s letters ‘His letters disgust me.’	Mr Knightley is aggrieved by Frank and his lack of appearance to pay respects to

					his father and his new step-mother
145 8	Letters referred to	Miss Bates	Jane Fairfax	'as well as she calculate, they were just now quite safe from any letter from Jane Fairfax'.	Emma tries to avoid the Bates when she knows a letter will arrive from Jane Fairfax
146 9	Letter referred to	Mr Cole	Mr Elton	How Mr Elton is in Bath and what he's been up to	Mr Elton writes that he has been a good deal in society and attended balls and parties.
146 – 151 10	Letter referred to	Miss Bates	Jane Fairfax	Only two pages of letter, which has been read many times to Mrs Cole, Mrs Bates 'in general she fills the whole paper and crosses half'. Jane is coming and to stay three months with the Bates'. Jane has been invited to Ireland but The Campbells are going to Ireland they are to visit their daughter Mrs Dixon. Mrs Dixon wrote her mother a letter asking them to come urgently to Dublin then to Baly-craig. Jane used to walk out with the Campbells daughter and Mr Dixon before they were married. Mr Dixon is from Ireland and is a 'most amiable, charming young man' and Jane is 'quite longing to go to Ireland'.	Paper was expensive therefore every part was used? Finally, we are seeing Jane Fairfax in person and she is coming for a long visit and the Bates are very excited. This letter tells us about who Jane has been staying with and now that the daughter who Jane was companion to is married, this frees her character. We learn about the story of Mr Dixon who saves Jane's life (or from falling into the sea from boat) he 'caught hold of her habit'

151 Cont.	Letter 7th November	To Miss Bates	Jane	Jane caught a 'bad cold' and the Campbells think it better that she 'come home, and try an air that always agrees with her' and it would be better she returns home than go to Ireland. Jane is to arrive next Friday or Saturday. Miss Bates states that she always reads Jane's letters first before reading them to her mother in order to make sure there is nothing in it that is distressing.	Miss Bates reads the letter first as she declares in order to make sure there is nothing distressing in the letter for her mother, however it could be that Miss Bates just wants to read it first. Jane is to come home because of a cold. (in hindsight her determination to come home and not attend Ireland is because of Frank Churchill and their arrangement to meet.
163 11	Note	Miss Bates	Mrs Cole	Mr Elton is engaged to Miss Hawkins from Bath	Emma is amused by this letter, Mr Elton marrying someone after 4 weeks, it 'was a very welcome piece of news, as proving that Mr Elton could not have suffered long, but she was sorry for Harriet'. Mr Elton didn't take that long to get over Emma denying his proposal.
163 12	Letter	Mr Cole	Mr Elton	That is to be married to a Miss Hawkins	
173 13	Note	Harriet Smith	Elizabeth Martin	'a note had been prepared and left for her written in the very style to touch, a small mixture of reproach with a great deal of kindness'	This note proves a welcome distraction from Harriet getting over Mr Elton and Emma sees this as a good time for her to visit the Martins, however this visit would be under the guidance of Emma and such an

					acquaintance would be kept to a minimum so as not be brought back into the fold of such a low society.
177 14	Letter	Mr Weston	Frank Churchill	Frank arrives tomorrow by dinner, ‘he is at Oxford to-day, and he comes for a whole fortnight’	
195 15	Invitation	Emma and Mr Woodhouse	Coles	Inviting to a party	Emma was quite put out that she should be invited to a party by such a family lower than her own in status yet is quite perturbed that everyone else seems to have had a invite. Despite determining not to go should she be invited Emma changes her mind.
196 16	Note	Mrs Goddard	Emma	Inviting her to sit with Mr Woodhouse while Emma is at the party	
196 17	Reply	To Mrs Cole	Emma	Accepting the invitation but excusing Mr Woodhouse	
201 18	Letter referred to	Jane	The Campbells	No reference of the gift a pianoforte	There is general intrigue as to who bought the pianoforte and Miss Bates declares that Jane said there was no mention of this gift her previous letter from the Campbells.

240 19 240	Letter Note	Frank Churchill Emma	Mrs Churchill Mrs Weston	'Mr Churchill to urge his nephew's instant return. Mrs Churchill was unwell – far too unwell to do without him' 'the substance of this letter was forwarded to Emma'	This note precedes Franks visit to Emma that he must leave and that the ball is cancelled.
243 20	Discussing letters			'I shall hear of everything that is going on among you. I have engaged Mrs Weston to correspond with me', 'Oh! The blessing of a female correspondent,'	Mrs Weston is to write to Frank
246 21	Letter	Mrs Weston	Frank Churchill	Emma reads this letter, 'It was a long well written letter, giving the particulars of his journey and of his feelings. 'It was the language of real feeling towards Mrs Weston. Frank discusses the change of society and living from Randalls to Enscombe	Frank talks about the 'transition from Highbury to Enscombe' he mentions Emma and remembers things she has said asks to be remembered to her 'friend' no mentioning of the name Harriet, therefore she was of little consequence to him.
265 22	Letter inferred	Jane	Mrs Dixon	Mrs Dixon had written most pressingly to invite her to Ireland' means were to be found, servants sent, friends contrived – no travelling difficulty allowed to exist; but still she declined it!'	Jane declines the request to visit Ireland
270 23	Invitations		Emma	A dinner to be held	Emma decides to hold a dinner party

272 24	Letters		Jane	'I always fetch the letters when I am here' from the post office	Jane was seen fetching letters from the post office and the weather was noted to be raining, Mrs Elton seems determined to interfere and get a servant to collect them for her, but Jane refuses, thus hinting perhaps at the fact that these letters were personal, private and secret.
276 25	**Discussion about letters** and handwriting			Mr John Knightley discusses his wife's handwriting and Emma's and that they are similar and must have had the same teacher, whereas boys 'have very little teaching after an early age, and scramble into any hand they can get' Mr Knightley argues with his brother that Emma has the stronger hand when writing. Emma declares that Frank Churchill 'writes one of the best gentlemen's hands' but Mr Knightley does 'not admire it… it's too small and wants strength, it is like a woman's writing'. Emma offers to produce a note written by Frank Churchill to herself as proof of his good penmanship.	
279 26	Letter	Mrs Partridge	Mrs Elliot	To be on the lookout for a position for Jane as governess	

282 27	Letter	Mrs Weston	Frank Churchill	Read it to Emma, Frank is to return to see them. Frank writes more to Mrs Weston than his father. Mr Weston openly admits opening his wife's letter. Frank is giving them 'notice' that all the Churchills are moving southward from Enscombe on account of Mrs Churchill's poor health.	Frank is to be amongst them again, the family are moving to town, this is so much nearer to them than Yorkshire. Mr Weston says that Mrs Churchill's illness is 'all nothing of course'
285 28	Refer to previous letter	Mrs Weston	Frank Churchill	'In Frank's last letter she complained, he said of being too weak to get into her conservatory without' aid	
287 29	Letters	To Mrs Weston	Frank Churchill	'Mrs Weston's letters lately have been full of' news regarding Mrs Elton	
289 (30)	Letter	Emma	Sister Isabella	General news of boys	
290 31	Letter	Isabella	Emma	every letter 'brought an account of fresh gaieties, dinners at Mr Cole's or balls at the crown'	
297/298 32	Letter And a note	Randalls	Frank Churchill	The Churchill's were going 'to remove immediately to Richmond' as Mrs Churchill couldn't stand the noise of the town. 'Frank wrote in the highest of spirits of this arrangement, and seemed most fully to appreciate the blessing of having two months before him of such a near neighbourhood to many dear friends, for the house was taken for	

				May and June'. The ball at the Crown has not been forgotten and a date would be fixed and Frank shall return to them for 24 hours as his aunt was in better health.	
302 33	Note	Jane	Mrs Weston	Offering them a carriage	
323 34	Letter	Frank	Jane	Frank Churchill discussing 'Mr Perry's plan of setting up a carriage' tells Mrs Weston that she wrote to him about his, but she did not.	This 'Blunder' on Frank's behalf almost gives away that he and Jane are writing to each other as she is the only one that could have told him this information
326 35	Letter		Emma	Mr Woodhouse 'took up any stray letter near him, how beautifully Emma had written it.'	Suggesting that letters were kept close to hand, and were of comfort and were there for people to read
335 36	Letter	Frank	Mr Weston	Inviting him to an outing on Box Hill	
337 37	Letter		Mrs Elliot	Insisted 'on being authorised to write an acquiescence by the morrow's post	Mrs Elliot was to write / asking for a position for Jane
345 38/39	Letter Letter	Maple Grove Ireland	Mrs Elliot	Mr Frank Churchill and Miss Woodhouse flirted together excessively' Saying the same thing	

354 40	Letters	To Col Campbell and Mrs Dixon	Jane	Regarding a situation she has been offered	
359 41	Message	Frank	Mr Churchill	On return from Box Hill. Requesting he return home as soon as possible as his aunt was very ill.	
363 (42)	Message	Randall	Frank	Mrs Churchill has died	
364 43	Letters	Randalls	Frank	'communicating all that was immediately important' regarding funeral	Update letter of news regarding his aunt, and her funeral arrangements
365 44	Letter	Jane	Emma	That she would call in the carriage and offer to take her out, Jane replies saying thank you but no	Jane is refusing to see and speak to Emma, and Emma is still unsure why she is rejected by Jane
373 45	Message	Frank	Jane	Regarding Jane accepting a position	
373 ** 46	Letter	Mrs Weston	Frank	Awaiting a letter to explain all	

390 47	Letter	Harriet	Emma	Asking her not to visit her	Emma distraught that Harriet should love Mr Knightley
394 ** 48	Letter			'We have not yet had the letter we are so anxious for,'	
398 49	Letter	Mr Knightley	Mr Weston	A few lines about Parish business, informed of the engagement between Jane and Frank	News
407 50	Letter	Harriet Smith	Emma	Writing to engage her to stay with her sister in Brunswick Square. Believing that a 'few weeks spent in London must give her some amusement,'	Emma, knowing that Harriet has professed her love for Knightley and worries this may be returned cannot face Harriet and therefore thinks sending her away the only way forward and that Harriet wouldn't be able to resist such an opportunity, Harriet not realising she is being disposed of Emma believes by sending Harriet away it will save her some embarrassment and remove Harriet from her sight and Mr Knightley
408 51	Letter Written in full	Emma	Mrs Weston	A cover letter forwarding Emma a letter she had received from Frank Churchill	

408 52	Letter Written in full Windsor, July	Mrs Weston	Frank Churchill	Frank wants to tell all that has happened. A letter of confession. When Frank arrived at 'Randalls' he admits to having a 'secret' that he must had kept 'at all hazards', he had met Jane in Weymouth and they had become secretly engaged. Frank admits that his return to the area was down to Jane Fairfax and not his wish of seeing his father, yet Frank tries to flatter himself into being forgiven by Mrs Weston, 'and as you were the person slighted, you will forgive me instantly,'. Frank also admits to using Emma 'My behaviour to Miss Woodhouse indicated, I believe, more than it ought. – In order to assist a concealment so essential to me' Frank deflects his behaviour towards Emma and says that had he not been 'convinced of her indifference' he would have flirted so with her and believed that they had a 'mutual understanding'. Frank admits to buying the pianoforte and that Jane knew nothing about it. Frank still unable to leave his uncle's side, wants to know if Mrs Weston has visited Jane yet and wants to know all the details, he also suggests that Jane is nervous about this visit. Frank does admit that he 'behaved shamefully' to Jane and to Emma. Frank recounts what happened at Donwell, that he and Jane had 'quarrelled'. On the morning of Frank's aunt's death Jane sent him a letter telling him that she wished to	This letter explains the missing links in the plot such as Jane being upset, Frank being cross, the secrecy between them, the walking to the post office, the gift of the piano. Confessional to an extent

				break off the engagement. Frank replied within 'the hour' however due to his error this letter wasn't sent. Jane took his silence as confirmation of their dissolvement of the engagement and sent a further letter with a parcel returning all his letters and asked for hers to be returned. Frank distraught asked his uncle for permission to marry to Jane and was consented, and now Frank was 'reconciled' with Jane. Frank wishes to thank Mrs Weston for all her kindness.	
422 53	Letter referred to	To Harriet	Emma	'Their intercourse was painful enough by letter'	Emma can't face talking to Harriet, their friendship is dissolving, communicating by letter only, Harriet is persuaded to go to London and stay with Isabella and visit a dentist
424 54	Letter referred to	Mrs Elliot	Mrs S	'Mrs S admits our apology, and is not offended'. Jane refused the employment	Mrs Elliot is enjoying being included into the private world of Jane Fairfax
428 (55)	Note	Mr Knightley	Mr Elton	To say he would be calling	
433 56	Letters referred to	Emma	Isabella	News of Harriet	All the news hears about Harriet, Harriet has visited a dentist and will be extending her stay from 2 weeks to a month and will be returning with Mr and Mrs Knightley.

432 57	Letters	John Knightley	Brother Mr Knightley	Discussing his engagement to Emma	
436 58	Letters referred to	Mr Woodhouse	Isabella	'the strongest approbation' Isabella suggesting the marriage of Emma and Mr Knightley is a good thing	Isabella is supportive of her sister and encouraging to their father that he sees this marriage as a good thing
446 59	Letters referred to	Frank	Mrs Weston	Thanking Emma for forgiving him	
447 60	Letter referred to	Mrs Weston/Emma	Frank	Frank wishes her and Mr Knightley well Frank discusses a last letter sent and that he wishes Emma to be in as much love as he is.	Emma and Frank talking

Appendix V: Table of letters in *Persuasion*

Page no/No of letter	**Date of letter/inferred or read allowed**	**Recipient**	**Sender**	**Purpose/Reason of Letter**	**Impact of letter/ effect/ comments/action/theme**
29 1	Inferred note No date Inferred, letter between Mary and Elizabeth only showing two lines of the letter	Elizabeth (Anne's sister)	Mary (Anne's sister)	That Mary is unwell and in need of Anne to help her at Uppercross. "I cannot possibly do without Anne,' was Mary's reasoning.	Anne stays with her sister Mary instead of going to Bath, this leads to Anne meeting with the Crofts and Captain Wentworth
33 2	Inferred letter Thursday	Anne	Mary	Giving a good account of herself. "you sent me such a good account of yourself on Thursday"	That Mary was fine on Thursday, shows the fickleness of Mary's illnesses.
45 3	No date Two letters of disinterest written under the influence of the Captain Wentworth, other letters sent but only asking for money	Mr and Mrs Musgrove	Dick (Richard) Musgrove	Under the guidance of Captain Wentworth Dick wrote home from his time at sea (6 months)	Telling his parents briefly that he was well, inferred that other letters he wrote were asking for money. Dick died and since his death all of his past behaviours have been forgotten and his character remembered better than he was. Dick was a 'hopeless son', thickheaded' unfeeling and 'unprofitable'
85 4	Letter November	Captain Wentworth	Captain Harville	Informing Captain Wentworth that he was settled in Lyme with his family, Captain	Reuniting Captain Wentworth and Captain Harville. Louisa is determined to visit Lyme, shows

	Not read aloud but the information of the letter shared			Harville still suffers from ill health from a wound received two years before. Charles, Mary, Anne, Henrietta, Louisa, and Captain Wentworth all visit Lyme	determination in character. CW visits Lyme first and talks of Lyme which leads to them all visiting Lyme, this visit leads to Louisa's fall and consequently falling in love with Captain Benwick, Anne meets her cousin Mr Elliot and Captain Wentworth is forced to recognise that he is still in love with Anne.
91 5	Suggested reading of letters			Advised Captain Benwick to read a wider range of prose,	Anne advising Captain Benwick that he should read a wider 'works or our best moralists, such collections of finest letters'
97 and 98 6	No read Letter No date Information regarding correspondence Letters were sent to Benwick	Anne	To her father Sir Walter	Mary suggesting that when Anne writes to Bath to mention they have seen Mr Elliot, their cousin The letters sent to Benwick were informing him of his finance's death	We discover that 'Mary never wrote to Bath herself, all the toil of keeping up a slow and unsatisfactory correspondence with Elizabeth fell on Anne'. Captain Wentworth told Benwick of the news as no else had the courage.
106 7	Reference to a poem			Matthew prior's Emma and Henry poem	The feelings of an Emma towards her Henry
112 8	A Note or two No date	Lyme	Anne	Notes found their way to Anne but could not tell how the notes found their way to her	Louisa is improving news
122 9	Letter No date	Anne	Elizabeth	Mr Elliot has visited Elizabeth and her father in Bath	Mr Elliot was in Bath and wished to be reacquainted with the Elliot's. Elizabeth and her father see this as a good connection and

	Information of what is in the letter				accept Mr Elliot's apology for neglecting his attentions to them.
134, 135 10	Letters referred to			Information regarding lack of letters between Anne's father and Lady Dalrymple regarding the loss of a Viscount (LD's husband) in Ireland and vice versa when Lady Elliot died. No condolence letters sent, this sent about a rift in the connections	Wanting to reignite connections with Lady Dalrymple the Viscountess, cousin to the Elliot's. After finding out that Lady Dalrymple had taken a place in Bath Sir Walter sends a letter filled with regret and entreaty that they should be recognised as cousins again, this would be important to Sir Walter as his need to be thought of as having a high social standing.
135 11	Letter information	Lady Dalrymple	Sir Walter	Letter of ample explanation, regret, and entreaty to his cousin	Re-establish family connections and connect with family of title and social rank
135 12	Note	Sir Walter	Lady Dalrymple	'She was very much honoured and should be happy in their acquaintance'	'An acquaintance worth having' LD wrote just a few lines in reply to a lengthy letter.
148, 149, 150, 151 13/14	A thick letter February 1 Consisting of two letters	Anne	Mary	The Crofts brought Anne the letter from Uppercross. Mary informs Anne that they had a dull Christmas and there had been no dinner parties. The Harville's children had stayed with Mrs Musgrove. Mary comments with jealousy that Mrs Musgrove prefers the Harville's children to her	Further proves Mary's fickleness of character. Mary is jealous of how Mrs Musgroves treats the Harville's children. There is further small concern about Mrs Clay and the time she spends in the company of Sir Walter. Mary's hypochondriac personality reveals more of itself. Mary changes her mind quickly about people and is easily offended and affronted. The

				own. Mary complains of the weather and inferring that the countryside had been very muddy as they do not pavements. Charles Hayter has visited Henrietta. The carriage has been sent to fetch Louisa and the Harville's. Mary wishes to meet with Mr Elliot. Mary remarks on how long Mrs Clay has been staying with Elizabeth and talks about visiting them in Bath. Mary has learnt that there is a 'bad sore throat' going around and she fears that she will catch this. Mary is upset that the Crofts have not kept her informed of their visit to Bath. 2nd part of letter Mary changes her attitude towards the Crofts after receiving a note from them. Mary informs Anne that Benwick did not come with Louisa and the Harvilles even though he had been invited however this was because he had written a letter to Mr Musgrove via Harville	news that Wentworh is still eligible gives Anne hope. Mary much like her father feels herself above many in society and loathes the fact that Henrietta should marry someone so below in social standing to Mary.

				requesting to marry Louisa. Mary continues to be dismayed by the Hayters connection and contradicts her previous feelings that she knew Wentworth was never attached to Louisa	
157, 158 15	Letter	Admiral	Captain Wentworth	Anne is looking for information about Captain Wentworth to find out how he feels about the marriage between Louisa and Benwick.	Anne is pleased to discover that Captain Wentworth is unaffected by Louisa's acceptance of marriage.
186 16	Letter July 1803 London	Charles Smith	Mr Elliot	Mr Elliot tells Charles of his dislike for Sir Walter and his daughter and can't wait to be in ownership of Kellynch Hall	This letter is proof for Anne that Mr Elliot's real character is far from the one he portrays.
212 17	Letter	Captain Wentworth		Writing on behalf of Captain Harville to get a picture reset for Louisa of Benwick.	This brings about a conversation between Harville and Anne about how women do not forget their first love, this conversation if important for Wentworth to overhear.
218 18	Letter written out in full	Anne	Captain Wentworth	Captain Wentworth declares his love for Anne, that he has loved no one but Anne. He came to Bath for her.	Anne finally realises that he loves her still and this leads to the happy resolution of the plot
231 19	Writing	Captain Wentworth writes on behalf of Mrs Smith		He writes on behalf of Mrs Smith and manages to acquire back her property and some wealth	Money

Appendix VI: Table of letters in *Northanger Abbey*

Page no/No of letter	**Date, Letter in full, note, letter inferred**	**Recipient**	**Sender**	**Purpose/Reason of letter**	**Impact of letter/ effect/ comments/action/theme**
4 1	Receiving of letters	N/A	N/A	'Her taste for drawing was not superior; though whenever she could obtain the outside of a letter from her mother, or seize upon any other odd piece of paper, she did what she could in that way, by drawing houses and trees'	Letters as pieces of paper to be recycled for other purposes
8/9 2	Inferred	N/A	N/A	'It is now expedient to give some description of Mrs Allen, that the reader may be able to judge, in what manner her actions will hereafter tend to promote the general distress of the work, and how she will probably, contribute to reduce poor Catherine to all the desperate wretchedness of which a last volume is capable – whether by her imprudence, vulgarity, or jealousy – whether by intercepting her letters, ruining her character , or turning her out of doors.'	How easily letters can be read by anyone not just the recipient
14/15 3	Inferred	N/A	N/A	Mr T 'My dear Madam, I am not so ignorant of young ladies' ways as you wish to believe me; it is this delightful habit of journalising which largely contributes to form the easy	Conversation between Catherine and Mr Tilney Women write better than men/female occupation

				style of writing for which ladies are so generally celebrated. Everybody allows that the talent of writing agreeable letters is peculiarly female' 'I should no more lay it down as a general rule that women write better letters than men, than that they sing better duets, or draw better landscapes'.	
P 16 4	Referenced	N/A	N/A	'while she drank her warm wine and water, and prepared herself for bed, as to dream of him when there, cannot be ascertained; but I hope it was no more than a slight slumber, or a morning doze at most; for if it be true, as a celebrated writer has maintained, that no young lady can be justified in falling in love before the gentleman's love is declared' via letter from Mr Richardson No. 97 Vol ii Rambler	Comic /irony Rules conventions of receiving a love letter before being allowed to dream of him
P 32 5	Inferred	Catherine	James	Catherine talking to her brother about Isabella: 'Indeed I am,' she replied; 'I love her exceedingly, and am delighted to find that you like her too. You hardly mentioned anything of her when you wrote to me after your visit here'	Siblings write to each other – he withheld information from her, limited on news sharing or she wasn't that important to tell of?
P 64 6	Calling card	Catherine	Miss Tilney	Catherine leaves a calling card at Miss Tilney's	

P 76 7	Referred	N/A	N/A	Catherine, relieved for herself, felt uneasy for Isabella; and after a moment's thought, asked Mr Allen whether it would not be both proper and kind in her to write to Miss Thorpe, and explain the indecorum of which she must be insensible as herself; for she considered that Isabella might otherwise perhaps be going to Clifton,'	Write a letter explaining how she should behave. How she might be gossiped about.
P77 8	Referred	N/A	N/A	'Yes,' added Miss Tilney, 'and I remember that you undertook to read it aloud to me, and that when I was called away for only five minutes to answer a note, instead of waiting for me, you took the volume into the Hermitage walk	'
P 81 9	Referred	N/A	N/A	Something very shocking indeed will soon come out in London….. 'Good Heaven! – Where could you hear of such a thing?' Mr T 'A particular friend of mind had an account of it in a letter from London yesterday. It is to be uncommonly dreadful. I shall expect murder and everything of the kind.'	Letter re scandal is about to break
P 85 10	Referred	Catherine	Isabella	Early the next day, a note from Isabella, speaking peace and tenderness in every line, and entreating the immediate presence of her friend on a matter of confidence and curiosity, to Edgar's Buildings	Note/letter – disingenuous character – hinting at secrets to be shared – use of irony

P 86 11	Note			‘Let us sit down and talk in comfort. Well, and so you guessed it the moment you read my note? – Sly creature! – Oh! My dear Catherine, you alone who know my heart can judge of my present happiness. Your brother is the most charming of men. I only wish I were more worthy of him what will your excellent father and mother say?’	Hyperbolic language
P 88 12	Referred			Morland says that by sending it tonight to Salisbury we may have it tomorrow. – Tomorrow? – I know I shall never have courage to open the letter. I know it will be the death of me’	Dramatically absurd character Anticipation of letter
P 88/89 13		Isabella	James Morland	Isabella became more and more desponding and before the letter arrived, had worked herself into a state of real distress. But when it did come, where could distress before? ‘ I have had no difficulty in gaining the consent of my kind parent’s and am promised that everything in their power shall be done to forward my happiness,’ were the first three lines’ … thus securing joy! The letter, whence sprang all this felicity, was short, containing little more than this assurance of success; and every particular was deferred till James could write again	Short letter bringing good news – parents consenting to marriage

P 97 14		Isabella	James Morland	James Morland's second letter was then received, and the kind intentions of his father fully explained. A living, of which Mr Morland was himself patron and incumbent, of about four hundred pounds yearly value, was to be resigned to his son as soon as he should be old enough to take it; no trifling deduction from the family income, no niggardly assignment to one of ten children. An estate of at least equal value, moreover, was assured as his future inheritance … necessity to wait 2/3 years	Not the news Isabella wanted - disappointment
P 99 15				We leave Bath, as she has perhaps told you, on Saturday se'nnight. A letter from my steward tells me that my presence is wanted at home; and being disappointed ….. invites Catherine to Northanger Abbey	'
P 100 16		Catherine	To parents	I shall write home directly said she Hurried home to write her letter And sent by return of post their ready consent	Requesting permission Staying in contact with family
P 102 17		N/A	N/A	Isabella: 'I have just had letter from John; - you can guess its contents' 'My sweet love, do not be so abominably affected. What can he write about but yourself? You know he is over head and ears in love with you'	John does not write to Catherine but uses Isabella as a conduit

P 139 18		N/A	N/A	Miss Tilney My father only wanted me to write a note	
142 19				Henry asks if Catherine has received a letter from Bath, which she hasn't	
147/148 20	Letter written in full:	To Catherine	From James	James is no longer engaged to Isabella, he is heartbroken and believes she will soon be engaged to Captain Tilney.	Letter brings shocking scandalous news 'I do not think I shall every wish for a letter again' – Catherine (similar to *Mansfield Park*)
154 21	Ref to letter	N/A	N/A	From Saturday to Wednesday, however, they were now to be without Henry. This was the sad finale of every reflection:—and Captain Tilney's letter would certainly come in his absence	Letter bringing ominous news
157 22	Letter written in full: Bath, April	To Catherine	From Isabella	Isabella trying to cover her tracks and reconnect with James, she did nothing wrong and is innocent	Disingenuous/ confession letter by her protesting
166 23	Ref Letter			'You must write to me Catherine' she cried 'you must let me hear from you as soon as possible.' Tilney's father has sent Catherine from the house as he believes her penniless and she is unchaperoned, Elinor gives her the money to get home	
172 24		Elinor	Catherine	To compose a letter which might at once do justice to her sentiments and her situation, convey gratitude without resentment – a letter which Eleanor might not be pained by the	Letter could be read by not just the recipient

				perusal of – and, above all, which she might not blush herself, if Henry should chance to see, was an undertaking to frighten away all her powers of performance, and after long thought and much perplexity, to be very brief was all that she could determine on with any confidence of safety.' Catherine returned the money owed to Elinor	
183 25	Letter referred	Catherine	Henry	Whether the torments of absence were softened by a clandestine correspondence, let us not enquire. Mr and Mrs Morland never did – they had been too kind to exact any promise; and whenever Catherine received a letter, as, at that time, happened pretty often, they always looked another way.	Social conventions of receiving love letters