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**The Need for Virtue to Guide the Imagination and Reason in Jane Austen's
Novels *Northanger Abbey*, *Sense and Sensibility*, and *Mansfield Park***

by

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements _____	iii
Introduction _____	1
Chapter 1: The Not so Foolish Catherine Morland in <i>Northanger Abbey</i> _____	12
Introduction _____	12
The Minor Characters John and Isabella Thorpe _____	14
The Not so Foolish Catherine _____	20
Catherine’s Ungoverned Imagination _____	21
Catherine’s Misuse of Reason _____	26
Catherine’s Correct Use of Reason _____	30
Catherine’s Moral Sense _____	35
Catherine’s Redemption _____	36
Conclusion _____	40
Chapter 2: Marianne’s Growth and Elinor’s Fortitude in <i>Sense and Sensibility</i> _____	41
Introduction _____	41
Marianne’s Growth _____	44
Marianne’s Lack of Sympathy for Others _____	44
Marianne’s Imagination Controlled by Books _____	48
Marianne’s Imagination Controlled by Her Will _____	49
Marianne’s Ungoverned Emotions _____	53
Marianne’s Correct Use of Imagination and Reason _____	56
Marianne’s Redemption _____	61
Elinor’s Fortitude _____	66
Elinor’s Sympathetic Imagination _____	67
Elinor’s Reason Regulating Her Emotions _____	71
Conclusion _____	76
Chapter 3: The Consistent Character Fanny Price in <i>Mansfield Park</i> _____	77
Introduction _____	77
Fanny’s Sympathetic Imagination _____	79

Fanny's Understanding of the Imagination _____	81
Fanny's Reason Guided by Observations _____	89
Fanny's Reason Regulating Her Emotions _____	93
Fanny's Philosophical Observations _____	98
Fanny's Use of Reason and Imagination by Properly Applying Books _____	102
Conclusion _____	107
Conclusion _____	108
Bibliography _____	112

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Introduction

Jane Austen is an eighteenth- and nineteenth-century writer who remains popular even to this day. An important theme that is present in all of her works is morality. There are two primary faculties of human nature that need to be guided by morals as Austen demonstrates in her novels: the imagination and reason.

These two faculties are important because they are the reasons why some characters, specifically some heroines, have to go through a learning process. This thesis will focus on characters found in Austen's novels *Northanger Abbey*, *Sense and Sensibility*, and *Mansfield Park*, with a focus mainly on her heroines.

Unfortunately, Austen's three other major novels could not be included due to the length of this thesis. The three novels included offer a wide variety of heroines who either demonstrate a proper understanding of how the imagination and reason are to be used, or who learn how to properly use these two faculties. Furthermore, a characteristic that is important to the heroines in regards to these two faculties of the mind is that they both need to be guided by morals. First, a discussion on some of Austen's letters will be presented. Next, an account of Austen's predecessors will be presented so that readers may gain an understanding of the imagination and reason during the eighteenth-century, and then the introduction will close with a discussion of her novels.

Austen's letters are an excellent way of gaining insight into her views of the imagination and reason, as well as her views of morality. There is one

particular letter that strongly reveals Austen's view of the imagination, judgement and principles. Austen wrote to her niece Fanny Knight declaring, "But how could it possibly be any new idea to you, that you have a great deal of Imagination? - You are all over Imagination. - The most astonishing part of your Character is, that with so much Imagination, so much flight of Mind, such unbounded Fancies, you should have such excellent Judgement in what you do! - Religious Principle I fancy must explain it" (*Jane Austen's Letters*, 349). Therefore, Austen believes that a lively imagination is not a dangerous thing if it is guided by religious principles. Even though the idea of "Religious Principle" is specific to her Christian faith, there are morals in the Christian faith that are universal.¹ This quotation also indicates that morals are needed to make judgements, which requires the process of reasoning. Reason must be guided by morals so that a person can process whether or not a decision is morally right. Austen interchangeably uses the words "imagination" and "fancy" in her letters, like the other writers during her time. In her letters, Austen uses the words "fancy" and "imagine" casually in statements such as "I fancy" and "I imagine" (*Jane Austen's Letters* 8, 48, 210). Austen also understands the limitations of the imagination as demonstrated in this quotation from her letter to Cassandra Austen: "The tables are come, & give general contentment. I had not expected that they would so perfectly suit the fancy of us all three..." (57-60). Austen is suggesting that her imagination could not fathom that the fancies of three people

1. In *Mere Christianity* C. S. Lewis states that there is very little disagreement about "...fair play and harmony between individuals...Almost all people at all times have agreed (in theory) that human beings ought to be honest and kind and helpful to one another" (67). C. S. Lewis explains that morality is concerned with the harmony inside each individual, as well as the harmony of each person with God which relates more to Austen's phrase "Religious Principle."

would be satisfied with the tables, since everyone's imagination can create different images. In another letter to Fanny Knight, Austen states, "I am by no means convinced that we ought not all to be Evangelicals, & am at least persuaded that they who are so from Reason & Feeling, must be happiest & safest" (292). Thus, Austen views reason as important, but she does not neglect the feelings. However, her novels demonstrate how ungoverned emotions can be dangerous, which is a view that many of her predecessors share.

Dr. Samuel Johnson was an important writer during the eighteenth-century, whose works Austen read. He is even referenced in *Mansfield Park* by the character Fanny Price.² Johnson wrote various works, such as essays, poetry, prayers, criticisms, a novel titled *Rasselas*, and a dictionary. Within his dictionary he defines the words 'imagination' and 'reason.' He describes the imagination as "Fancy; the power of forming ideal pictures; the power of representing things absent to one's self or others," "Conception; image in the mind; idea," and "Contrivance; scheme" (258). On the other hand, Johnson defines reason as "The power by which man deduces one proposition from another, or proceeds from premises to consequences; the rational faculty," "Cause; ground or principle," "Argument; ground of persuasion; motive," "Clearness of faculties," "Right, justice," "Rationale; just account," and "Moderation; moderate demands" (428-29). He was wary of the imagination, and placed reason above the imagination in the human mind. Johnson emphasizes this belief through the character Imlac in *Rasselas*, who states:

2. Fanny quotes Johnson's view of celibacy as a metaphor for her situation (Austen 388).

All power of fancy over reason is a degree of insanity; but while this power is such as we can controul and repress, it is not visible to others, nor considered as any depravation of the mental faculties: it is not pronounced madness but when it becomes ungovernable, and apparently influences speech or action. 'To indulge the power of fiction, and send imagination out upon the wind, is often the sport of those who delight too much in speculation. (93)

Therefore, he views the imagination as the faculty of the mind that speculates, whereas reason is a sign of someone being in a proper state of mind. Also, Johnson is indicating that it is wrong to let an uncontrolled imagination influence someone's decisions, which may perhaps lead that person into sin. However, Johnson makes a further interesting statement in *Rasselas* through Imlac, who states: "...for what reason did not dictate reason cannot explain" (105). Imlac makes this statement in regards to superstitious ancient Egyptians ceremonies. Thus, this indicates that there are things in the world which cannot be explained through reason, and that even go against reason.

Of the moral philosophers who influenced the thinking of the eighteenth-century, two of the most important are David Hume, referenced by Austen in *Northanger Abbey*, and Adam Smith. Hume published his work *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739-40) first, while Smith published his work *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759) a few years later. Smith was influenced by Hume's theory of the imagination and developed it into his own theory of the mind. Hume and Smith are not critical of the imagination like Johnson; instead they discuss the

pleasures of the imagination. Austen read Hume, and, as noted, refers to him in *Northanger Abbey* through the character Eleanor Tilney.³ Hume discusses how the imagination receives satisfaction when it perceives something in the distance that is “great and magnificent” (199). He goes on to explain “...that every thing, which invigorates and enlivens the soul, whether by touching the passions or imagination, naturally conveys to the fancy this inclination to ascent...” (201). The ascent that Hume is talking about is towards every thing that is good. He argues that a strong and sublime imagination is able to convey “the idea of ascent and elevation” (200). In this way, Hume views the imagination as good, for it can lift the soul when it views something sublime. However, Hume does admit that the imagination is weakened when it tries to engage with passing time, because time is “always broken and divided” (201). He also mentions that moral virtues such as “constancy, fortitude, [and] magnanimity” are essential and involuntary with the attributes of the imagination and judgement (206). Hume is indicating that when someone has moral virtues, that person will unconsciously use those virtues to guide his or her imagination, and to make decisions. In contrast, according to Hume, blameable characteristics and actions are voluntary. He also explains that violent passions have a powerful effect over the will, and are in a struggle with reason.

Emerging from Hume’s moral philosophy, Adam Smith’s idea of sympathetic imagination is also important to discuss in regards to Austen. In the introduction to Smith’s *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, Knud Haakonssen

3. Eleanor states that she enjoys reading history, especially if it is written by “Mr. Hume or Mr. Robertson” (Austen 100).

explains that Hume and Smith both agreed that the imagination is an aspect of the mind through which people "... create a distinctively human sphere within the natural world. It is the imagination that enables us to make connections between the perceived elements of both the physical and the moral world..." (xii). Knud then explains that Smith's idea of the imagination in regards to morals is a wish for agreement, as well as a matter of harmony and beauty in regards to aesthetics. Knud breaks down the imagination into two types: theoretical and practical. He suggests that the practical imagination is what Smith calls sympathy, which is the imagination that creates the moral world. Knud then argues that the theoretical imagination is what Smith suggests to be the foundation for all sciences and arts. The practical imagination is what observes people, and their actions to try to understand them, not to approve or disapprove, which results in sympathy. Smith explains the concept of a sympathetic imagination:

Though our brother is upon the rack, as long as we ourselves are at our ease, our senses will never inform us of what he suffers. They never did, and never can, carry us beyond our own person, and it is by the imagination only that we can form any conception of what are his sensations... It is the impressions of our own senses only, not those of his, which our imaginations copy. By the imagination we place ourselves in his situation, we conceive ourselves enduring all the same torments, we enter as it were into his body, and become in some measure the same person with him, and thence form some idea of his sensations, and even

feel something which, though weaker in degree, is not altogether unlike them. (11-12)

Smith goes on to explain that sympathy can arise when witnessing the passions of someone else who is distressed or sad. However, he does admit this is imperfect, because the passion of someone does not reveal the facts of their situation, which is why people then tend to ask questions to find out why a person is feeling distressed or sad.

As well as reading philosophical prose, as an Anglican, and a firm believer of the Christian faith, Austen also read numerous sermons. Thomas Sherlock is a theologian whom she particularly liked, for in one of her letters to Anna Austen she states, “I am very fond of Sherlock’s Sermons, prefer them to almost any” (*Jane Austen’s Letters* 290). In Sherlock’s book *Several Discourses Preached at the Temple Church*, he mentions the limitations of reason. He especially emphasizes that reason cannot fully comprehend God’s glory and will. In “Discourse 1 - John 6: 67-69,” Sherlock states “We may and do daily believe the Reality of Things, without knowing any thing of the Nature and Reasons of them” (43). This statement suggests that there are occurrences in the world that cannot be explained through reason. Similar to the other writers, Sherlock emphasizes virtue as the greatest aspect in the minds of humans. Therefore, for reason and the imagination to be used properly, virtue must guide these two aspects of the mind.

There are two late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century poets whom Austen enjoyed reading: William Cowper and Sir Walter Scott. Cowper is

referenced in the novels *Sense and Sensibility* and *Mansfield Park*.⁴ He is known for being a moral writer, especially in regards to his anti-slavery views. In the poem “from Book I: The Sofa,” he uses the phrase “Ingenious fancy...,” which personifies the imagination as being clever (172). Cowper also understands what it means to have a sympathetic imagination. In the poem “from Book 2: The Time-Piece,” he describes the brutalities of slavery, and how Britain’s abolition of slavery is a mercy felt by humans around the world. At one point Cowper states “I had much rather be myself the slave, / And wear the bonds, than fasten them on him” (35-36). He is able to imagine what the slaves are suffering, which causes him to have genuine sympathy. In “from Book 4: The Winter Evening,” Cowper makes an interesting statement about the imagination: “While fancy, like the finger of a clock, / Runs the great circuit, and is still at home...” (118-19). Cowper is indicating that the imagination can take someone on travels through images created in the mind, while being at home. In these examples, Cowper has a positive view of the imagination.

Sir Walter Scott is a writer known for his historical novels and poetry, who is mentioned in *Sense and Sensibility* and *Mansfield Park*.⁵ In his long poem *Marmion*, which Austen read, Scott appears to be more wary of the imagination.⁶

4. In *Sense and Sensibility*, three times it is mentioned that Marianne Dashwood enjoys reading Cowper (Austen 19, 49, 91), and in *Mansfield Park* Fanny Price quotes Cowper two times (Austen 56, 427).

5. In *Sense and Sensibility*, two times it is mentioned that Marianne enjoys reading Scott (Austen 49, 91), and in *Mansfield Park* Fanny quotes Scott and is compared to the Lady of Braxholm Hall in Scott’s *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* (Austen 84-85, 276).

6. It is interesting to note that Austen was not pleased with this particular work by Scott, though in her letter to Cassandra Austen (sister) she does not state why (*Jane Austen’s Letters* 136).

In the “Introduction to Canto I,” he talks about a vision which beguiles the “wilder’d fancy” of the speaker (207). Then he compares the dissipation of the imaginative vision to melting frost, writing, “Like frostwork in the morning ray, / The fancied fabric melts away...” (220-21). Scott is indicating that the imagination can create visions, which quickly dissolve when reality is perceived. He also mentions how the vision of fancy cannot last, because it is not reality. The imagery of light is also a reminder of God being the light of truth as stated in the Bible numerous times.⁷ Another example of the imagination is in Canto II: “For them no vision’d terrors daunt, / Their nights no fancied spectres haunt” (424-25). Scott is indicating that the imagination can create scenes of terror, which preys upon the mind; however, he also suggests there are people who are able to fend off horrific visions. Austen includes horrific visions in *Northanger Abbey*. Scott also mentions reason a few times in his poem. There is a scene where Lord Marmion is distraught, but then brought to a “calmer reason” (VI. 189). Also in Canto VI, someone is referred to as a fool because he lost his reason (516). Similarly, a maiden’s reason is described as stooping or reeling because she is distraught (VI. 846). In Scott’s romantic poem *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, he also mentions the effects of uncontrolled emotions. In Canto V he writes, “...he thought / Their erring passion might have wrought / Sorrow, and sin and shame...” (209-11). This quotation indicates that Scott views the passions as capable of leading a person into sin instead of acting with moral principles. Therefore, Scott’s view of reason is similar to Johnson’s view, in that a lack of

7. Some Biblical references are Luke 11:34-35, John 8:12, James 1:17 and 1 John 1:5-9.

reason results in madness or distress, sometimes because the emotions are not governed.

Northanger Abbey is the first novel that Austen wrote, though it was published after her death in 1817. The heroine Catherine Morland becomes caught up in the world of Gothic novels. Catherine tends to be criticized for her lively imagination and lack of reason. However, she does demonstrate reason, as well as a moral sense, which differentiates her from the minor characters John and Isabella Thorpe. Their characters will be demonstrated to help clarify how Catherine is different from them. Catherine experiences a moment of humility which is a turning point in her character, because she realizes that she has been misusing her imagination, and not applying reason to her situation. By the end of the novel readers are left feeling hopeful for Catherine's future in regards to her imagination and reason.

Sense and Sensibility is the second novel that Austen wrote, and it was published while she was still alive in 1811. This novel is different from her first novel, because there are two heroines: Elinor and Marianne Dashwood. These two sisters are similar in mind and feeling; however, like Catherine, Marianne misuses her imagination, and does not engage with her reason. Marianne sometimes demonstrates the proper use of her imagination and reason, and eventually she experiences humility, which encourages her to properly use her imagination and reason in the future. Elinor is an example of Austen's belief in balancing the imagination and reason.

Mansfield Park is one of Austen's later novels, and was published in 1814.

The tone of the novel is more serious, which reflects the contemplative, somber and quiet characteristics of the heroine Fanny Price. Whereas Catherine is a heroine of action, Fanny is a heroine of observation. Fanny, like Elinor, demonstrates the proper balance of the imagination and reason. Fanny is sympathetic, and knows when and when not to use her imagination. Fanny also deploys her reason in numerous ways.

There are various aspects that are important to this discussion of the imagination and reason. In regards to Austen's characters, there are things that often dangerously control the imagination and reason, such as books, false assumptions, the desires of the will, and emotions. Then there are things that correctly influence the imagination and reason, such as morals, sympathy, observations and the proper application of books. In this way Austen demonstrates how the imagination and reason can be balanced when guided by virtue.

Chapter 1: The Not so Foolish Catherine Morland in *Northanger Abbey*

Introduction

Northanger Abbey is a novel that is often underestimated, though it is a story filled with moral education.¹ Scholars tend to focus on the Gothic features of Austen's first novel, and how she uses those elements to create a plot centered on a young woman, Catherine Morland, who becomes captivated by Gothic novels, while neglecting the moral purpose of *Northanger Abbey*.² Furthermore, the moral purpose in Austen's novel relates to imagination and reason, and how these two concepts are being used by the characters. To look at minor characters in the novel, John Thorpe is presented as an unintelligent man, because he does not read novels, while his sister Isabella Thorpe is presented as a cold and calculating young woman. John's limited imagination causes him to have a narrowed perception of the world, while his misuse of reason causes him to make false assumptions about Catherine. Isabella has a limited imagination which causes her to have a lack of sympathy for others. Catherine's ungoverned imagination limits her perception of the world, because her mind is narrowed by the Gothic novels that she reads, and Catherine's misuse of reason leads her to make false assumptions about General Tilney. However, Catherine is able to use her reason correctly at times, and she has a moral sense. Lastly, Catherine experiences

1. Susannah Carson argues that *Northanger Abbey* should not be compared to Austen's five other major works, because it is not in the same class (37), and indicates it is not a great work (40).

2. Christine Colón talks about how scholars do not always connect the Gothic to philosopher Adam Smith's ideas of a moral purpose (119).

redemption which encourages her to always use her imagination and reason properly in the future.

Many critiques of *Northanger Abbey* look at Catherine as the lesser heroine compared to the female protagonists in Austen's five other major works. To some, Catherine does not even measure up to the other heroines. For example, Susannah Carson states, "...she [Catherine] is also ignorant, gullible, and therefore unable to appreciate Henry's main character trait – his wit – and so it is doubtful that she will ever be able to appreciate him for who he truly is" (38). Carson goes on to argue that Henry Tilney and Catherine's marriage will most likely fail, because Catherine will never be able to understand Henry; she even compares their marriage to Mr. and Mrs. Bennets' marriage. However, there is no evidence that their marriage will be doomed. On the contrary, at the end of the novel the narrator states, "...the General's unjust interference, so far from being really injurious to their felicity, was perhaps rather conducive to it, by improving their knowledge of each other, and adding strength to their attachment..." (Austen 241). The narrator is indicating that Catherine is capable of appreciating Henry's character, and that their relationship will succeed because their regard for each other is strong.

Catherine may have been naïve and deceived in many instances, but there are times when Catherine does apply reason correctly. The difference between Catherine and the Thorpe siblings is that Austen's heroine does have a moral sense throughout the novel. Christine Colón agrees: "Catherine certainly has a stronger moral foundation than characters such as Isabella and John Thorpe. She

knows what is right and tries to act accordingly” (120). Catherine not only “tries to act accordingly,” but she does act correctly when she senses that something is wrong (Colón 120). Before Catherine learns of her misjudgment in applying Gothic novels to General Tilney’s home Northanger Abbey, she has the capacity to use her reason to judge people’s characters and to control her emotions, as well as using her moral sense correctly. After Catherine learns that she was mistaken, she resolves to apply her reason and imagination properly in the future.

The Minor Characters John and Isabella Thorpe

John and Isabella come into Catherine’s life when she goes with her neighbors, Mr. and Mrs. Allen, to Bath. Catherine discovers that John is a friend of her brother James Morland, which inclines her to like him for her brother’s sake. However, upon first meeting John, Catherine describes him as a “self-assured man,” indicating that he is a young man confident in himself and his opinions (Austen 38). John’s limited imagination causes him to have a narrowed perception of the world. He also misuses his reason, which causes him to make false assumptions.

John does not read novels, which affects his imagination. Catherine learns this fault of his while they walk to Edgar’s Buildings to visit with Mrs. Thorpe. When Catherine strikes up a conversation with John about novels, specifically Ann Radcliffe’s *Mysteries of Udolpho*, John makes these statements “I never read novels,” “Novels are all so full of nonsense and stuff,” and “they are the stupidest things in creation” (Austen 38). He even calls Frances Burney’s novel *Camilla* “stupid,” which lowers his character even more, for Austen enjoyed reading

Burney's novels (Austen 38). According to John Mullan, Austen referred to the works of her predecessors, like Burney, as portraying "the most thorough knowledge of human nature, the happiest delineation of its varieties'..." (qtd. in Mullan 377). In *Northanger Abbey*, John Thorpe calls *Camilla* "unnatural," which shows he cannot perceive the variations of human nature being displayed, because his imagination is not open to learning anything new (Austen 38). Furthermore, his critique of Burney is unjust, because he does not like how she married a French emigrant. The satirical moment comes when Henry makes a comment about people who do not read novels. Henry tells Catherine, "The person, be it gentleman or lady, who has not pleasure in a good novel, must be intolerably stupid" (Austen 97). Henry goes on to say that he read the novel *Udolpho* with great pleasure. Austen is making a statement about novels, and through the character Henry, she shows how a person can take pleasure in novels and apply them correctly to their life. John, on the other hand, does not have any interest in reading, thus making his imagination limited because he is not open to the perspectives of other people. Rachel M. Brownstein states that John is an inadequate suitor for Catherine because of "his ignorance of novels" (40). Therefore, John is not an appropriate teacher to guide Catherine on how to apply novels correctly, especially when it comes to moral application. John's limited perception is emphasized when he tells Catherine, "It is not my way to bother my brains with what does not concern me" (Austen 115). John does not care about learning new ideas or views, which makes his imagination limited. This causes him to perceive the world through his own opinions and feelings without

sympathy for other human beings. John also demonstrates a misuse of his reasoning.

John uses his reason to make false assumptions about Catherine. During a carriage ride John, in an abrupt and impertinent manner, asks Catherine about Mr. Allen (the neighbor who brought Catherine along with his wife to Bath). He asks her if Mr. Allen is rich, if he has any children, and if he drinks (Austen 53-54). From these questions, John assumes that because Catherine is staying with Mr. and Mrs. Allen, and because they do not have any children, she will inherit their money. Catherine, confused by his questions, never gives him any reason to believe that she will inherit the Allens' money; her answers are short and direct without any suggestion of her being particularly favoured by the Allens. Austen does not present the ramifications of John's inquiries until later on in the novel when Henry visits Catherine at her home in Wiltshire after his father General Tilney mysteriously kicked her out. Henry reveals that John misled his father into believing that Catherine was rich and would inherit Mr. Allen's estate. The narrator explains John's character: "...his vanity induced him to represent the family as yet more wealthy than his vanity and avarice had made him believe them" (Austen 234). John's vanity, manifested in his belief that Catherine was going to marry him, overruled his reasoning, and convinced him that the Morland family was rich, simply because his vanity wanted them to be. Clearly John's thinking, or lack thereof, is not based on facts and realities, but on a conceited belief that since his acquaintance with Catherine has grown, so has her wealth. This is also an example of why John is not a moral character, which is why he is

not a good guide for Catherine. Even with her own false assumptions, which will be discussed later on, Catherine is able to discern John's character:

Catherine listened with astonishment; she knew not how to reconcile two such very different accounts of the same thing; for she had not been brought up to understand the propensities of a rattle, nor to know to how many idle assertions and impudent falsehoods the excess of vanity will lead...it appeared to her that he [John] did not excel in giving those clearer insights, in making those things plain which he had before made ambiguous... (Austen 56)

Catherine knows he is a man of "endless conceit," who rattles off false speeches for the benefit of only himself, which is the result of reasoning grounded in selfish desires (Austen 57). John cannot see the realities around him, because he is blinded by his own desires, which is not virtuous. Thus, his reasoning is guided by false assumptions.

Isabella focuses on her own selfish passions without feeling any sympathy for others. The cause of her conceit is a mind that cannot imagine the feelings of others, and that cannot sympathize with the situations of other people. Isabella's mindset goes against the moral sentiments of philosopher Adam Smith, who states, "The man of the most virtue... is he who joins, to the most perfect command of his own original and selfish feelings, the most exquisite sensibility both to the original and sympathetic feelings of other" (246). Isabella does not have command over her selfish feelings, thus making her imagination incapable of being sensible to the feelings of others. Furthermore, she conceals her devious

character with false flatteries. As the novel progresses, glimpses of Isabella's true character are portrayed.

There are moments when Catherine questions Isabella's character. When James, John and Isabella try to persuade Catherine into going with them to Clifton, instead of going for a pre-engaged walk with the Tilneys, Isabella makes a bold comment about herself and the Tilneys. Isabella states, "But I believe my feelings are stronger than any body's; I am sure they are too strong for my own peace; and to see myself supplanted in your friendship by strangers, does cut me to the quick, I own. These Tilneys seem to swallow up every thing else'" (Austen 89). The narrator then describes Catherine's thoughts: "Catherine thought this reproach equally strange and unkind. Was it the part of a friend thus to expose her feelings to the notice of others? Isabella appeared to her ungenerous and selfish, regardless of every thing but her own gratification" (Austen 89). Isabella is giving Catherine, and readers, an indication of her true character. She only thinks of her own feelings, and does not care about what Catherine believes is the right thing to do. Therefore, she cannot imagine what Catherine must be going through in this difficult situation.

Catherine continues to get glimpses into Isabella's true character. In one incident, after Catherine comes back from visiting with the Tilneys and is confused by Eleanor's and Henry's lack of conversation, Isabella gives an ironic explanation as to their conduct; she states it was "insufferable haughtiness and pride!" (Austen 119) As the dialogue between Isabella and Catherine continues, she declares, "well, some people's feelings are incomprehensible," and "Of all the

things in the world inconstancy is my aversion” (Austen 120). Isabella is contradicting herself, because she is someone who hides her true feelings and her character is inconsistent. When Isabella declares she is saddened by the amount of money Mr. Morland can give her and James, she declares it is only because she is thinking of James, and how he will suffer from a low income. Isabella also makes the statement, “...I never think of myself,” which is the exact opposite of her true character, for later on Catherine will discover that Isabella has only been thinking about herself (Austen 126). Even Mrs. Thorpe is deceived by her daughter, for she exclaims, “...we perfectly see into your heart. You have no disguise. We perfectly understand the present vexation; and every body must love you the better for such a noble honest affection” (Austen 127). Unfortunately, after Mrs. Thorpe’s comment, Catherine’s “uncomfortable feelings” disappear, as she believes that Isabella is only upset because of the delay in her marriage to James (Austen 127). Readers can pick up on Isabella’s false statements, and affirm that she does not truly care for James, especially when she finds out how small of an income they will receive when they are married. This passage confirms Isabella’s lack of sensibility for others, and how she is only concerned about her own situation. Susan Morgan comments:

She plays at possessing an acute sensibility but in reality she has only sense. And to possess sense without feeling is to be shrewd, calculating, practical, and cold. It is also to fail in perceptiveness. Isabella cannot understand other people because she doesn't sympathize with their points of view. (113)

Isabella is using words to deceive people into thinking she has sensibility, but her lack of kindness shows her want of sympathy towards others.

When Catherine receives a letter from Isabella, while she is staying at Northanger Abbey, her eyes are completely opened to Isabella's character. The narrator describes, "Such a strain of shallow artifice could not impose even upon Catherine. Its inconsistencies, contradictions, and falsehood, struck her from the very first... Her professions of attachment were now as disgusting as her excuses were empty, and her demands impudent" (207). Catherine realizes that Isabella did not truly care for her, and now views Isabella's flattery as false and calculating. Isabella is not a good friend for Catherine to have, because she is not a virtuous character. Thus ends the friendship between Catherine and Isabella.

The Not so Foolish Catherine

Catherine Morland is presented by the narrator in *Northanger Abbey* as a girl who "...was often inattentive, and occasionally stupid" (Austen 4). However, as Catherine's age progresses, so does the growth of her mind. When Catherine reaches the age of seventeen the narrator announces that she is ready to be a heroine, because she has filled her mind with quotations from books (Austen 5). Austen is being satirical not only about the nature of a heroine, but also about how literature is being applied to one's life. However, Catherine does not understand how to properly apply what she has read onto reality. Thus, Catherine's imagination is being guided by the Gothic novels she has read. Catherine misuses her reason, which causes her to create false assumptions in her mind regarding

General Tilney. However, Catherine is capable of using her reason correctly, and she has a moral sense. After her humbling experience, Catherine realizes that she has not been using her imagination and reason properly.

Catherine's Ungoverned Imagination

The novel that affects Catherine's imagination the most is Ann Radcliffe's Gothic novel *Mysteries of Udolpho*. Isabella is the person who introduced this novel to Catherine, and it has already been established that Isabella is a character who cannot properly guide Catherine while she is reading. Therefore, Catherine is engaging in a fantastical novel with a person whose mind is not efficiently developed to guide Catherine's understanding. Catherine herself enjoys books, "...provided they were all story and no reflection..." (Austen 5). Austen is indicating that readers should reflect on what they are reading. When she is introduced to Gothic novels by Isabella, she is vulnerable to horrific and fantastical stories. It should be stated, however, that Austen is not fully against the genre of Gothic novels, but is warning against the improper application of the terrifying stories. Through Catherine, Austen is showing what happens when one does not cultivate one's imagination properly. Colón explains, "Her [Catherine's] inability to look beyond the sensational story contributes to her downfall..." (120). Since Catherine is not interpreting the Gothic novel *Udolpho* correctly, her imagination is narrowed, and she cannot perceive the world without the lens of the Gothic novel before her eyes. Colón further explains how literature, used properly, develops the imagination: "Any good literature, then, may help readers

practice these powers of imagination so that they may, in turn, use imagination appropriately in real life and enact Smith's process of moral development" (117). It will be argued later that Catherine is a moral person, but unfortunately, Catherine has not learned to use her imagination properly before being swept into the society of Bath. As a result, Catherine uses her imagination to apply Gothic scenarios onto her own life.

There is one instance where Catherine is controlled by her desire to read *Udolpho*. The narrator describes Catherine's obsession:

...Catherine was then left to the luxury of a raised, restless, and frightened imagination over the pages of *Udolpho*, lost from all worldly concerns of dressing and dinner, incapable of soothing Mrs. Allen's fears on the delay of an expected dress-maker, and having only one minute in sixty to bestow even on the reflection of her own felicity, in being already engaged for the evening. (Austen 41)

Catherine cannot perceive the world around her because her imagination is focused entirely on the Gothic novel. Brownstein argues "She [Catherine] is nothing like a quixotic, deluded, isolated reader who prefers romantic fantasies to the actual world..." (39). Brownstein's statement is true in regards to Catherine not being portrayed as constantly cutting herself off from society, like Marianne Dashwood in *Sense and Sensibility*; however, the quotation from Austen above shows how much Catherine is being misled by her imagination, and how much it is caught up in the Gothic fantasy world, to the point that she cannot even focus on the task of dressing and on the social obligation of engaging with the people

around her. Catherine does engage with the real world, but the problem is that she applies Gothic fiction onto her own life.

When Catherine goes to Northanger Abbey, her expectations of what the Abbey will look like are based on what she has read in novels. During the evening of her first night there, a violent storm breaks out. Catherine listens to the storm with awe, and "...felt for the first time that she was really in an abbey. – Yes, these were characteristic sounds; - they brought to her recollection a countless variety of dreadful situations and horrid scenes, which such buildings has witnessed, and such storms ushered in..." (Austen 156). Instead of imagining realistic situations that could happen during a storm, such as tree blowing over, Catherine can only recall terrifying scenes from novels she has read. Later in the evening when she explores a black cabinet in her bedroom, her lamp is extinguished and darkness descends upon her. Horrified, Catherine scrambles into her bed in fear. Her mind begins to imagine movements and sounds: "The very curtains of her bed seemed at one moment in motion, and at another the lock of her door was agitated, as if by the attempt of somebody to enter. Hollow murmurs seemed to creep along the gallery..." (Austen 161). Catherine's fear is being guided by horrific scenarios she has read about. This scenario is an example of what the poet Sir Walter Scott talks about in his poem *Marmion* where he writes about the imagination creating visions of terror (II. 424-25). What Catherine does not understand is that novels are not fixed stories that can be applied to life. Morgan explains that Catherine needs to learn "...that there are no fixed formulas or conventions which Catherine can apply to her experience in order to

understand it” (118). Catherine does not understand how to interpret the circumstances around her, because her imagination is limited by stereotypical situations from Gothic novels. When she does apply Gothic conventions onto her life, her imagination becomes disappointed when her situations do not follow the Gothic formulas.

There are moments in the novel when Catherine’s imagination is disappointed about the Abbey not measuring up to what she has read about. When Catherine first enters the Abbey she is distressed by the appearance of the drawing-room. The narrator explains:

To be sure, the pointed arch was preserved – the form of them was Gothic – they might be even casements – but every pane was so large, so clear, so light! To an imagination which had hoped for the smallest divisions, and the heaviest stone-work, for painted glass, dirt and cobwebs, the difference was very distressing. (Austen 151)

Unknowingly, Catherine set herself up for disappointment. The high expectations of her imagination could not have been proven by an abbey that was furnished with modern furniture and updates. Morgan discusses how Catherine’s “Gothic speculations are actually a failure of the imagination,” because “Catherine’s fancies [are] failing to come alive for her” (118). Catherine’s imagination is focused on her Gothic expectations, which causes her distress and disappointment. However, she does not learn from this experience, but continues to search for Gothic stereotypes in the Abbey.

When Catherine first enters her room at Northanger Abbey, she walks around the room and is assured that it is not like a Gothic room. However, upon seeing a wooden chest, Catherine is startled, and immediately her imagination is heightened. She tells herself that she must focus on dressing for dinner, but when she is finished, her curiosity takes control, and with spirit she springs forward and opens the chest. The narrator describes Catherine as blushing in surprise "...with rising shame of having harboured for some minutes an absurd expectation..." (Austen 154). Catherine realizes her error, and the ridiculousness of her high expectations. Unfortunately, even after making the resolution of being wise, she again is overcome by curiosity and an imagination fixed on finding evidence of a Gothic abbey. Catherine discovers manuscripts in a Japanese black cabinet, and is overcome by a curiosity determined on reading the papers. The narrator describes her as having a "greedy eye" as she quickly glances "over a page" (Austen 161). Catherine soon discovers that the manuscripts which caused her a restless sleep were only inventories of linen. The narrator states, "She felt humbled to the dust. Could not the adventure of the chest have taught her wisdom? A corner of it catching her eye as she lay, seemed to rise up in judgement against her. Nothing could now be clearer than the absurdity of her recent fancies" (Austen 162). Her high expectations come crashing down, and again, she rebukes herself with shame. Catherine still has not learned to control her heightened imagination. Laura White states that Austen is focusing "...on the unrealistic expectations that arise when readers (including her characters) cannot discern fiction from reality and, second, on the moral unmooring that takes place when imagination is excited

without proper restraint” (163). Therefore, Catherine must learn to let go of her Gothic fantasies, which is causing her imagination to be morally confused, as White indicates. Fortunately, Catherine knows exactly where her imagination went wrong: “She saw that the infatuation had been created, the mischief settled long before her quitting Bath, and it seemed as if the whole might be traced to the influence of that sort of reading which she had there indulged” (Austen 189). Catherine understands her reading was an indulgence, which is not morally correct, instead of a method of learning. Her imagination was infatuated by the terror of Gothic novels. Catherine has to open her imagination up to other scenarios, and use her imagination in a way that is realistic. Catherine also has to learn how use her reason properly.

Catherine’s Misuse of Reason

Catherine’s misuse of reason causes her to fabricate false assumptions about General Tilney. The Gothic novels have filled Catherine’s mind so completely that she cannot even perceive the world around her. All the judgements she makes on General Tilney are based upon what she has read in the Gothic novels. She cannot make her own judgements based on the actual realities around her.

The pinnacle moment of Catherine’s misuse of reason is when her curiosity about the late Mrs. Tilney’s room compels her to sneak into the room by herself. She believes her suspicions to be reasonable, and expects “to have her feelings worked” (Austen 183). Just like the other incidents, Catherine’s expectations are unreasonably high, as she prepares to find evidence that will

validate her suspicions about General Tilney murdering his wife. Again, her expectations come crashing down as she realizes that there is nothing in the late Mrs. Tilney's room to prove that she was murdered by her husband. The narrator describes Catherine's emotions: "Astonishment and doubt first seized them [her feelings]; and a shortly succeeding ray of common sense added some bitter emotions of shame. She could not be mistaken as to the room; but how grossly mistaken in every thing else..." (Austen 183) However, the shame of her actions is not felt fully until Henry discovers her exiting his late mother's room. Upon seeing her, Henry is surprised, and then realizes what her mind has been fabricating:

If I understand you rightly, you had formed a surmise of such horror as I have hardly words to - Dear Miss Morland, consider the dreadful nature of the suspicions you have entertained. What have you been judging from?...Consult your own understanding, your own sense of the probable, your own observation of what is passing around you...Dearest Miss Morland, what ideas have you been admitting? (Austen 187-88)

Henry is a voice of reason in Catherine's life, and is the one who wakes her up from the unreasonable suspicions upon which she has been dwelling. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the word "surmise" means "An idea formed in the mind (and, often, expressed) that something may be true, but without certainty and on very slight evidence, or with no evidence; a conjecture." Therefore, Henry is indicating that Catherine has created an idea in her mind that is not based on evidence. Interestingly, Catherine herself calls her imagined scenarios "surmises,"

as well as a “conjecture” (a word used in regards to Marianne Dashwood) in a scene where she is contemplating General Tilney’s wife (Austen 178).

Embarrassed by the folly of her assumptions, Catherine runs away with tears streaming down her face:

The visions of romance were over. Catherine was completely awakened. Henry’s address, short as it had been, had more thoroughly opened her eyes to the extravagance of her late fancies than all their several disappointments had done. Most grievously was she humbled... The liberty which her imagination had dared to take with the character of his father, could he ever forgive it? The absurdity of her curiosity and her fears, could they ever be forgotten? (Austen 188)

Catherine realizes her assumptions were not based on reasonable premises, but on illogical observations that she had created in her own mind. Catherine’s imagination is connected to her reasoning; her reasoning was based on false assumptions, those false assumptions were influenced by her imagination, an imagination that was focused on Gothic novels. The problem is that Catherine believes it is reasonable to apply the Gothic novels’ views of the world onto the world in which she is living. Again, this scene is similar to the poet Sir Walter Scott’s poem *Marmion* where he writes about the imagination creating visions of terror (II. 424-25). In the case of Catherine, she was creating Gothic visions in her mind that were not reasonably realistic.

Catherine’s perception of people is not always accurate. In the case of General Tilney, she was correct in believing there was something “not perfectly

amiable” about his character, but she was wrong in her belief of what made his appearance seem unlikeable (Austen 190). Brownstein agrees by explaining, “The General is imposing; his children are afraid of him; to Catherine, it is logical to imagine that he must have murdered his wife in the Abbey” (39). Catherine can sense that General Tilney is not an agreeable person, but her mind could not perceive his full character, because her judgement was being guided by Gothic novels. Morgan explains that there is more to Catherine’s problem of making false assumptions than just the Gothic novels: “... she [Catherine] thinks perception is a matter of straightforward description... Catherine has yet to realize that truth is multiple and particular and incomplete, and that judgement is an active process of exploration and understanding” (114). Morgan is accurate in her statement about Catherine thinking people state exactly what they mean, and appear to others exactly as they are. Readers notice this when Catherine is shocked by John’s inconsistent speech, and also when Catherine misunderstands Eleanor. She tells Catherine that she was away when her mother died, and that her mother’s sickness was unexpected and brief; she died before Eleanor arrived home. The narrator describes Catherine’s impression of this comment: “Catherine’s blood ran cold with the horrid suggestions which naturally sprang from these words. Could it be possible? – Could Henry’s father? – And yet how many were the examples to justify even the blackest suspicions!” (Austen 176) Catherine quickly jumps to the conclusion that General Tilney had murdered his wife. Her reasoning is based on the character Montoni who is the gloomy and dark villain in *Udolpho*. General Tilney’s “silent thoughtfulness, with downcast

eyes and contracted brow” are viewed by Catherine as evidence for a man who is distraught by guilt (Austen 176-77). To Catherine this is a logical assumption. As Catherine contemplates General Tilney further, she begins to speculate that Mrs. Tilney may yet be alive, and is a prisoner in Northanger Abbey. As these assumptions go through Catherine’s mind, the narrator states, “Catherine sometimes started at the boldness of her own surmises, and sometimes hoped or feared that she had gone too far; but they were supported by such appearances as made their dismissal impossible” (Austen 178). Catherine believes she is being reasonable, and to her, all appearances are pointing to General Tilney being an evil man who has done something wretched to his wife. Colón explains that “Catherine lacks experience evaluating individuals and forming the general principles that should influence her character and her understanding of others” (127). Catherine does not have experience in meeting new kinds of people; that is why she is deceived by Isabella, astonished by John, misunderstands Henry and Eleanor, and misjudges General Tilney’s character. Catherine has to enhance her reasoning so that she can understand people better without making false assumptions.

Catherine’s Correct Use of Reason

Catherine is a heroine who has the potential to improve herself. In *Northanger Abbey*, the narrator pauses the storyline for a moment to declare that Catherine’s character must be further explained, “...for the reader’s more certain information, lest the following pages should otherwise fail of giving any idea of what her character is meant to be...” (Austen 7). The key phrase here is “meant to

be,” meaning that Catherine has not reached her full potential, but she will in the future. The narrator then goes on to list Catherine’s character traits:

...that her heart was affectionate, her disposition cheerful and open, without conceit or affectation of any kind – her manners just removed from the awkwardness and shyness of a girl; her person pleasing, and, when in good looks, pretty – and her mind about as ignorant and uninformed as the female mind at seventeen usually is. (Austen 8)

First, Catherine has admirable qualities, such as being “affectionate” and “open” towards others, which distinguishes her from John and Isabella. Second, the last part of the sentence needs to be considered. Yes, Catherine’s mind is “ignorant and uninformed,” but the word “usually” means that many females at the age of seventeen begin that way (Austen 8). To break it down even more, the word “uninformed” means Catherine has not fully learned everything that her mind has the capacity of learning. She is still gaining knowledge and understanding of the world, and is eager to improve her mind. Catherine should not be undermined because she has potential. Before Henry’s rebuke, Catherine demonstrates that she can use her reason to judge peoples’ characters and to control her emotions, as well as having a moral sense. After Henry’s rebuke, Catherine is determined to always use her imagination and reason correctly.

Even though Catherine based General Tilney’s character on villains in Gothic novels, Catherine’s judgement of his character was not completely wrong. When General Tilney goes off on a walk by himself, Catherine contemplates his character. She declares in her mind, ““This lengthened absence, these solitary

rambles, did not speak a mind at ease, or a conscience void of reproach” (Austen 171). Catherine senses that there is something amiss about his gloomy countenance, but she is only wrong in the reason for his demeanor. Catherine is confused by his character because of his inconstancies. The narrator explains Catherine’s thinking: “That he was very particular in his eating, she had, by her own unassisted observation, already discovered; but why he should say one thing so positively, and mean another all the while, was most unaccountable!” (Austen 201) Catherine has perceived General Tilney’s eating habits, but his speech is what confuses her. In this way, General Tilney is like John Thorpe, because he says things he does not mean. When General Tilney leaves Northanger Abbey to go to London, Catherine observes how his going away effects the moods of Henry and Eleanor Tilney. The narrator states that Catherine was “...thoroughly sensible of the restraint which the General’s presence had imposed, and most thankfully feel their present release from it” (Austen 209). Catherine observes General Tilney’s character based on the reactions of his children Henry and Eleanor. His unamiable character is felt by Catherine when he demands she leave his house with no explanation why: “Without any reason that could justify, any apology that could atone for the abruptness, the rudeness, nay, the insolence of it” (Austen 215). Catherine perceives his character to be unreasonable, and cannot fathom what she could have done to make him angry enough to be rude. When Catherine learns from Henry why General Tilney’s opinion of her changed so much that he kicked her out of his house, she affirms that she was not completely wrong in her view of him. The narrator states, “Catherine, at any rate, heard enough to feel, that

in suspecting General Tilney of either murdering or shutting up his wife, she had scarcely sinned against his character, or magnified his cruelty” (Austen 237).

Catherine’s perception of General Tilney not being completely amiable is now grounded, for he showed himself to be a proud, cruel man, who only liked Catherine because he thought she was rich. Brownstein agrees that Catherine was not entirely wrong in her view of General Tilney: “We are persuaded to think her absurd for having horrific 'visions of romance' (199) about the General - but then, on the other hand, they prove to be substantially correct. No wife-murderer, he is evil in a commonplace way...he is a villain of 'common life', not romance” (40). Catherine learned that General Tilney is not a stereotypical villain from a Gothic novel, but was correct in her judgement of him not being an agreeable man.

The narrator observes times when Catherine uses her reason correctly by controlling her emotions. When Catherine sees Henry with a young woman at the ball, the narrator describes Catherine’s thinking:

...guided only by what was simple and probable, it had never entered her head that Mr. Tilney could be married; he had not behaved, he had not talked, like the married men to whom she had been used; he had never mentioned a wife, and he had acknowledged a sister. From these circumstances sprang the instant conclusion of his sister’s now being by his side; and therefore, instead of turning of a deathlike paleness, and falling into a fit on Mrs. Allen’s bosom, Catherine sat erect, in the perfect use of her senses, and with cheeks only a little redder than usual. (Austen 43-44)

Catherine is in control of her emotions, and does not jump to irrational conclusions as to who this woman could be. Furthermore, she goes through her interactions with Henry, and comes up with a rational conclusion.

Another example of Catherine controlling her emotions is when she is deceived by John during the first Clifton scheme. He tells her that the Tilneys are not coming to fetch her for their planned walk, and tries to convince her to go with him, James and Isabella to Clifton. Catherine is distressed by this, and believes it was an inappropriate thing for John to do. She goes to visit Miss Tilney at her house, but Catherine is told by the doorman that Miss Tilney is out. She suspects that Miss Tilney is at home, and later down the street, she sees Miss Tilney and her father walking out the door. The narrator describes Catherine's feelings: "Catherine, in deep mortification, proceeded on her way. She could almost be angry herself at such angry incivility; but she checked the resentful sensation; she remembered her own ignorance. She knew not how such an offence as her's might be classed by the laws of worldly politeness..." (Austen 82). She does not give in to the feeling of resentment, but reasons through her situation, and understands that, through John's deceit, she has given offence to Henry and Eleanor Tilney. Catherine is also applying the correct use of her imagination, because she imagines what Eleanor must be feeling in regards to Catherine going out when they already had plans for a walk. In the second incident regarding the Clifton scheme, when James, John, and Isabella are trying to persuade Catherine into going with them, Catherine shows that she has control over her emotions. The narrator explains, "At one moment she [Catherine] was softened, at another

irritated; always distressed, but always steady” (Austen 90). The word “steady” indicates that Catherine’s emotions are fluctuating, but she does not allow them to change her determined will by giving into their pleading. In this way, Catherine correctly uses her reason and will together to control her emotions.

Catherine’s Moral Sense

Catherine is a moral person who would never say anything to deceive someone, and she would never do anything that she believed was wrong or inappropriate. Isabella makes a remark that Catherine is a “sly thing” and “would have made some droll remark” about how she and James were sharing the same opinions about living in the country (Austen 61). After Catherine denies this, Isabella goes onto say that Catherine would have said “some nonsense” about them being made for each other (Austen 61). Catherine replies “...I would not have made so improper a remark upon any account; and besides, I am sure it would never have entered my head” (Austen 61). Catherine’s remark verifies that she has a moral sense of what is appropriate and what is not; she never would have made some silly or false remark, which Isabella never ceases to do.

The whole incident of going for a walk with the Tilneys or going to Clifton with James, John and Isabella leaves Catherine in a difficult predicament. Every time she sets a date with Miss Tilney for their walk, James and the Thorpes try to persuade her to go with them to Clifton instead. The first time works, but when Catherine sets a date with Miss Tilney a second time, she is not persuaded by their arguments and Isabella’s “strange and unkind” words (Austen 89).

Catherine believes herself to be right. When John tricks her by saying he spoke to Miss Tilney on her behalf, saying that Catherine remembered a prior engagement, Catherine becomes distressed. She declares, “If I had thought it right to put it off, I could have spoken to Miss Tilney myself. This is only doing it in a ruder way...If I could not be persuaded into doing what I thought wrong, I never will be tricked into it” (Austen 91). Catherine knows that it is wrong to trick people, and to lie about having a previous engagement so that one can satisfy his or her own wishes. Catherine believes she is being reasonable, because her engagement with the Tilneys was already established before she even knew about the Clifton scheme. After Catherine breaks free from the Thorpes’ grasps, she pursues the Tilneys to explain to them that she had no part in John’s trickery. After she leaves the Tilneys’ house, she begins “to doubt whether she had been perfectly right” (Austen 94). Thus Catherine seeks guidance from Mr. Allen, a person who was established at the beginning of the novel to be “a sensible, intelligent man” (Austen 11). It is a smart decision on her part to be seeking guidance from a wise man. Catherine’s rationality is confirmed when Mr. Allen declares, “These schemes are not at all the thing...It is not right...” (Austen 94). Therefore, Catherine’s judgement is confirmed to be reasonably correct.

Catherine’s Redemption

After Henry’s rebuke, Catherine’s reasoning and imagination improve. During the evening, after Henry caught her in his late mother’s room, Catherine contemplates her past behavior. She realizes that her actions and feelings were

“...all a voluntary, self-created delusion, each trifling circumstance receiving importance from an imagination resolved on alarm, and every thing forced to bend to one purpose by a mind which, before she entered the Abbey, had been craving to be frightened” (Austen 189). The fact that Catherine realizes the error in her reasoning and imagination is a perception of her faults. She knows she has not been using her reasoning and imagination properly. Again, this has to do with her moral character. Isabella and John Thorpe never admit to any wrong doing, even though it is clear to readers that their conduct has been immoral. The eighteenth-century philosopher David Hume concludes that many “...moral virtues, are equally involuntary and necessary, with the qualities of the judgement and imagination” (206). Therefore, Hume is stating that a person who has a moral sense will naturally use it when making a judgement, and when engaging with one’s imagination. Catherine has a moral sense, and even though she sometimes does not apply it correctly with her “judgment and imagination,” she does reprimand her actions (Hume 206). She knows her actions and feelings have been “voluntary,” which is something Hume also addresses: “The greater degree there is of these blamable qualities, the more vicious they become, and yet they are the less voluntary” (206). Hume is suggesting that when people make terrible judgements they are making those decisions willingly. Catherine voluntarily wanted to be frightened, like the Gothic heroines, and had her mind set on that. However, now she looks to the future with the hope of improving herself: “Her mind made up on these several points, and her resolution formed, of always judging and acting in future with the greatest good sense, she had nothing to do

but to forgive herself and be happier than ever..." (190). Catherine, with her mind set on improvement, proceeds through the rest of the novel by checking herself when moments arise that remind her of Gothic novels.

Catherine puts her ideas of Gothic novels aside when she is faced with a real threat. One evening, while General Tilney and Henry are away, Catherine and Eleanor hear the unexpected arrival of a carriage. Catherine proceeds to wait in her chamber while Eleanor greets whoever has arrived at the Abbey. While Catherine is waiting in her chamber, she believes a person is approaching her door. The narrator explains:

Scarcely, however, had she convicted her fancy of error, when the noise of something moving close to the door made her start; it seemed as if some one was touching the very doorway - and in another moment a slight motion of the lock proved that some hand must be on it. She trembled a little at the idea of any one's approaching so cautiously; but resolving not to be again overcome by trivial appearances of alarm, or misled by a raised imagination, she stepped quietly forward, and opened the door.

(Austen 212)

Catherine's resolution of judging situations with good sense is shown here. She is using her reasoning correctly here, by basing it on the realities that are before her, and not on a raised imagination guided by Gothic novels. When Eleanor, who was the person at her door, comes in and tells Catherine that General Tilney has arrived back home and demands that Catherine must leave early in the morning,

Catherine is disturbed and cannot sleep. This time, however, Catherine has a realistic reason for why her mind is disturbed. The narrator explains:

That room, in which her disturbed imagination had tormented her on her first arrival, was again the scene of agitated spirits and unquiet slumbers. Yet how different now the source of her inquietude from what it had been then - how mournfully superior in reality and substance! Her anxiety had foundation in fact, her fears in probability; and with a mind so occupied in the contemplation of actual and natural evil, the solitude of her situation, the darkness of her chamber, the antiquity of the building were felt and considered without the smallest emotion; and though the wind was high, and often produced strange and sudden noises throughout the house, she heard it all as she lay awake, hour after hour, without curiosity or terror.

(Austen 216)

Catherine realizes that her situation is now the reality of a true terror. Austen's use of the words "reality," "substance," "foundation," "probability," "actual" and "natural" indicate that Catherine is not wrong in her reason for anxiety (Austen 216). She is now living her own life of terror, and not the imaginative life of a Gothic heroine. Catherine puts aside her Gothic presuppositions, and realizes that her life is not a Gothic novel, and that it will not follow a storyline from a book. She had reasoning and an imagination beforehand, but now Catherine is learning to use these two important aspects of her mind correctly by integrating them together.

Conclusion

John and Isabella Thorpe are examples of people not using their imagination and reason properly. John's disinterest in reading and unintelligent opinion of novels shows that he is not feeding his imagination with new perceptions and ideas. His terrible reasoning leads to false assumptions about Catherine, which causes her harm at the end of the novel when General Tilney kicks her out of his home. Isabella's reasoning is guided by her selfish desires, which leaves her lacking in sympathy for others, particularly Catherine and James who are deceived by her character. Catherine's imagination, guided by her infatuation with Gothic novels, leaves her with a limited perception of the world, which causes her to apply Gothic scenarios on to her own life, resulting in disappointment and embarrassment. Her reasoning, based on false assumptions, causes her to view General Tilney as an evil villain, resulting in Henry's embarrassing rebuke. However, there is hope for Catherine's reform. There are moments beforehand when she applies her reason and moral sense properly, and after her wake up call, she determines that she will not allow novels to control her imagination and that in future she will always make logical judgements.

Chapter 2: Marianne's Growth and Elinor's Fortitude in *Sense and Sensibility*

Introduction

Sense and Sensibility is a novel that explores the terms that are stated in the title: sense and sensibility. By the early eighteenth-century the term sensibility started to mean emotional reactions (Mullan 379). The idea of feelings was explored by novels in the later eighteenth-century (Mullan 380). Indulging in one's own feelings too much was viewed as selfish, whereas responding to other people's distresses was viewed as virtuous. In contrast, readers in Austen's time would have known that sense refers to the human faculties (the senses) that absorb information, and the functions of the conscious mind (Weiss 256-57). Therefore, sense is understood to be the rationalizing process of the mind. Yet in *Sense and Sensibility*, the imagination and reason have not been thoroughly discussed in relation to sense and sensibility. The imagination and reason are important aspects in the novel that affect the conduct of the characters Marianne and Elinor Dashwood. Marianne has the qualities of sense and sensibility that would make her the embodiment of a person balancing the imagination and reason; however, she allows potentially destructive things to control her imagination and reason. On the other hand, her sister Elinor also has sense and sensibility, and does demonstrate a balance of the imagination and reason. Marianne's limited imagination causes her to have a lack of sympathy for others.

Furthermore, her imagination is controlled by the books she reads, and the desires of her will. Her limited use of reason causes her to have ungoverned emotions. Yet, there are moments when she does use her imagination and reason correctly. Furthermore, Marianne experiences humility and redemption. Elinor is an excellent example of a character who balances the imagination and reason, because she has sympathy for others, and regulates her emotions.

Some critics assert that Austen's intention was not to present a sense versus sensibility statement, but a representation of how sense and sensibility can work together. For example, Ruth apRoberts states, "From the first, Austen refused to let us take sense-sensibility as an absolute good-evil polarity, and, as her theme and variations act themselves out in the events, the odd thing is that sensibility rejoins virtue" (54). Indeed, many moralists from Austen's time believed that sensibility is tied to morality. The moralist Hannah More, in her work *Sensibility: A Poetical Epistle* (1782), argues how sensibility should properly be used:

Sweet Sensibility! thou keen delight!
Thou hasty moral! sudden sense of right!
Thou untaught goddess! Virtue's precious seed!
Thou sweet precursor of the generous deed!
Beauty's quick relish! Reason's radiant morn,
Which dawns soft light before Reflection's born!

(lines 246-51, qtd. in Mullan 382)

According to More, sensibility is an aspect of morality, which helps determine what is right and wrong. Marianne is a character who takes pleasure in reading, as well as music. However, what she fails to do is learn how to apply what she has read properly to her life. Marianne misuses her sensibility by indulging her own emotions, which causes her to neglect the feelings of others. apRoberts discusses C. S. Lewis's essay "Sense (with Sentence, Sensibility and Sensible)," and how he views William Cowper as a poet of moral sympathy, a poet who Marianne passionately reads (46). Therefore, Marianne is not applying Cowper's moral sentiments of sensibility onto her life. Marianne's imagination is controlled by ideals she has read in books, and ideals such as these influence her view of John Willoughby. He fits her ideal view of the perfect man, because he shares the same tastes as her. Her imagination is also controlled by her will, and she believes things will happen the way she desires them to be. In contrast, Elinor partakes in reading and correctly applies it to her life. Instead of forming ideals in her mind, Elinor observes the realities around her and makes judgements based on what she sees. Some critics state that readers are more inclined to admire Marianne's open spirit compared to Elinor's reserved character. However, this thesis will present how Marianne's conduct leads to a potential tragedy, while Elinor's reserved yet engaging character is what Austen is presenting as the proper way to balance the imagination and reason.

Marianne's Growth

Marianne is presented by the narrator as a young woman of sense and sensibility. However, the narrator also states that she was "...eager in everything; her sorrows, her joys, could have no moderation...she was everything but prudent" (Austen 8). Thus Marianne has the qualifications that would make her a character of balanced sense and sensibility, but she misuses these qualities. Christine Colón notes that Marianne does not follow philosopher Adam Smith's moral sentiments of art and nature leading towards an imagination that is sympathetic to others, because instead, Marianne selfishly indulges her own feelings and opinions (118). Furthermore, she allows her imagination to be controlled by books and her will. Also, Marianne puts aside reason for the sake of passionately displaying and indulging her emotions.

Marianne's Lack of Sympathy for Others

Marianne demonstrates a limited imagination, because sometimes she is not sympathetic to other people. In one situation, she is not sympathetic towards Colonel Brandon, who is presented as a potential suitor to Marianne. She views the colonel as "...an absolute old bachelor, for he was on the wrong side of five and thirty..." (Austen 36). Granted it may be hard for a seventeen year old woman to imagine what it is like being a man who is thirty-five, but that does not give her the excuse to make harsh comments about him and his age. Marianne assumes that Colonel Brandon can no longer be animated by love because of his age. She then talks about him having an infirmity, because he mentioned his

rheumatism on a cold and damp day. Instead of being sympathetic towards Colonel Brandon, she views his age and slight ache as deficiencies and reasons for him being incapable of affection. When Mr. Willoughby comes into her life, a suitor she is interested in, Marianne feeds off of Willoughby's comments on Colonel Brandon. Marianne describes the colonel thus: "...he has neither genius, taste, nor spirit...his understanding has no brilliancy, his feelings no ardour, and his voice no expression" (Austen 53). Interestingly, Elinor's reply to Marianne has to do with Marianne's imagination: "'You decide on his imperfections so much in the mass,' replied Elinor, 'and so much on the strength of your own imagination...'" (Austen 53). Elinor views Marianne's comment as revealing a deficiency in the imagination of her sister. Marianne cannot be sympathetic towards Colonel Brandon, because she does not understand his character; perhaps she unwillingly does not want to understand him, because she is blinded by her own character. Marianne is spirited and forward with her emotions and opinions, and believes that everyone else should have the same character traits. In this way, Marianne is failing at using her imagination properly, because the power of the imagination allows people to be able to picture themselves in the position of someone else. The narrator describes Elinor's views on Marianne, and agrees that Marianne is blinded by her own opinions and character:

Elinor had not needed this to be assured of the injustice to which her sister was often led in her opinion of others, by the irritable refinement of her own mind, and the too great importance placed by her on the delicacies of a strong sensibility, and the graces of a polished manner. Like half the rest

of the world, if more than half there be that are clever and good, Marianne, with excellent abilities, and an excellent disposition, was neither reasonable nor candid. She expected from other people the same opinions and feelings as her own, and she judged of their motives by the immediate effect of their actions on herself. (Austen 190-91)

Thus, when viewing other people who are different from her, Marianne can only judge them based on her own character. This is why she forms an attachment to Willoughby right away, because he demonstrates the same spirit, and the same pleasures found in dancing, music and reading. Similarly, Marianne shows a lack of sympathy towards Elinor.

Since Marianne and Elinor are different in regards to being open about their emotions, sometimes Marianne demonstrates a lack of sympathy towards her sister. One of the repeated occurrences throughout the novel is Marianne's lack of social engagement with the people she is around. Sometimes it is because she does not consider civility, or because her mind is constantly focused on Willoughby, which causes her to disengage from reality. Thus Marianne's social disengagement forces Elinor to speak on behalf of herself and her sister. Marianne does not care about her opinions offending anyone, and states her views plainly. In one example, Marianne tells Lady Middleton that she will play the piano because she detests cards. As a result, Elinor speaks on behalf of her sister "...to smooth away the offence..." (Austen 138). Not only is Marianne showing a lack of sympathy towards Lady Middleton's feelings, because Lady Middleton enjoys playing cards, she is unsympathetic to Elinor who always has to apologize every

time Marianne says something that is rude. apRoberts argues that “Marianne’s sensibility emerges as an unwillingness to sense the feelings of others and hence a reversal into lack of sensibility” (50). Instead of having a sensibility that is engaged with her imagination, so that she can sympathize with others, Marianne’s sensibility is focused on her own feelings.

An example of Elinor having to engage in conversation on behalf of herself and Marianne is when they are travelling to London with Mrs. Jennings. The lady kindly invited the two sisters to travel with her; however, Marianne remains silent, and only engages in conversation when an object of beauty delights her. The narrator describes the effect this has on Elinor: “To atone for this conduct therefore, Elinor took immediate possession of the post of civility which she had assigned herself, behaved with the greatest attention to Mrs. Jennings...” (Austen 153). The word “atone” indicates that Elinor, by engaging with Mrs. Jennings, is apologizing and making up for Marianne’s rude conduct of ignoring Mrs. Jennings. The word “atone” also suggests that Marianne is not using her imagination morally, which is why she is being rude. Throughout these moments of Elinor’s excuses for Marianne’s lack of civility, Marianne neither appears grateful towards Elinor, nor does she appear to have sympathy towards Elinor for the situations through which she has put her sister. Ian Watt agrees by stating, “Jane Austen... makes us observe that Marianne’s selfish indulgence of her own sufferings makes her insensitive to Elinor’s...” (50). As a result, Marianne cannot imagine herself in the positions she is putting Elinor through,

because she is blinded by her own emotions. Thus she is not using her imagination morally.

Marianne's Imagination Controlled by Books

Marianne is similar to Catherine Morland, in regards to misapplying books she has read onto her real life. When Marianne meets Willoughby for the first time, he strikes her imagination as she reflects on his conduct. The narrator explains:

His person and air were equal to what her fancy had ever drawn for the hero of a favourite story; and in his carrying her into the house with so little previous formality, there was a rapidity of thought which particularly recommended the action to her... Her imagination was busy, her reflections were pleasant, and the pain of a sprained ankle was disregarded. (Austen 44-45)

Without even fully knowing him, Marianne allows Willoughby's actions to recall ideal characteristics of how a male should act in her imagination. Instead of waiting for more evidence, Marianne's imagination quickly conjectures Willoughby as a perfect gentleman. As Marianne gets to know him, she discovers that they both enjoy dancing and music, and that they delight in the same books. This further convinces her imagination that he is the ideal man she had read about in books. William H. Magee asserts that Marianne's "...open sensibility leads her to near disaster as she overvalues the enthusiastic but cruel Willoughby..." (204). While that may be true, it is Marianne's imagination, which is filled with ideals,

that cause her to quickly accept Willoughby's character. Unfortunately, Marianne learns that Willoughby is not the man she imagined him to be.

There is another moment when Marianne's imagination is demonstrated to be influenced by what she has read. When Colonel Brandon briefly tells Elinor that he once knew a young lady like Marianne, he stops before he reveals too much information. The narrator says that Elinor perceives his countenance, and her fancy concludes that he must have recalled a past love he once had. Then the narrator describes what it would have been like if Marianne was in Elinor's situation. The narrator states, "The whole story would have been speedily formed under her [Marianne's] active imagination; and every thing established in the most melancholy order of disastrous love" (Austen 57-58). Marianne most likely would have recalled books she has read, and from those storylines would have imagined Colonel Brandon experiencing a similar disappointed love. In Colonel Brandon's case, he did experience a disastrous love scenario, but what the narrator is indicating is that Marianne would have conjectured the whole scenario without the full facts of Colonel Brandon's story. Her imagination would have taken the brief words that he had said, and completed a full story from start to finish. Thus Marianne's imagination forms ideal people and situations based on the books she has read.

Marianne's Imagination Controlled by Her Will

Marianne's imagination is being controlled by her will. This narrows her imagination's perception of the world, because she can only imagine scenarios

that will happen the way she desires. An example of this is demonstrated in the beginning of the novel when Elinor tells Marianne what she thinks of Edward's character and appearance. Marianne's response is warm, and Elinor fears that she spoke too highly of him without being certain of their attachment. The narrator then explains Elinor's thoughts: "She knew that when Marianne and her mother conjectured one moment, they believed the next – that with them, to wish was to hope, and to hope was to expect" (Austen 23). Elinor knows that Marianne imagines scenarios in her mind, which she desires to happen. This can create disappointment or shock when a situation is not what one expects. This is shown when Elinor goes on to explain her relationship with Edward, to clarify to Marianne that she is not certain of Edward's regard for her. Then, the narrator states, "Marianne was astonished to find how much the imagination of her mother and herself had outstripped the truth" (Austen 23). Instead of filling her imagination with evidence of Elinor's attachment to Edward, Marianne created in her mind a situation that she wanted to happen – a romantic relationship between Elinor and Edward. In this situation, Marianne's imagination is being controlled by her will, and what her will desires.

A tremendous example of Marianne's will controlling her imagination is demonstrated in her constant expectation of seeing Willoughby. After Elinor and Marianne arrive in London as guests of Mrs. Jennings, Marianne writes a letter to Willoughby. For the rest of the day Marianne remains anxious in expectation of Willoughby visiting them. Marianne's desire for him to visit them is extremely high, for every time there is a rap at a neighbour's door, Marianne is struck with

disappointment. Finally, there is a knock at their door, and Marianne imagines that it is Willoughby. Her will in desiring this is so strong that she almost throws herself into Colonel Brandon's arms. The narrator explains that Marianne's shock was great, causing her to leave the room to indulge in her disappointment in private. However, Marianne does not learn from this lesson, for the next morning her disappointment is forgotten, and her imagination is filled with the expectation of seeing Willoughby. Marianne reluctantly goes out shopping with Elinor, Mrs. Jennings and her daughter Mrs. Palmer during the morning, and remains anxious to return to the house. When they return later that morning, the narrator states that "Marianne flew eagerly upstairs" in hopes of discovering a letter left by Willoughby (Austen 157). Marianne is once again disappointed that her desire for Willoughby to reach out to her is not happening in reality. Finally, Marianne receives a calling card from Willoughby while they were out one morning. Instead of raising Marianne's spirits, it causes her to be more agitated, because she is now anxious with expectation of him truly coming to visit. The narrator explains, "From this moment her mind was never quiet; the expectation of seeing him every hour of the day, made her unfit for anything" (Austen 161). She desires Willoughby to be there, which causes her to continuously imagine Willoughby showing up at the door. Instead of waiting for evidence of Willoughby's intention of coming or for his actual arrival, she wills him to arrive. Marianne cannot perceive other circumstances, but believes that because her will desires him to come, then he will come.

The next day, Marianne stays behind in hopes of Willoughby stopping by again. When Elinor and Mrs. Jennings return, a note arrives, and Marianne quickly asks if it is for her. A maid or footman says that it is for Mrs. Jennings. Marianne does not believe this reply, because she wants it to be from Willoughby, and thus picks up the letter to check for herself. There is an extreme example of Marianne's will controlling her imagination when Mrs. Jennings announces that Marianne has received a letter that will improve her spirits. The narrator explains Marianne's strong will:

Marianne heard enough. In one moment her imagination placed before her a letter from Willoughby, full of tenderness and contrition, explanatory of all that had passed, satisfactory, convincing; and instantly followed by Willoughby himself, rushing eagerly into the room to inforce, at her feet, by the eloquence of his eyes, the assurances of his letter. (Austen 191)

Marianne wants the letter to be from Willoughby, which is why she imagines that it is a letter from him. However, when she notices that it is a letter from her mother, she is instantly struck by disappointment. This example is a reminder of Dr. Samuel Johnson's one definition of the imagination as a "Contrivance; scheme" (258). Furthermore, this situation is a reminder of Imlac's worry in *Rasselas* of the fancy being too powerful (Johnson 93). In Marianne's case, her desires are influencing her imagination in a way that is causing her to contrive a scenario in her mind, which results in her acting rashly. To Marianne's credit, she does read the letter, and even though she is distressed by her mother's certainty of her engagement to Willoughby, the narrator states that "...her mother was dearer

to her than ever..." (Austen 192). However, this scenario demonstrates Marianne's strong will, which is controlling her imagination, and causing her to imagine situations happening the way she desires.

Marianne's Ungoverned Emotions

Marianne demonstrates a limited reason, because she cannot control her emotions. C.S. Lewis believes that *Sense and Sensibility* almost became a tragedy because of the "...intellectual deficiency [that] has been involved in Marianne's errors" (106). To go further, Marianne does not view her open emotions as wrong; she believes that openly showing her emotions is the correct way of handling them. Deborah Weiss agrees:

In Marianne's opinion, her displays of emotional spontaneity reflect the depth and authenticity of her feelings; but as many scholars have noted, her behavior is actually motivated by the self-conscious desire to adhere to a preexisting code – the code of 'sensibility,' as it was understood in the late eighteenth century. (258)

Marianne fits the code of excessive and passionate displays of sensibility, which is not prudent. Elinor reprimands Marianne for being too open with Willoughby right away, resulting in Marianne responding with sarcasm. She replies, "I have been too much at my ease, too happy, too frank, I have erred against every common place notion of decorum; I have been open and sincere where I ought to have been reserved, spiritless, dull, and deceitful..." (Austen 49-50). Marianne cannot comprehend that being reserved and silent does not mean that someone has

no emotions. On the contrary, being reserved can indicate that someone is able to govern their emotions, which will be shown later in the discussion on Elinor.

In another scene, Elinor advises Marianne to demonstrate self-command, but Marianne does not listen. The narrator explains, "...to aim at the restraint of sentiments which were not in themselves illaudable, appeared to her [Marianne] not merely an unnecessary effort, but a disgraceful subjection of reason to common-place and mistaken notions" (Austen 54). Marianne believes that reason should not regulate emotions, which, as C.S. Lewis stated, is an error demonstrated by her limited reasoning. In Samuel Johnson's essay "On Self-Indulgence," he explores the idea of advice. He states:

If those who follow the call of their desires, without enquiry whither they are going, had deviated ignorantly from the paths of wisdom, and were rushing upon dangers unforeseen, they would readily listen to information that recalls them from their errors, and catch the first alarms by which destruction or infamy is denounced. (125)

He is saying that if people knew their paths would lead to destruction, then they would listen to reasonable advice and correct their ways. In the case of Marianne, she does not view the path that she is taking (the path of openly expressing her emotions) as destructive, which is why she does not listen to Elinor. This sets the stage of how Marianne will handle her emotions in regards to Willoughby's change of character.

When Willoughby tells Marianne that he is leaving for London, and does not know when he will be back, Marianne is emotionally affected. The narrator

describes Marianne as having a “violent affliction” as she runs out of the parlour (Austen 76). Elinor knows that Marianne is not correctly regulating her emotions: “...and she thought with the tenderest compassion of that violent sorrow which Marianne was in all probability not merely giving way to as a relief, but feeding and encouraging as a duty” (Austen 78). Again, the narrator uses the word “violent” to describe Marianne’s emotions, which indicates that Marianne completely allows herself to be under the control of her emotions. Later that evening Marianne cannot even partake in dinner, for when Mrs. Dashwood tenderly reaches out a hand to her, Marianne runs out of the room in tears. The narrator then explains, “This violent oppression of spirits continued the whole evening. She was without any power, because she was without any desire of command over herself” (Austen 82). Again, Marianne’s emotions are described as “violent.” Also, the important phrases to look at here are “without any power” and “without any desire of command” (Austen 82). Marianne cannot control her emotions, because she does not want to. This relates back to philosopher David Hume’s discussion on how “blameable qualities” are “voluntary” (206). Therefore, Marianne voluntarily indulges in her emotions. About a week later, again the narrator states that Marianne’s reasoning is not in control, “...for Marianne’s *mind* could not be controuled...” (Austen 85). Marianne’s mind is so focused on indulging her emotions that she cannot use her mind to rationalize her situation or continue on with her life. This is also an example of Johnson’s discussion on how a lack of reason causes a chaotic mind (*Rasselas* 93). When Marianne and Elinor are invited to the Palmers’ house in Cleveland, Marianne’s

emotional indulgences do not end. Her unoppressed emotions lead her to take constant walks among the grounds, which results in her getting a cold. By the fourth evening Marianne's cold becomes "violent," because her lack of prudence results in her deciding to sit in her wet stockings and shoes (Austen 286). Thus her violent emotions result in a violent cold, because her limited reason has caused her to neglect her health. Marianne's uncontrolled and destructive emotions almost end her story in tragedy.

Marianne's Correct Use of Imagination and Reason

Marianne does have the capacity to apply imagination and reason correctly. In the beginning of the novel the narrator tells readers that "Marianne's abilities were, in many respects, quite equal to Elinor's. She was sensible and clever... She was generous, amiable, interesting..." (Austen 8). Marianne is not a silly and foolish girl, she just does not always apply her imagination and reason properly to certain situations. However, there are moments when she does use her imagination correctly. Marianne does feel for her sister Elinor when she is placed in an embarrassing situation. Mrs. Jennings tries to persuade their younger sister Margaret to tell the name of the man that Elinor likes, which causes Marianne to become angry with Margaret. The narrator states that "Marianne felt for her [Elinor] most sincerely..." (Austen 62). Even though Marianne boldly rebukes Margaret, her sympathy for Elinor is genuine. Marianne, most likely, was imagining herself in Elinor's position, and realizing how embarrassed she would be if she were teased relentlessly.

Marianne also shows sympathy towards Edward. When Marianne makes a comment about the hair on the ring that Edward is wearing, she instantly regrets what she had said. The narrator explains, “Marianne spoke inconsiderately what she really felt – but when she saw how much she had pained Edward, her own vexation at her want of thought could not be surpassed by his” (Austen 96). In this moment, Marianne recognizes that she spoke thoughtlessly, without reason, and her sense of Edward’s pain shows that her imagination can be sympathetic towards others. Later on, the narrator states that “Marianne severely censured herself for what she had said...” (Austen 96). This shows that Marianne does have an awareness of morality, because she can recognize when she has done something wrong.

There are more times when Marianne is sympathetic towards others. After Marianne is told by Elinor about Colonel Brandon’s niece Eliza, who became pregnant by Willoughby, Marianne no longer avoids Colonel Brandon, and willingly speaks to him. This new found understanding of Colonel Brandon and his situation touches Marianne’s imagination, because she can imagine what he is suffering. The narrator states that Marianne now looked upon the colonel with a “compassionate respect” (Austen 200). Marianne also thinks about Eliza and “the misery of that poor girl” (Austen 200). Marianne imagines what Eliza must be suffering, and compares that to what she herself might have gone through at the hands of Willoughby. By using her imagination, Marianne can understand Eliza’s plight and feel sympathy towards her. Later on, Marianne is again referred to as having sympathy for Colonel Brandon. The narrator states, “His chief reward for

the painful exertion of disclosing past sorrows and present humiliations, was given in the pitying eye with which Marianne sometimes observed him, and the gentleness of her voice..." (Austen 204). Colonel Brandon does not feel the full force of his embarrassing situation, because of Marianne's sympathetic conduct towards him.

Another moment when Marianne shows sympathy towards her sister is when Elinor's painting is disregarded by Mrs. Ferrars, who then proceeds to praise the talent of Miss Morton instead. Marianne is horrified by the way Elinor is slighted, and cannot help but make a comment. Mrs. Ferrars, and her daughter Fanny Dashwood become angry; John Dashwood is distressed; and Elinor is hurt. However, "...Colonel Brandon's eyes, as they were fixed on Marianne, declared that he noticed only what was amiable in it, the affectionate heart which could not bear to see a sister slighted in the smallest point" (Austen 222). Marianne's bold comment about how Elinor is the person they are speaking about and not Miss Morton may be viewed as a lack of social etiquette, but then again, Fanny's reference of Miss Morton was done out of the fear of appearing "too civil," which is even more rude (Austen 200). Marianne's comment was done out of love and sympathy for Elinor, not out of a desire to appear uncivil. The narrator further explains Marianne's emotions:

The cold insolence of Mrs. Ferrars's general behavior to her sister, seemed, to her, to foretell such difficulties and distresses to Elinor, as her own wounded heart taught her to think of with horror; and urged by a

strong impulse of affectionate sensibility, she moved, after a moment, to her sister's chair... (Austen 222)

Marianne imagines that Elinor will experience further distress by Mrs. Ferrars in the future, because of Marianne's belief of Elinor's attachment to Mrs. Ferrars's son Edward. Also, because Marianne's heart is wounded by the experience of love, she can imagine the suffering Elinor may face. The phrase "affectionate sensibility" indicates that Marianne's sensibility for Elinor is true (Austen 222).

There are moments when Marianne does use reason to control her emotions. After Marianne learns that Willoughby is to marry Miss Grey, she does become hysterical until Elinor is able to calm her down. However, after Mrs. Jennings comes into her room to speak with the two sisters, "Marianne, to the surprise of her sister, determined on dining with them... Elinor, pleased to have her governed for a moment by such a motive, though believing it hardly possible that she could sit out the dinner, said no more..." (Austen 183). In this moment, Marianne rationalizes her situation, and realizes that she should not stay up in her room by herself. Marianne sets a goal for herself, and is determined to see it through. Elinor even notices that Marianne's emotions are "governed," which indicates that Marianne is trying to regulate her emotions. While at dinner, the narrator again states the surprise of Elinor: "... she [Marianne] ate more and was calmer than her sister had expected" (Austen 183). This example shows that Marianne does have the capacity to regulate her emotions. She is a determined woman, and if she applied that trait onto her reasoning, then she would be able to control her emotions.

After she learns about Colonel Brandon's situation, Marianne becomes more thoughtful. She listens attentively to Elinor without making any emotional objections to the story, and without defending Willoughby. Elinor even senses that the guilt of Willoughby has touched Marianne's mind. Elinor perceives Marianne's "spirits less violently irritated than before," and that "Her mind did become settled," even though "it was settled in a gloomy dejection" (Austen 200). Instead of thinking of her own emotions, Marianne is touched by the morality of the situation. The narrator even states that "She felt the loss of Willoughby's character yet more heavily than she had felt the loss of his heart..." (Austen 200). Thus Marianne is putting aside her emotional attachment to Willoughby, and thinking about Willoughby's character and how his actions have caused a moral issue in his being. When she is told by Elinor that Willoughby married Miss Grey, at first Marianne remains calm. The narrator explains, "She received the news with resolute composure; made no observation on it, and at first shed no tears..." (Austen 204). Afterwards she does burst into tears, and remains in an emotional state for the rest of the day. Even so, this scene demonstrates the battle within Marianne's mind as she tries to control her emotions with reason. It appears that Marianne tries to set her mind on being rational in situations, but then easily gives way to her passionate sensibility. Furthermore, there is hope that Marianne will be redeemed from the folly of her past conduct.

Marianne's Redemption

Marianne, like Catherine Morland, is not completely lost for she has demonstrated the potential to change, and goes through a similar experience of humility. Marianne realizes that her conduct has not been correct, and reprimands herself harshly. Laura White asserts that *Sense and Sensibility* has the “most sustained language about religious feeling,” in regards to Marianne’s repentance (61). There are two stages of Marianne’s redemption: first, when Elinor finally tells her about her love for Edward, and how she knew about his engagement to Lucy Steele for months; and second, when Marianne becomes gravely ill, and almost dies because of her imprudence in regards to her health. In both these instances, Marianne demonstrates repentance and the willingness to change.

Marianne is shocked when she hears about Edward’s engagement to Lucy, and that Elinor knew about it for four months. Then, when Elinor reveals that she has loved Edward all of this time, Marianne cannot help but exclaim her emotions:

‘Oh! Elinor,’ she cried, ‘you have made me hate myself for ever. – How barbarous have I been to you! – you, who have been my only comfort, who have borne with me in all my misery, who have seemed to be only suffering for me! – Is this my gratitude? – Is this the only return I can make you? – Because your merit cries upon myself, I have been trying to do it away.’ (Austen 247)

Marianne realizes that she has not been sympathetic to Elinor, mostly because she could not comprehend the virtue of self-command. After their conversation,

Elinor asks Marianne to promise that she will not discuss this matter with anyone, and to not show any dislike towards Lucy and Edward. The narrator then states, “These were great concessions; - but where Marianne felt that she had injured, no reparation could be too much for her to make” (Austen 248). Marianne is showing that she is a moral person, because she is willing to admit that she was wrong and to make amends for it. Peter Knox-Shaw explains that many of Austen’s heroines “...find their sympathies enlarged as their chastened pride leads them to a firmer grasp of the world around them.” (353) Marianne’s sympathy has grown, because she realizes her view of Elinor has been wrong, which is demonstrated when she follows through with her promise.

When Mrs. Ferrars is made aware of the situation, John Dashwood visits Elinor, Marianne and Mrs. Jennings to talk of the affair. The narrator explains Marianne’s conduct: “She performed her promise of being discreet, to admiration...Such advances towards heroism in her sister, made Elinor feel equal to any thing herself” (Austen 248). This shows that Marianne is capable of following through on a promise, which is a demonstration of her morality. The narrator further explains Marianne’s reflection of her conduct compared to Elinor’s: “She felt all the force of that comparison; but not as her sister had hoped, to urge her to exertion now; she felt it with all the pain of continual self-approach, regretted most bitterly that she had never exerted herself before; but it brought only torture of penitence, without the hope of amendment” (Austen 253). This passage demonstrates Marianne’s regret regarding not putting effort into controlling her conduct, and her continuous rebuke of her conduct. The word

“penitence” is the evidence of White’s assertion of religious language around Marianne, as well as “amendment” (Austen 253). However, at this point Marianne believes that she cannot make amends for her conduct, which results in her continuing to wallow in her emotions. Marianne has to go through a near death experience to further be redeemed.

Marianne’s lack of prudence regarding her health results in her getting a cold while staying at the Palmers’ house in Cleveland, and her experience of near death completely awakens Marianne’s mind to the follies of her conduct and uncontrolled emotions. Upon returning home to Barton, the narrator explains Marianne’s reaction:

In the whole of her subsequent manner, she traced the direction of a mind awakened to reasonable exertion; for no sooner had they entered their common sitting room, than Marianne turned her eyes around it with a look of resolute firmness, as if determined at once to accustom herself to the sight of every object with which the remembrance of Willoughby could be connected. (Austen 319)

Marianne is finally rationalizing her situation, and is voluntarily deciding to improve her conduct. One way of doing this is by dissipating the memories of Willoughby in their home from her imagination. The word “awakened” creates a parallel with Catherine Morland’s experience, whose mind is similarly awakened to her own follies.¹ The phrase “reasonable exertion” indicates that Marianne will apply her spirited and passionate characteristics, including her lively imagination,

1. In *Northanger Abbey*, the narrator states that “The visions of romance were over. Catherine was completely awakened” (Austen 188).

in a manner that is regulated by reason (Austen 319). Sometimes Marianne relapses into thinking about the past with misery, but the narrator states that "...it never passed away without the atonement of a smile" (Austen 319). Religious language again is being used, and in this case the emotion of cheerfulness is indicated as a sign of amends for the emotion of misery.

Instead of letting the emotion of pain and misery take control of her mind, Marianne is using the emotion of happiness in a rationalized manner to improve her conduct. Marianne explains how she will improve her conduct in a reasonable manner:

I mean never to be later in rising than six, and from that time till dinner I shall divide every moment between music and reading. I have formed my plan, and am determined to enter on a course of serious study... By reading only six hours a-day, I shall gain in the course of a twelvemonth a great deal of instruction which I now feel myself to want. (Austen 320)

Instead of using her imagination for self-indulgence, Marianne is using her imagination correctly by picturing herself completing goals in the future. She is also stating that she will employ herself with music, and especially reading, in a manner that will improve her mind. Isobel Grundy agrees that the arts are crucial to Marianne's improvement: "If books and ideas have led Marianne astray, encouraging her to seek intensity of emotion as the greatest good, then books and ideas, and especially meditation and self-examining, are to play some part in her redemption" (204). She even uses the word "redemption" to describe Marianne's goal of self-improvement through the arts. In this way, Marianne is engaging in

the imagination correctly, for arts should teach and delight, and should improve one's sense and sensibility. Elinor even views Marianne's passionate plan as a "...scheme of such rational employment and virtuous self-control" (Austen 320). Thus, Marianne is showing how moral sense is the starting point for using reason.

While on a walk with Elinor, Marianne gives a long speech about her lack of prudence and her lack of kindness towards others. She continues on with,

My illness, I well knew, had been entirely brought on by myself, by such negligence of my own health, as I had felt even at the time to be wrong. Had I died, - it would have been self-destruction. I did not know my danger till the danger was removed; but with such feelings as these reflections gave me, I wonder at my recovery, - wonder that the very eagerness of my desire to live, to have time for atonement to my God, and to you all, did not kill me at once. (Austen 322)

Marianne realizes that she had voluntarily succumbed to her illness, because of her lack of sense towards her health. White takes the word "self-destruction" further by saying it is like suicide, which is an immoral act (62). apRoberts suggests that "Her severe physical illness symbolizes the moral danger..." that Marianne was threatened with (52). Marianne would have died without eased spirits, and without asking God and her family to forgive her for her past conduct, which would have been a tragedy. Her fight to live demonstrates that Marianne now has the motivation to fight her unchecked sensibility, not in a manner that will destroy her sensibility, but in a way that will temper the excessiveness, as well as direct it towards other. Johnson talks about the discovery of one's own

faults, and then the resolution of changing one's conduct: "... there is, perhaps, no man, however hardened by impudence or dissipated by levity, sheltered by hypocrisy, or blasted by disgrace, who does not intend some time to review his conduct, and to regulate the remainder of his life by the laws of virtue" (126). In the case of Marianne, she was being controlled by her will and her emotions, as well as ideals found in books. Marianne fits Johnson's guideline of reviewing one's conduct, and choosing to regulate it with virtues. She tells Elinor, "His [Willoughby's] remembrance can be overcome by no change of circumstances or opinions. But it shall be regulated, it shall be checked by religion, by reason, by constant employment" (Austen 323). Marianne's conduct will now be regulated by reason, and religious principles as Austen stated in her letter. Later on, the narrator states that Marianne was born to go through the harsh experience of learning that her excessive displays of emotions and opinions were not always correct.

Elinor's Fortitude

The narrator explains Elinor's character in the beginning of the novel: "Elinor, this eldest daughter whose advice was so effectual, possessed a strength of understanding, and coolness of judgement... She had an excellent heart; - her disposition was affectionate, and her feelings were strong; but she knew how to govern them..." (Austen 8). Thus readers are told that Elinor possesses sense and sensibility in a balanced manner. Elinor is "fond of reading" like Marianne, but she applies books to her life in a proper manner, by learning how to sympathize

with others (231). Elinor has passionate feelings like Marianne, but she has the capacity to regulate them through reason. Unlike Marianne, Elinor paints, which is a demonstration of her ability to perceive the world, for painting requires an artist to perceive reality, and then represent it. Thus, Elinor applies her imagination correctly by sympathizing with others, and uses her reason to regulate her emotions.

Elinor's Sympathetic Imagination

Elinor correctly uses her imagination, because she is capable of feeling sympathy towards others. In this way, she is distinguished from her sister Marianne, for she does not selfishly indulge in her own feelings, but is mindful of her interactions with others. Patricia Fagan explains what it means to have compassion for others:

Pity occurs when we are witnesses or beholders: we are not involved in the destructive or painful situation but, through our capacity to see ourselves in others and others in ourselves, we feel ourselves implicit in this situation and the suffering because we recognize there a situation and a suffering that we could experience ourselves. (237)

This is done through the process of imagination, because one has to imagine what the other person is experiencing; reason does not do this. Elinor is the embodiment of Fagan's description of pity.

Colonel Brandon is an example of a person for whom Elinor continues to have pity. The narrator describes Elinor's thoughts:

Sir John had dropt hints of past injuries and disappointments, which justified her belief of his being an unfortunate man, and she regarded him with respect and compassion. Perhaps she pitied and esteemed him the more because he was slighted by Willoughby and Marianne... (Austen 51)

Unlike Marianne, Elinor is able to imagine herself in Colonel Brandon's position, and thus she is able to feel compassion towards him. Also, Elinor's pity for him is raised, because she wants to make up for the lack of compassion that is shown towards him by Willoughby and Marianne. Elinor feels even more sympathy for him, because of his affection towards Marianne. The narrator states, "Elinor's compassion for him increased, as she had reason to suspect that the misery of disappointed love had already been known to him" (Austen 56). Elinor perceives Colonel Brandon's regard for Marianne, which is not returned, and feels pity for him because she does not want him to experience a disappointment in love again. Elinor uses her imagination to configure what he experienced in the past, and then applies that to his present situation. Elinor's conduct represents Adam's Smith's idea of how the imagination should be used. Smith states: "By the imagination we place ourselves in his situation, we conceive ourselves enduring all the same torments, we enter as it were into his body, and become in some measure the same person with him, and thence form some idea of his sensations" (12). In this way, sensibility is used correctly, for by perceiving others and imagining what they are going through, one can experience or at least understand the emotions of other people.

Elinor's sympathy for Willoughby is different. When Marianne is gravely ill at the Palmers' house, Willoughby arrives to discern the status of Marianne's health, as well as explain his conduct to Elinor. During her discussion with Willoughby, Elinor remains firm and prudent. Elinor focuses their discussion on facts, and not on his violent emotions. Weiss views Elinor's conduct with Willoughby as a demonstration of "...empirical thinking that allows her to feel considerable empathy for others...the most important product of Elinor's empirical approach is not truth, but compassion" (266). Thus, Elinor pays attention to the details that Willoughby is sharing with her, and goes through a back and forth process of compassion and hardening of the heart. When Willoughby tells her that he truly cared for Marianne, Elinor's reply is "softened" (Austen 299). However, his reference to his affair with Eliza causes Elinor to harden "...her heart anew against any compassion for him..." (Austen 300). Elinor does not feel any compassion for Willoughby in regards to Eliza, because the way he treated the poor girl was morally wrong. Elinor is applying her imagination here correctly, by viewing Willoughby's conduct as unvirtuous and imagining the situation of Eliza and what she must be experiencing.

Then, when Willoughby explains the suffering he went through when he had to leave Barton and the Dashwood family, Elinor's view of him changes again to pity. In this way, Elinor is imagining what he must have felt when he left Barton and Marianne behind, and thus is able to feel pity for him in regards to that particular situation. Willoughby explains his emotions when he received Marianne's first note while in London, and the narrator describes Elinor's

sensibility: “Elinor’s heart, which had undergone many changes in the course of this extraordinary conversation, was now softened again; - yet she felt it her duty to check such ideas in her companion last” (Austen 303). Elinor regulates her sympathy towards Willoughby, because she does not want to be influenced by his passionate emotions.

Since Elinor is a moral woman, she understands that aspects of Willoughby’s conduct have been wrong. Magee agrees that “Elinor Dashwood interviews Willoughby as a woman of moral authority...” (205). Her compassion is regulated by her sense of morality. This is seen again when Willoughby speaks ill of his wife, and highly of Marianne. The narrator states that Elinor replied with a “compassionate emotion” in regards to Mrs. Willoughby and Marianne (Austen 307). As Elinor reflects on their conversation, she realizes that the world had made Willoughby vain and extravagant. His vanity led him to have a real attachment to Marianne, but his desire of an extravagant lifestyle led him to end his attachment to Marianne. Furthermore, Elinor recognizes that his immoral decisions have led him to punishment and unhappiness. That being said, Elinor most likely views his punishment as a just result of his immoral actions, but she still views him with sympathy, because she can imagine the suffering of losing Marianne, and the suffering of the unhappiness he is now experiencing. By keeping an open, yet rationalized mind, and paying attention to the details of their conversation, Elinor is able to understand his character, and feel compassion towards him.

Elinor's Reason Regulating Her Emotions

Elinor regulates her emotions for Edward Ferrars with reason. The day after Willoughby leaves, Edward visits the Dashwood family at Barton. His behavior towards Elinor appears to have changed. The narrator explains:

His coldness and reserve mortified her [Elinor] severely; she was vexed and half angry; but resolving to regulate her behavior to him by the past rather than the present, she avoided every appearance of resentment or displeasure, and treated him as she thought he ought to be treated from the family connection. (Austen 88)

Through reason, Elinor puts social conduct before her passionate emotions. Edward remains at their cottage for a week, and Elinor continues to be confused by his behavior. The narrator explains, "Disappointed, however, and vexed as she was, and sometimes displeased with his uncertain behavior to herself, she was very well disposed on the whole to regard his actions with all the candid allowances and general qualifications..." (Austen 99). Elinor views Edward not based on her emotions, but on his actions. Elinor is following Dr. Johnson's definition of reason, in regards to her using her rational mind to go through the causes and propositions of Edward's actions (428). By using reason, Elinor is trying to discover the truth of his change of character.

When Edward leaves, Elinor's response is different from Marianne's emotional response after Willoughby leaves. The narrator says, "But as it was her determination to subdue it... she did not adopt the method so judiciously employed by Marianne, on a similar occasion, to augment and fix her sorrow, by

seeking silence, solitude, and idleness” (Austen 101-02). There are two things here that Elinor is rationalizing that are different from Marianne. First, she does not want to openly showcase her emotions, because she knows that it will affect the spirits of her family. Second, she does not want to indulge her emotions by secluding herself from her family. Therefore, Elinor immediately employs herself by drawing, and engages in conversation with her family. This is similar to Fanny Price in *Mansfield Park*, who continues on with her life while she is away from Edmund Bertram. Elinor does take some time to reflect and meditate on Edward, but she does so in a reasonable manner by contemplating his behavior. Weiss explains Elinor’s way of contemplating Edward: “Elinor's approach to knowing Edward, to the fundamental question of who he is... is based on experience. She studies the available evidence of feeling and opinion and develops an interpretation of Edward based on observation” (11). Instead of basing Edward’s character on her own feelings, Elinor observes Edward to establish a reasonable overview of his person.

When Lucy reveals to Elinor that she has been secretly engaged to Edward, Elinor is astonished, but does not lose control. The narrator states, “...though her complexion varied, she stood firm in incredulity and felt in no danger of an hysterical fit, or a swoon” (Austen 124). Elinor’s reaction is different from Marianne’s when she finds out that Willoughby is going to marry, for Marianne goes into an hysterical fit which Elinor finds difficult to subdue. Faced with her own disappointment, Elinor calmly engages Lucy in a conversation to obtain facts that would support Lucy’s bold statement. Even while Elinor’s

security of Lucy's statement being false sinks, the narrator says that "...her self command did not sink with it" (Austen 126). Furthermore, when she considers the evidence that Lucy shows (a portrait of Edward and a letter from Edward), Elinor does feel great emotions. The narrator states, "...her heart sunk, and she could hardly stand; but exertion was indispensably necessary, and she struggled so resolutely against the oppression of her feelings, that her success was speedy, and for the time complete" (Austen 129). This passage shows that Elinor does have sensibility, and that her inner struggle is challenging. Furthermore, it demonstrates that it takes strength and a great amount of rationality for her to overcome her passionate emotions. It is more difficult to regulate violent emotions, than it is to let the oppressing emotions take control. Elinor does take the time to weep privately, but she cries more for Edward than she does herself. She also stays true to her promise to Lucy, and does not tell her family, which she believes is a relief, because their affliction would cause her more distress. The narrator explains, "She was stronger alone, and her own good sense so well supported her, that her firmness was as unshaken, her appearance of cheerfulness as invariable, as with regrets so poignant and so fresh, it was impossible for them to be" (Austen 135). Some may argue that Elinor is being selfish by keeping her emotions to herself, but she has rationalized her situation. First, she made a promise to Lucy to not discuss this with anyone, which shows her moral character. Second, she knows the characters of her mother and two sisters, and discerns that their sensibilities would be overcome by the news of Edward's secret engagement.

When Edward's secret engagement is made known, Elinor discusses her emotions with Marianne. Her sister is shocked that Elinor was able to have self-command over her emotions during the four months that she knew about the engagement. Elinor is able to relate the situation without violent emotions, because she has taken the time to rationalize the situation. She realizes that she cannot change the situation, and is able to forgive Edward for his past conduct. Elinor explains her experience of regulating her emotions to Marianne: "The composure of my mind with which I have brought myself at present to consider the matter, the consolation that I have been willing to admit, have been the effect of constant and painful exertion..." (Austen 247). Elinor is not a cold person who can shut her emotions on and off, but through a process of rationalized thought, she can limit the effect that her emotions have on her mind and spirits. When the Dashwood family hears from their servant Thomas that a Mr. Ferrars is married, Elinor's reaction is different from Marianne's. Instead of going into a state of hysterics like her sister, Elinor turns pale and her countenance shows that she is suffering by the news. However, after a few minutes Elinor "...though still much disordered, had so far recovered the use of her reason and voice as to be just beginning an enquiry of Thomas, as to the source of his intelligence" (Austen 329). This situation is an example of C. S. Lewis's ideas about reason in *The Discarded Image*. Lewis states that humans are using reason when they "...proceed step by step to prove a truth which is not self-evident" (157). Instead of completing losing her reason to uncontrolled emotions, Elinor wants to seek

out the evidence of Edward's marriage to Lucy to determine the truth of Thomas's statement.

When Elinor concludes that Thomas's account must be true, still she does not rush off to indulge her emotions, but stays in the room with her mother to think. Some criticize Elinor for being cold, like Marianne does before she knows of Elinor's suffering, but this is not the case.² Watt argues that "... perhaps because she [Elinor] is older, she consistently tries to regulate her imagination and her feelings to her judgement and to the moral and social tradition on which the order of society is based" (53-54). This means that Elinor's use of reasoning allows her to process her situation, and regulate her emotions in a way that is morally and socially correct.

When Edward suddenly arrives to visit the Dashwood family, Elinor tells herself, "I *will* be calm; I *will* be mistress of myself" (Austen 333). Again, she does not want to cause a scene by allowing her emotions to take control of the situation. Then, when Edward reveals that it was his brother Robert Ferrars who had married Lucy, Elinor cannot contain her emotions. The narrator states, "She almost ran out of the room, and as soon as the door was closed, burst into tears of joy, which at first she thought would never cease" (Austen 335). Finally, Elinor does display some emotions in front of her family and Edward. Watt notes, that even though Elinor is displaying emotions, she is still regulating them. Elinor does not run out of the room, because she knows that would not be proper, and she remembers to close the door before she bursts into tears; these are two actions

2. William Magee argues that readers tend to like Marianne's open sensibility, rather than Elinor's governed and silent passions (204). Marianne calls Elinor "cold-hearted" twice (Austen 23).

that demonstrate her rationality in this scene. Even so, everyone notices her emotion, even Edward who becomes silent after she leaves. Thus Elinor is not a cold-hearted woman who has no emotions, but a woman of strong emotions who knows how to properly regulate them with reason. Austen rewards Elinor for her proper use of imagination and reason, by freeing Edward from Lucy which allows him to marry the woman he loves – Elinor.

Conclusion

Austen is not a complete rationalist who does not see the usefulness of morality in the characteristic of sensibility, but she is an advocate for the regulation of both sense and sensibility. Marianne learns that sensibility is not a characteristic that should be directed only towards herself, but it also includes how she conducts her feelings towards other people. One of the ways for the imagination to be moral is by being sympathetic towards the distresses of other people. She realizes that her imagination was conjecturing ideals, because it was being controlled by books and the desires of her will. Marianne also learns that reason must be applied to govern her emotions, and that it is improper to excessively display and indulge them. Through Elinor, Austen is demonstrating how the imagination should be used properly in regards to being moral by showing sympathy towards other people. Also, Elinor demonstrates how reason should be used, not to dissipate emotions, but to regulate them. Thus, Austen presents a balance of reason and imagination, in regards to sense and sensibility.

Chapter 3: The Consistent Character of Fanny Price in *Mansfield*

Park

Introduction

Mansfield Park is a novel that is different from Jane Austen's other novels, in the sense that the protagonist Fanny Price is not a typical heroine. She hardly takes action, and is more of an observer rather than an actress. Instead of being the center of attention, Fanny prefers to stay in the shadows and watch everyone else perform. Fanny is different from most of Austen's other heroines because she does not experience the suffering of acting in a wrong way; rather, Fanny suffers because of the actions and words of the people around her. She grows up in Mansfield Park, the home of her wealthy uncle Sir Thomas Bertram and aunt Lady Bertram. Being an outsider, Fanny is not dazzled by wealth, and thus she is able to observe the Bertram family quietly. Fanny is the embodiment of Austen's balance of the imagination and reason. She has a sympathetic imagination, as well as an acute understanding of the imagination, because she knows when she is and is not using it properly. Fanny's reason is properly guided by her observations. Also, Fanny knows how to regulate her emotions with her reason. She demonstrates her imagination and reason through philosophical observations. Finally, Fanny's uses of reason and imagination are demonstrated by how she properly applies books to her life.

Fanny is a character who many readers like to critique for being too good.¹ However, Fanny is created the way that Austen wanted her to be, a character of high morals and principles. She stands out, because she is in a house filled with family members and guests who are frivolous, lazy, flirtatious and immoral, with the exception of her cousin Edmund Bertram, though even he falls from the moral standard because of his infatuation with Mary Crawford. Critics like to critique Fanny for always striving to do what is right. For example, C. S. Lewis states that there are readers who “charge [Fanny] of being a prig,” because she disapproves of how other characters act (110). When did it become terrible for a character to be good? Also, Fanny is critiqued as a heroine for being inactive and silent. Ignês Sodré calls Fanny the “silent, self-effacing heroine” (135). It is true that Fanny remains silent on many occasions; however, this essay will present moments where Fanny does speak out against what she views to be wrong, and by making philosophical comments. Edmund is a character who recognizes the good qualities in Fanny right from the beginning, because he takes the time to reach out to her, and shows her kindness. When Fanny was just ten years old, Edmund “...was convinced of her having an affectionate heart, and a strong desire of doing right; and he could perceive her to be farther entitled to attention by great sensibility of her situation, and great timidity” (Austen 16). Furthermore, Edmund knew Fanny “...to be clever, to have a quick apprehension as well as good sense, and a fondness for reading...” (Austen 21). Throughout the novel Fanny remains consistent in her character by using her imagination and reason properly. This

1. James Collins states that “She [Fanny] is famously disliked by readers...” because she is a character that seems to have “...no manners and no personality, but is simply raw morality” (153).

does not make her a boring character, but a character of whom Austen approves, and whom she hopes will influence her readers to think, speak and act morally.

Fanny's Sympathetic Imagination

Since Fanny is a moral character with a sensibility for the feeling of others, she is able to imagine the suffering that other people are going through. She is able to pity other people in stressful situations, even those who do not treat her kindly. On one occasion the narrator even states that Fanny has a “sympathetic acuteness of feeling” (Austen 393). An example of a character towards whom she feels sympathetic is Edmund. He decides that Fanny should go to the Rushworths' house Sotherton in his place, while he stays home with his mother Lady Bertram. Fanny is filled more with gratitude than with pleasure. The narrator explains, “She felt Edmund's kindness with all, and more than all, the sensibility which he, unsuspecting of her fond attachment, could be aware of; but that he should forgo any enjoyment on her account gave her pain, and her own satisfaction in seeing Sotherton would be nothing without him” (Austen 79). Instead of imagining what Sotherton will be like, Fanny imagines what it will be like without Edmund. Fanny is also imagining what Edmund must feeling by being excluded from an occasion of enjoyment.

During the preparation of the play *Lovers' Vows*, Fanny's cousin Julia is slighted by Henry Crawford who trifled with her feelings. Fanny is the only one who can perceive the resentment and jealousy that Julia now has for her sister Maria. The narrator explains that, “Fanny saw and pitied much of this in Julia; but there was no outward fellowship between them. Julia made no communication,

and Fanny took no liberties. They were two solitary sufferers, or connected only by Fanny's consciousness" (Austen 159-60). Fanny is suffering because she refuses to participate in the play, which makes her an outsider, though a voluntary one. She is able to perceive Julia's suffering, and then imagine what she must be feeling like. It is interesting how the narrator states that they are "connected only by Fanny's consciousness," or her sympathetic imagination (Austen 160). In Fanny's imagination they are connected to each other, because they are both suffering. There is another moment that is similar to the scenario with Edmund and Sotherton. Maria, who married Mr. Rushworth, and Julia are away from home when Sir Thomas has a ball for Fanny. Sir Thomas insists that Fanny and Henry lead the ball; Fanny is astonished by the distinction she is given. The narrator then explains, "And her thoughts flew to those absent cousins with most unfeigned and truly tender regret, that they were not at home to take their own place in the room..." (Austen 271). Even though Maria and Julia do not always treat Fanny kindly, immediately Fanny thinks of their loss of pleasure. Her imagination is filled with occurrences of the delight Maria and Julia experience while being at various balls, which results in Fanny feeling sympathetic towards them in their absence.

Mary Crawford is a character who Fanny does not particularly like, but she is still able to feel sympathy towards her. After Mary makes some criticizing comments about the clergy, Julia reveals that Edmund will be ordained. The narrator notes, "She [Mary] looked aghast under the new idea she was receiving. Fanny pitied her. 'How distressed she will be at what she said just now,' passed

across her mind” (Austen 88). Even though Fanny does not like Mary, she is capable of feeling sympathy towards her through the imagination. Fanny is able to imagine what it must be like to be embarrassed after saying rude and unthinkable words. Henry is also a character who Fanny does not particularly like, because of his flirtatious and inconsistent conduct. However, when his affections turn towards her, Fanny is able to feel sympathy for him. Fanny is aware of the slight change in Henry’s character, and is sensible to his declaration to her. Fanny realizes that “She must be courteous, and she must be compassionate” (Austen 324). Fanny has sympathy towards Henry, because she can imagine what it must be like to have unrequited love. Actually, she is able to imagine it easier because of her unrequited love for Edmund. There is another moment when Fanny is sympathetic towards Henry, and his feelings for her. Henry and Mary are leaving Mrs. Grant’s house, so they visit Mansfield Park the day before their departure. The narrator states, “He was evidently oppressed, and Fanny must grieve for him...” (Austen 361). The word “must” indicates that Fanny believes it is necessary to feel sympathetic towards Henry. In this way, Fanny is similar to Elinor Dashwood who also has a sympathetic imagination.

Fanny’s Understanding of the Imagination

Fanny has a great understanding of the imagination, and knows how this aspect of the mind should be used. There are times when the narrator states that Fanny knew when not to imagine something. For example, the narrator explains how Fanny sits with her aunt Lady Bertram at Mansfield Park while the rest of the family is away at a party or ball. The narrator then states, “As to her cousins’

gaities, she loved to hear an account of them, especially of the balls, and whom Edmund had danced with; but thought too lowly of her own situation to imagine she should ever be admitted to the same..." (Austen 35). Fanny understands what her position in the family is, and knows not to imagine herself going to a ball or party, because she has never been invited to go, thus she does not expect that she will be offered an invitation. She does not want to even imagine herself at a ball, because she does not want to raise her hopes and make herself unhappy. There is an interesting passage that gives insight into the boundaries of the imagination. Fanny is astonished by the appearance of her old home in Portsmouth, as well as the vulgarity and chaos of her parents and siblings. While Fanny is observing the house, the narrator states, "The smallness of the rooms above and below indeed, and the narrowness of the passage and staircase, struck her beyond her imagination" (Austen 383). This passage indicates that her imagination could not even fathom the real appearance of her former home, to her it was unimaginable.

Fanny rebukes herself when she knows her imagination has not been correct. She is not to be portrayed as an ultimately perfect human, for she is allowed to make mistakes, but an important aspect of Fanny's character is the ability to determine when she is wrong. Furthermore, sometimes it is not morally wrong for the imagination to be incorrect; rather, it is important to note how a disappointed imagination is handled. For example, Fanny is told there is a chapel in Mr. Rushworth's Sotherton home. The narrator states that, "Fanny's imagination had prepared her for something grander than a mere, spacious, oblong room, fitted up for the purpose of devotion..." (Austen 84). Fanny

proceeds to tell Edmund how she is disappointed, and then he explains that the chapel is not old, and therefore is not grand in appearance like the chapels in castles and monasteries. David Hume explains that “The imagination moves with more difficulty in passing from one proportion of time to another, than in a transition through the parts of space...” (201). In this example, Fanny’s imagination created a grand chapel that was from the past, and she could not fathom a chapel that was small and simple. This indicates that Fanny’s imagination is working on a sublime scale, which is similar to Catherine Morland’s imagination. However, Fanny simply says that she was foolish to think of a grand chapel, whereas Catherine’s high expectation leads her to great disappointment.

There is an important moment where Fanny recognizes that she did not use her imagination correctly. When Edmund speaks openly about Miss Crawford to Fanny, she feels dejected, and her expectations are dashed. However, she realizes that her expectations were incorrect, and that she was being selfish with her affection for Edmund. The narrator explains:

To call it or fancy it a loss, a disappointment, would be a presumption; for which she had not words strong enough to satisfy her own humility. To think of him as Miss Crawford might be justified in thinking, would in her be insanity. To her, he could be nothing under any circumstances – nothing dearer than a friend. Why did such an idea occur to her even enough to be reprobated and forbidden? It ought not to have touched on the confines of her imagination. (Austen 260)

Fanny realizes that there has been nothing but sibling affection between her and Edmund, which means her imagination should not be filled with occurrences of her and Edmund together as a couple. The sentence “It ought not to have touched on the confines of her imagination” indicates that Fanny knows there is a boundary, as well as that the imagination is a good aspect of the mind that should be filled with good things, such as morals (Austen 260). John Wiltshire gives insight into Fanny’s contemplation:

Her imagination has confines... but the term confines, like the fence at Sotherton, implies, and in fact cannot mean anything other than, that there is something outside the confine, itself powerful or dangerous enough to be excluded... in which ‘imagination’ is to be kept separate from another aspect, or ‘idea’, that the mind has produced, that is something altogether more dangerous. (112)

Wiltshire agrees that there are ideas or aspects in the mind that should not touch the imagination. An explanation of what that might be could be the desires of the will. Uncontrolled desires can press upon the imagination, making someone imagine scenarios that the person wants to happen. Catherine desires to be frightened by Northanger Abbey, while Marianne desires Willoughby to show up on her doorstep, so both imagine those occurrences happening which causes their high hopes to be dashed. In Fanny’s case, she immediately recognizes her mistake, and knows that she should not imagine something that differs from reality.

Fanny knows when it is appropriate to use her imagination. She uses her imagination to create images in her mind, and to recall moments of the past that may happen again. A wonderful example is when she visits Mr. Rushworth's home Sotherton with her cousins Maria and Julia, and the Crawfords. Fanny genuinely listens to Mrs Rushworth's account of Sotherton and the history surrounding it, unlike Miss Crawford who is disinterested. The narrator explains,

...Fanny, to whom every thing was almost as interesting as it was new, attended with unaffected earnestness to all that Mrs Rushworth could relate of the family in former times, its rise and grandeur, regal visits and loyal efforts, delighted to connect any thing with history already known, or warm her imagination with scenes of the past. (Austen 84)

In this way, Fanny is using her imagination for education by supplying it with information on history, and creating images in her mind to coincide with what she is learning.

She also uses her imagination to create images in her mind of incidents that have occurred. Fanny visits with Miss Crawford at the parsonage who insists that Fanny should stay and hear her play a song on her harp of which Edmund is fond. The narrator explains: "...such a memento made her particularly awake to his idea, and she fancied him sitting in that room again and again, perhaps in the very spot where she sat now, listening with constant delight to the favourite air, played, as it appeared to her, with superior tone and expression..." (Austen 204).

Fanny's mind is imagining something that has happened, which makes her

specific thoughts regarding Edmund's visits to the parsonage probable. In this way, Fanny is not imagining something that is far-fetched.

The next example is a more interesting use of the imagination. Miss Crawford generously encourages Fanny to choose a necklace from her collection to go with the cross that her brother William gave her. Fanny reluctantly agrees to choose one. The narrator then explains, "She looked and looked, longing to know which might be least valuable; and was determined in her choice at last, by fancying there was one necklace more frequently placed before her eyes than the rest" (Austen 254). In this moment, Fanny's perception of the necklaces is what is guiding her imagination. She perceives in her imagination that there is one necklace that Miss Crawford presents to her compared to the rest of the chains.

Fanny is distressed by Henry's persistent expressions of regard for her, even though she continuously explains to him that she does not love him, and that she will never love him. The use of her imagination is different here, because Austen paraphrases it in a particular way. The narrator explains;

She [Fanny] could not, though only eighteen, suppose Mr. Crawford's attachment would hold out for ever; she could not but imagine that steady, unceasing discouragement from herself would put an end to it in time. How much time she might, in her own fancy, allot for its dominion, is another concern. (Austen 327)

The phrase "she could not but imagine" indicates that Fanny could not help imagining this scenario (Austen 327). Furthermore, it indicates that her imagination believes this, but that the dissipation of Henry's love for her is not

certain. In her imagination, the idea of discouragement is strong enough to cease Henry's persistent love. It can even be said that this occurrence is reasonable in Fanny's mind, and that discouragement will result in Henry's withdrawn love. Also, her imagination cannot determine how long it will take for this to happen, which also shows Fanny understands the limits of the imagination.

There are times when Fanny uses her imagination based on observations she has made. One evening Fanny notices that Mr. Crawford has been sending her pointed looks from across the room. The narrator then states, "She thought he was wishing to speak to her unheard by the rest. She fancied he was trying for it the whole evening at intervals..." (Austen 301). Through her observations, Fanny's imagination concludes that Mr. Crawford wanted to engage with her in a conversation. Again, this is an example of Fanny using her imagination properly by grounding it in observations she has made. There is another moment when she uses her imagination in a similar way in regards to Mr. Crawford. While in Portsmouth, Fanny is visited by Mr. Crawford. After he leaves Fanny experiences low spirits, because she has parted with someone who has a connection to Mansfield Park. The narrator then states, "The wonderful improvement which she still fancied in Mr. Crawford, was the nearest to administering comfort of anything within the current of her thoughts" (Austen 409). Fanny's imagination is again influenced by the observations she had made on Mr. Crawford's conduct. Even though her family is bold, disordered and in a lower station, he behaved like a complete gentleman towards them. It is interesting that Austen chose to use the

word “fancied” instead of “noticed” or “observed,” which indicates that the imagination can be properly used.

When Fanny hears about her cousin Tom’s illness, she imagines herself being of service to her aunt Lady Bertram. The narrator explains, “She loved to fancy how she could have read to her aunt, how she could have talked to her, and tried to make her feel the blessing of what was, and prepare her mind for what might be...” (Austen 428). Fanny’s imagination is creating a scenario that is probable since she has done these tasks for her aunt in the past. Joseph Addison is a writer who founded the magazine *The Spectator* in the eighteenth-century, in which he wrote a series of essays titled “The Pleasures of the Imagination.” In this work Addison talks about how the imagination is influenced by the perception of past objects. Addison states, “...we have the power of retaining, altering, and compounding those images, which we have once received, into all the varieties of picture and vision that are most agreeable to the imagination...” (230). Fanny is using images of scenes from her past, and configuring scenes of spending time with her aunt, which are agreeable to her imagination. She is also using her imagination for good, because she is thinking about being a comfort to her aunt during a stressful time.

Fanny uses her imagination again in regards to Mr. Crawford’s character. While Fanny is in Portsmouth she receives a shocking letter from Miss Crawford about a rumored scandal regarding Mr. Crawford. Fanny concludes that it must have something to do with Mr. Crawford and her cousin Maria. The narrator goes on to explain Fanny’s thoughts: “It was very strange! She had begun to think he

[Mr. Crawford] really loved her, and to fancy his affection for her something more than common – and his sister still said that he cared for nobody else” (Austen 434). Again, Fanny’s imagination is being guided by the observations she has made, as well as words she has been told, such as those found in Miss Crawford’s letter.

Fanny’s Reason Guided by Observations

Fanny’s reason is guided by the observations that she makes. Her quietness and her ability to sit unnoticed allow her to observe the other characters. This is one of the reasons why Fanny’s thoughts are trustworthy, because she takes the time to perceive the realities around her. Fanny is also a reliable character, because her reason is influenced by morals. This is indicated by Edmund’s assertion to his aunt Mrs Norris that Fanny’s judgement is safe to trust (Austen 145). Fanny takes the time to observe everything, and then contemplates if something is right or wrong. The narrator even states, “Her own thoughts and reflections were habitually her best companions...” (Austen 80). Fanny prefers to contemplate everything she observes rather than socialize with other people, except Edmund. Fanny uses her observations to make judgements on what is right and wrong, and on peoples’ characters.

One character that Fanny continuously observes throughout the novel is Henry Crawford, by focusing on the relationships he has with people. An example of this is when she is at Sotherton. Fanny is able to perceive the flirtatious relationship between her cousin Maria and Henry, which is unacceptable since Maria is betrothed to Mr. Rushworth. Instead of waiting for Mr. Rushworth to

come back with the key to a fence, Maria and Henry decide to climb over it and continue their walk together. Fanny disapproves of this idea, but they decide to leave anyway. The narrator explains Fanny's thoughts: "By taking a circuitous, and as it appeared to her, very unreasonable direction to the knoll, they were soon beyond her eye, and for some minutes longer she remained without sight or sound of any companion" (Austen 99). Fanny recognizes that Maria and Henry are specifically taking a route that will make it difficult for Mr. Rushworth to find them. Fanny is correct in her judgement of their relationship. Furthermore, "Fanny's observation" concludes that there was no harmony in their walk, and that both her cousin Julia and Mr. Rushworth appear gloomy (Austen 103). Even though the novel is centered more on Fanny's observations and thoughts, Austen makes no indication that any of the other characters have observed the tension between Maria, Henry, Mr. Rushworth and Julia.

There are other moments when Fanny's observations on Henry are made known. The narrator states that Fanny is the only one who dislikes aspects of Henry's relationships with Maria and Julia. The narrator then reveals "... she [Fanny] could never see Mr. Crawford with either sister without observation, and seldom without wonder or censure..." (Austen 114). Unfortunately, Fanny does not feel confident in her reasonable judgement, so she does not share it with Edmund. There is another time when Fanny is observing Henry, as well as his sister Mary, and she struggles to understand their characters. The narrator describes Fanny's observations: "There was every thing in the world against their being serious, but his words and manner. Every thing natural, probable,

reasonable was against it; all their habits and ways of thinking, and all her own demerits” (Austen 300). Fanny doubts herself on whether or not their characters are good, but views their characters as being against reason. Unfortunately, Fanny’s reasonable observations are rebuked by her uncle Sir Thomas who does not see why Fanny should turn down Henry’s marriage proposal. Fanny’s flawed character, for again she is not perfect, is showcased here when she does not tell her uncle about her observations of Henry (Austen 313). Even after her uncle’s harsh rebuke, “. . . she trusted, in the first place, that she had done right, that her judgement had not misled her; for the purity of her intentions she could answer . . .” (Austen 319-20). This is a demonstration of Fanny’s reasoning being guided by morals. Fanny knows that she has made the right decision, based on her observations of Henry’s questionable character. C. S. Lewis agrees that Fanny is an excellent observer because she is not deceived by the deceptions of the other characters like Henry (182). Fanny may be an observer, but she does not always agree with what is happening around her.

While talking with Mary Crawford before she leaves to visit her friend Mrs. Fraser, Fanny learns that Henry knew about the necklace. Fanny explains to Mary that she is sensible of Henry’s sudden attentions towards herself. She also reveals that she has noticed Henry’s particular attentions to her cousins. Fanny explains, “I had not, Miss Crawford, been an inattentive observer of what was happening between him and some part of this family in the summer and autumn. I was quiet, but I was not blind” (Austen 358). This demonstrates Fanny’s particular attention to detail when she observes the other characters. Again,

because she is quiet she is able to observe others without notice. Her attention to detail heightens her reasoning, because she is basing her reason on the realities that are happening around her. In *The Discarded Image*, C. S. Lewis defines reason as being the process of searching for truth that is not self-evident by going through facts and evidences (157). However, he also suggests that there must be a starting point for reason to begin, which he calls moral sense (158). Therefore, Fanny's opinion on Henry's character, gained through the process of observing and reasoning, is trustworthy because she is a moral character.

Fanny views the performance of the play *Lovers' Vows* as reasonably inappropriate. She refuses to participate in the play, even when she is verbally attacked by her cousin Tom and the others. In this moment, Fanny is taking action against something she views as morally wrong. James Collins describes Fanny in this scene as being "brave" and "wise" (153). Edmund shares the same view as her, but then changes his mind, and decides to perform in the play, supposedly so that someone who is not well-known to their family does not perform in the play. The narrator explains Fanny's thoughts: "Her heart and her judgement were equally against Edmund's decision; she could not acquit his unsteadiness; and his happiness under it made her wretched" (Austen 156). Fanny is emotionally distressed by Edmund's decision, but she also knows that his decision is wrong. Fanny's thinking is reasonable, because she judges correctly that her uncle Sir Thomas would disapprove of the play. Her judgement is established when Sir Thomas unexpectedly arrives home, and makes his views of the play known. Edmund defends Fanny by stating that Fanny was the only one who was

“consistent” and “judged rightly” (Austen 185). Therefore, Fanny has the capacity to direct her reason through morals.

Fanny’s Reason Regulating Her Emotions

Fanny is similar to Elinor Dashwood, because she can regulate her emotions through reason. Fanny is a character who feels strongly, for there are moments where she does break down and cry, but this is understandable, for Fanny is misused horribly by her aunt Mrs Norris, and often critiqued by her uncle Sir Thomas. However, the narrator does state that Fanny is “...more inclined to silence when feeling most strongly” (Austen 365). This is why Fanny is similar to Elinor, because they both feel great emotions silently. They both try to conceal their sorrow and distresses from the people around them. They both do this through reasonable thinking and employment.

There is an important moment that shows Fanny’s use of reasoning to control her emotions in regards to Edmund. Fanny learns that Edmund is intending to take his orders as a clergyman soon, which is a shock to Fanny, because normally he takes the time to discuss certain matters with her. The narrator states that Fanny “...would now meet him with his own cool feelings...She would learn to match him in his indifference. She would henceforth admit his attentions without any idea beyond immediate amusement. If *he* could so command his affections, *hers* should do her no harm” (Austen 224). This moment is similar to Elinor’s decision to remain detached towards Edward Ferrars, so that her heart will not be greatly affected by Edward’s shocking engagement to Lucy Steele. Fanny’s anger towards Edmund is reasonable,

because he has demonstrated inconsistency, and the explanation of Fanny's thoughts is done in a rational manner.

There is a critical moment when Fanny uses reason to calm her agitation. Similar to Elinor in regards to Edward, Fanny realizes that Edmund's intention is to marry Mary Crawford. The narrator states that "Till she [Fanny] had shed many tears over this deception, Fanny could not subdue her agitation; and the dejection which followed could only be relieved by the influence of fervent prayers for his happiness" (Austen 260). Fanny releases her emotions, but immediately prays that Edmund will be happy, which is similar to Elinor's reaction, for she wonders if Edward Ferrars will be happy married to Lucy Steele, and even weeps for his situation.² Praying is a rational way of calming one's agitation, by soothing one's emotions with peace. Fanny is also being considerate of Edmund, because she does want what is best for him. Fanny then tries to get rid of her selfish feelings for Edmund, because she also realizes that he is not hers to lose; they did not have a relationship beyond brotherly and sisterly affection. The narrator then states: "She would endeavor to be rational, and to deserve the right of judging of Miss Crawford's character and the privilege of true solicitude for him by a sound intellect and an honest heart" (Austen 260-61). Fanny realizes that she cannot be emotionally attached to this situation, because it will only cause her more grief. Instead she can observe Mary's conduct, and be there for Edmund if he needs her. This does not mean that Fanny can and will diminish her love for Edmund, but that she will regulate her selfish emotions for the sake of Edmund's happiness.

2. The narrator in *Sense and Sensibility* explains Elinor's thoughts on how Edward will be unhappy, and then states "... she wept for him, more than for herself" (Austen 134).

The narrator then declares, “Having regulated her thoughts and comforted her feelings by this happy mixture of reason and weakness, she was able in due time to go down and resume her usual employments near her aunt Bertram, and pay her the usual observances without any apparent want of spirits” (Austen 261). Again, Fanny is similar to Elinor by reasonably keeping herself busy, so that the oppression of her emotions will not cause her agitation.

There is another moment where Fanny’s thinking is dissimilar to that of Marianne’s. When Fanny hears about how she will leave Mansfield Park for a few months to visit her family in Portsmouth, she is surprisingly content with being away from Edmund. The narrator explains,

At a distance unassailed by his looks or his kindness, and safe from the perpetual irritation of knowing his heart, and striving to avoid his confidence, she should be able to reason herself into a proper state; she should be able to think of him as in London, and arranging every thing there, without wretchedness. (Austen 366)

Whereas Marianne is constantly hoping for Willoughby’s appearance, Fanny is reasonably content with being away from Edmund, because she wants to have her own time to make peace with Edmund’s intention of marrying Mary. Instead of allowing herself to be emotionally distraught, Fanny strives to always have a fortified mind.

Fanny discovers that her old home in Portsmouth is not what she had expected it to be. Her family is chaotic, loud and vulgar. However, while she is away from Mansfield Park, and the occurrences that are happening there, Fanny

keeps herself busy so that she will not be agitated by her situation and the terrible news that she hears from Mansfield Park. Fanny genuinely feels compassion towards her younger sister Susan, and becomes a subscriber of a circulating library in the hopes of encouraging Susan to read. The narrator explains,

In this occupation, she [Fanny] 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...

(Austen 394).

Fanny does not want her mind plagued by emotions regarding Mansfield Park and Edmund, so through her kindness to Susan she is able to rationally keep her mind busy by teaching her sister. Also, Fanny is engaging her imagination by reading literature to her sister. Again, this is different from Marianne who indulged her emotions by not keeping herself employed. In this way, Fanny is keeping her mind busy by helping Susan.

Henry Crawford visits Fanny while she is in Portsmouth, and before he leaves he promises to tell Edmund to write a letter to her. After a few days, Fanny becomes anxious, because she has not yet heard from Edmund. However, the narrator explains,

At length, a something like composure succeeded. Suspense must be submitted to, and must not be allowed to wear her out, and make her useless. Time did something, her own exertions something more, and she

resumed her attentions to Susan, and again awakened the same interest in them. (Austen 414)

Fanny realizes that anxiously awaiting a letter from Edmund is not going to help her situation, so she rationally decides to calm down, and continue teaching Susan. Again, this is different from Marianne who willfully desires a letter or note from Willoughby to appear, and remains anxiously disengaged from life. Furthermore, she is different from Marianne because “her own exertions” indicate that Fanny wants to have composure (Austen 414). After Fanny hears the news of Maria’s shocking affair with Henry Crawford, and Julia’s elopement with Mr. Yates, Edmund sends her letter declaring that he is coming to retrieve her from Portsmouth to bring her back to Mansfield Park. Instead of wallowing in sorrow, Fanny takes action immediately to prepare for her and Susan’s departure. The narrator declares, “There is nothing like employment, active, indispensable employment, for relieving sorrow. Employment, even melancholy, may dispel melancholy, and her occupations were hopeful. She had so much to do...” (Austen 439). This reflection on employment also represents Elinor’s character. The idea of taking Susan back to Mansfield Park causes Fanny’s heart to glow, which limits the distress Fanny is feeling. Therefore, by keeping engaged in busy actions, such as preparing her and Susan for their journey, Fanny is using her reason to regulate her emotions.

While Fanny is away in Portsmouth, she dispels emotions that are negative. For example, after Henry Crawford leaves, Fanny becomes melancholy, because she feels like she has been deserted by everyone from Mansfield Park.

The narrator then explains that "...she could not think of his returning to town, and being frequently with Mary and Edmund, without feelings so near akin to envy, as made her hate herself for having them" (Austen 409). Fanny knows that it is wrong to feel envious of others, so she rebukes herself, and rationally dispels that feeling from her mind. When Fanny does finally hear from Edmund she is distressed by his statement of wanting Mary as his wife, and how his loss of her would be as terrible as Henry Crawford's loss of Fanny. She is angered by his words, but immediately checks herself. The narrator explains, "Such sensations, however, were too near kin to resentment to be long guiding Fanny's soliloquies. She was soon more softened and sorrowful" (Austen 421). This indicates that Fanny has the capacity to reason through her thoughts and emotions to determine when something is breaching the borders of morality. Similar to when she starts to feel envious, the narrator states that it was near envy and near resentment, but not quite. Fanny knows how to regulate what she is feeling, and is able to stop herself from having a negative emotion.

Fanny's Philosophical Observations

Fanny's observations influence her to make rational and imaginative philosophical statements. For example, there is a scene where Fanny and Edmund are looking out the window at a cloudless night sky. Fanny makes a declaration about the beauty of the scene causing the heart to be lifted in delight. She goes on to exclaim, "When I look out on such a night as this, I feel as if there could be neither wickedness nor sorrow in the world; and there certainly would be less of

both if the sublimity of Nature were more attended to, and people were carried more out of themselves by contemplating such a scene” (Austen 112). There are many elements in Fanny’s statement, for it also includes nature as a guide to being sympathetic towards others. Also, this is a demonstration of Fanny’s knowledge of the philosophical and moral writers during Austen’s time. For example, Addison discusses how scenes of nature delight the imagination, and can disperse melancholy and sorrow. Therefore, Fanny is rationally processing the scene before her by including what she has learned from other writers, as well as engaging her imagination. Laura White gives an explanation that relates to Fanny’s rapturous statement: “The application of reason in the face of nature made God’s role plain, and divines spoke often of God’s beauty as it was revealed in the created universe everyone could perceive” (34). Fanny’s observation of nature is not just an emotional exclamation, for she is focused on nature itself and not on the feelings she is experiencing while looking at nature, which makes her statement more rational. Also, White’s statement is a reminder of Addison’s discussion on how God helps humans to raise an agreeable idea in their imaginations, so that humans gaze at God’s works with contentment. Thus, Fanny’s declaration is reasonable and imaginative.

There is another scene that demonstrates Fanny’s imagination and rational thinking. While walking in Mrs Grant’s shrubbery with Mary Crawford, Fanny makes a deep observation about the appearance of the shrubbery, and how in three years they may forget about what it once looked like. This influences Fanny to make a philosophical statement on memory:

If any one faculty of our nature may be called *more* wonderful than the rest, I do think it is memory. There seems something more speakingly incomprehensible in the powers, the failures, the inequalities of memory, than in any other of our intelligences. The memory is sometimes so retentive, so serviceable, so obedient – at others, so bewildered and so weak – and at others again, so tyrannic, so beyond controul! – We are to be sure a miracle every way – but our powers of recollecting and of forgetting, do seem peculiarly past finding out. (Austen 205-06)

The obedience and service that Fanny is talking about may be a reference to reason, because memory can be of use to reason when it is correct. However, Fanny also recognizes how memory can fade and become incoherent. The word “recollecting” has been used in regards to Fanny throughout the novel, because she observes, and then recollects past scenarios, which means Fanny is using her memory rationally (Austen 206). As stated before, memory is an important aspect of the imagination. Addison emphasizes how memory helps the imagination store images of past objects, and can create scenarios based on those past memories. Another thing to note is Mary’s silence, because she is not philosophical like Fanny, so she does not care to respond to Fanny’s contemplation on memory. This is a demonstration of how Fanny’s reasonable and imaginative statements are sometimes ignored.

Another example is Fanny’s brief, but still observant statement to Henry Crawford while he is visiting her in Portsmouth. Fanny tells Henry, “We have all a better guide in ourselves, if we would attend to it, than any other person can be”

(Austen 408). Fanny is indicating that everyone has the capacity to properly apply reason, but only if people practice using it correctly. White makes an interesting comment by stating that Fanny's words are similar to those of English Anglican bishop Joseph Butler, who believed that "...moral obligation is an essential feature of the rational universe..." (35). White goes on to quote Butler, whose words are similar to Fanny's statement: "'Man hath the rule of right within; what is wanting is only that he honestly attend to it'" (qtd. in White 35). Fanny is a character who defends clergymen, and prays, so she may have read books by theologians. Therefore, she is indicating that reason directed by morals is the guide that helps a person make right decisions.

When Fanny hears the horrible news of Maria Rushworth's affair with Henry Crawford, she is completely shocked. The narrator explains the processing of her mind, as she concludes that this affair is true. Fanny's "perception of the horrible evil" becomes certain as she rationally goes through all the facts (Austen 36). The narrator explains that the affair is "...too gross a complication of evil, for human nature, not in a state of utter barbarism, to be capable of! – yet, her judgement told her it was so" (Austen 437). In this case, Fanny's imagination cannot even fathom this horrible sin, but by rationally processing the situation, reflecting on facts (including Mary's letter), and recalling observations, Fanny reasonably concludes that this affair is true. Fanny's imagination is moral, which is why she finds it difficult to imagine something so evil. This again is related to Addison's discussion, because he states that a "polite imagination" will think of good things, while a corrupt imagination will think of evil and vulgar things

(231). Fanny's observations of the conduct of Henry and Maria are evidence enough for this affair to have been possible. Furthermore, when Fanny returns to Mansfield Park, the narrator explains that she "could reasonably combine" the explanation given to her by Lady Bertram, the details in the letters from Sir Thomas, and what she already knew within herself to reach an understanding of the affair (Austen 446). Thus, Fanny is capable of processing information that is given to her to reach a reasonable conclusion.

Fanny's Use of Reason and Imagination by Properly Applying Books

Fanny is similar to Catherine Morland and Marianne Dashwood in regards to reading, because all three heroines take pleasure in reading. There are numerous times in *Mansfield Park* where the narrator mentions that Fanny reads, times when she is reading, and times when she applies what she has read to her life. Furthermore, Fanny is a heroine who reads various types of writings: history, plays, biographies, novels, poetry and essays. Fanny even admires the same poet as Marianne: William Cowper. Edmund is the one who discovers that Fanny has a "fondness for reading," and encourages her to read so that she can improve her judgement and taste (Austen 21). Furthermore, "...he made reading useful by talking to her of what she read, and heightened its attraction by judicious praise" (Austen 22). Therefore, Fanny is different because she imaginatively and reasonably applies what she has read onto her life.

One evening, while eating in the dining-parlour, Maria's intended Mr. Rushworth explains how he wants to improve his large estate Sotherton Court. Mr. Rushworth mentions how he believes the avenue of old trees at Sotherton

should be cut down, with the only reason being it will open up the view of the house. Upon hearing this, Fanny turns to Edmund and declares, “Cut down an avenue! What a pity! Does not it make you think of Cowper. ‘Ye fallen avenues, once more I mourn your fate unmerited’” (Austen 56). Cowper’s use of the word “unmerited” indicates that the avenues have no reason for being cut down. In this way, Fanny is rationally applying Cowper to Sotherton, because Mr. Rushworth does not give a grounded reason as to why the avenue at Sotherton should be cut down. It appears that Mr. Rushworth wants to chop down the avenue for the sake of “improvement” or change. Fanny clearly does not believe the avenue should be cut down, and mourns the “old state” of Sotherton (Austen 56). This is also a demonstration of Fanny’s sympathetic imagination, which is similar to Cowper’s, for they both mourn when nature is destroyed unwarranted. Fanny is not just being sentimental in regards to nature, but reasonably understands the frivolousness of cutting down trees for no reason.

Tom Bertram’s friend John Yates talks of nothing but the theater when he comes to visit, resulting in the enthusiasm of the young people putting on a play. There is much disagreement on what play should be performed, and eventually the play *Lovers’ Vows* is chosen. Fanny, who does not want to participate in the play, decides to read *Lovers’ Vows* so that she knows what the play is about. The narrator states that Fanny is astonished by the impropriety of the play being performed in a private home. The narrator then explains reasons as to why Fanny thinks it is inappropriate: “Agatha and Amelia appeared to her in their different ways so totally improper for home representation – the situation of one, and the

language of the other, so unfit to be expressed by any woman of modesty...” (Austen 136). Fanny is correct in her view of the play, because it has shocking elements such as seduction and a child out of wedlock. She is being reasonable in regards to the play not being appropriate for a private home, and to be performed by young men and women who are not married to one another. Gary Kelly agrees by stating, “To speak one’s love was to undertake to accept ethical consequences of such verbal action; to do otherwise, to speak love while not intending to accept the consequences, or to speak love that was not felt, was coquetry or mere seduction and did lead, often, to social banishment” (137). Fanny understands this idea of “consequences.” Fanny had previously observed the flirtatious natures of Henry and Mary Crawford, and thus views the play as a way for Henry to flirt with Maria who is betrothed to Mr. Rushworth. Therefore, she is able to imagine what consequences may occur if they practice and perform this play. She also imagines what Sir Thomas would think if he was there, and knows that he would disapprove. Thus, Fanny’s reasonable judgement is correct, for this play should not be performed by the young adults.

Fanny has a similar view of Edmund that Catherine has towards Henry Tilney, and that Marianne has towards Mr. Willoughby. While sitting with Mary Crawford, Fanny perceives Edmund approaching with Mary’s sister, Mrs Grant. Mary calls Edmund “Mr. Bertram”, which Fanny declares sounds cold, for it is without any character or warmth (Austen 208). Fanny then proceeds to say, “But there is nobleness in the name of Edmund. It is a name of heroism and renown – of kings, princes, and knights; and seems to breathe the spirit of chivalry and

warm affections” (Austen 208). Catherine and Marianne refer to Henry Tilney and Willoughby as heroes, but Fanny extends the metaphor by comparing Edmund to “kings, princes, and knights” (Austen 208). There is no particular book that Fanny is referring to, but she is referencing the general idea of nobleness and chivalry found in medieval literature. Fanny’s opinion is a reflection of her sensibility, and excellent judgement of character by making this comment based on the observations she has made on Edmund’s character. The narrator continuously describes Edmund as demonstrating “kindness” (Austen 17), and numerous times Edmund demonstrates chivalry by standing up for Fanny against the cruel comments of their family members. This scene also reflects Fanny’s imagination, because she is able to picture Edmund as a hero based on his character. Therefore, Fanny’s comment about him has foundations for being reasonable. Thus, Fanny correctly applies the idea of heroism and chivalry to her life in regards to Edmund’s character.

Fanny demonstrates her understanding of various types of writing by applying Dr. Samuel Johnson to her life. After Henry Crawford’s proposal, and Fanny’s refusal, Sir Thomas believes that Fanny should visit her family in Portsmouth, so that she will perhaps miss Henry as well as Mansfield Park. Fanny soon realizes that her past home in Portsmouth is not what she expected it to be. The Price family is uncivilized, disordered and loud, and her parents pay her very little attention. Thus Fanny makes this reflection:

In a review of the two houses, as they appeared to her before the end of the week, Fanny was tempted to apply them to Dr Johnson’s celebrated

judgement as to matrimony and celibacy, and say, that though Mansfield Park, might have some pains, Portsmouth could have no pleasures.

(Austen 388)

Fanny's metaphor is reasonably imaginative, for even though marriage/celibacy is different in comparison to talking about houses, the content of "pains" and "pleasures" works in both cases. Fanny rationally reflects on the two homes, and comes up with an imaginative comparison by quoting Johnson.

Fanny applies Cowper to her life a second time, when she is longing to return to Mansfield Park. The narrator states that, "Her eagerness, her impatience, her longings to be with them, were such as to bring a line or two of Cowper's *Tirocinium* for ever before her. 'With what intense desire she wants her home,' was continually on her tongue..." (Austen 427). Fanny previously longed to return to Mansfield Park, because she realized that Portsmouth was not what she expected. However, her reason for wanting to return to Mansfield Park even more is because of Tom's illness. It is reasonable for Fanny to think of Mansfield Park as her home, because that is where she has lived for the last few years of her life. Her use of Cowper is even more reasonable when the narrator states that her aunt Lady Bertram calls Mansfield Park Fanny's home, and she longs for Fanny's return. Fanny even imagines herself back at Mansfield Park giving comfort to Lady Bertram. Thus Fanny is again applying Cowper properly to her life.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Fanny is a heroine that many critics and readers like to critique for being priggish, inactive, boring and self-righteous.³ However, Fanny's capacity to always apply morals to her imagination and reason is what makes her an excellent heroine. She struggles with thoughts of jealousy, she is continuously verbally abused, and often times when she does speak, other characters take little notice of the philosophical comments she makes. Fanny is a heroine who understands how to properly apply her imagination and reason, which makes her a character that readers should strive to be like. Her capacity to understand the workings of the imagination is deep. Fanny's silent observations heighten her reason. The ability to control her emotions with reason is admirable. Her philosophical statements are insightful. Applying books correctly to her life is inspirational. Fanny's imagination and reason accomplishes this by the guidance of morals. The novel ends with the narrator stating that Edmund previously recognized "Fanny's mental superiority," but that "She was of course only too good for him" (Austen 467). Readers should be applauding Fanny's consistency, and celebrating the fact that Edmund finally recognizes that she is the woman he truly loves.

3. Gary Kelly comments that Fanny is another "...conventional Sentimental heroine, always acted upon, never acting for herself" (131). He does admit that she tries to speak up, but is silenced by others, which is sometimes true.

Conclusion

Jane Austen understands the importance of balancing the imagination and reason as reflected in her novels *Northanger Abbey*, *Sense and Sensibility* and *Mansfield Park*. She views the imagination and reason as crucial aspects of the mind which is why these two faculties need to be guided properly. In *Northanger Abbey*, the minor characters John and Isabella Thorpe are examples of characters who do not use their imaginations and reason well. John does not want to improve his imagination by reading novels, and uses his reason to make false assumptions about Catherine. Isabella does not have a sympathetic imagination for she only cares about her own feelings and desires with little regard for anyone else. The Thorpe siblings are demonstrated in comparison to Catherine to show how they are not willing to improve their imaginations and reason, while Catherine demonstrates the willingness to change. Catherine allows her imagination to be controlled by Gothic novels, and uses her reason to make false assumptions about General Tilney. The differences between Catherine and the Thorpe siblings are her demonstrations of correctly using her reason, and her moral sense. The other key difference is Catherine's humbling experience where she realizes that she has been wrong, which leads her to affirm that she will always act properly in the future.

Similarly, Marianne Dashwood in *Sense and Sensibility* goes through a humbling experience. Marianne was focused on her own situation which caused

her to not have a sympathetic imagination. Also, she allowed her imagination to be controlled by the books she has read, as well as the desires of her will. Yet, there are moments when Marianne does use her imagination and reason properly, which, like Catherine's, demonstrate her capacity to improve. Finally, Marianne has redemption because she realizes her conduct has been wrong, and declares that she wants to act properly in the future. Elinor Dashwood is an example of a character who balances her imagination and reason, by being sympathetic and by regulating her emotions. Elinor does not experience a humbling situation, because she has been using her imagination and reason correctly.

Fanny Price in *Mansfield Park* is similar to Elinor, because she also demonstrates a balance of the imagination and reason. Fanny has a sympathetic imagination, and an excellent understanding of the imagination. Her reason is guided by observations, and regulates her emotions. Finally, Fanny uses her imagination and reason to properly apply books, and to make philosophical statements. Like Elinor, Fanny does not experience a humbling situation, because throughout the novel she has used her imagination and reason properly.

To understand where Austen's views of the imagination and reason are coming from, it is important to read her predecessors and writers who influenced her. Dr. Samuel Johnson is an example of a writer who favoured reason above the imagination, and viewed the imagination with a suspicious eye. Furthermore, Johnson views madness as the result of someone lacking in reason. The philosopher David Hume believes that the imagination could be elevated by perceiving objects that are sublime, meaning good and beautiful. The philosopher

Adam Smith views the imagination as connected to the moral world. For Smith, sympathy is an important aspect of the imagination, because it allows humans to imagine what other people are going through. The theologian Thomas Sherlock was a writer who Austen enjoyed reading. He argues that human reason cannot always comprehend occurrences that happen in the world. The poet William Cowper also believes in the importance of having a sympathetic imagination. In contrast, the poet Sir Walter Scott is more critical of the imagination, while emphasizing the importance of reason. Like Johnson, Scott views madness as a result of a lack in reason, which results in the passions being uncontrolled.

An important aspect that many of the writers listed above believe in is virtue. The writers Hume, Smith and Cowper all agree that morals are an important aspect in regards to the imagination. For an imagination to be good, it must be regulated by morals, such as sympathy. Sherlock emphasizes that virtue is the most important aspect of the mind, which indicates that the imagination and reason both need to be guided by morals. Johnson emphasizes that when reason is controlled by the emotions instead of morals, then chaos ensues. Similarly, Scott views uncontrolled passions as potentially leading a person into sin. The topic of morals is important in regards to the imagination and reason, because similarly both must be guided by morals. The idea of morals is also important in regards to Austen's view, because she is not a complete rationalist who believes that reason is the most important. In her letter to Fanny Knight, Austen declares that her niece Fanny has a lively imagination and good judgment because of her religious principles. Without morals, both the imagination and reason can be corrupted.

Austen's novels are excellent examples of works that give insight into the imagination and reason. Through her characters, readers can learn how the imagination and reason should be applied, as well as warnings of how they can be misused. The imagination and reason are important faculties of human nature that should not be ignored. They need to be balanced, cultivated and guided properly in order for them to function properly. Vices, vanity, uncontrolled emotions and desires of the will should not guide either the imagination or reason. The crucial aspect that Austen emphasizes, as demonstrated in her heroines, is virtue. For humans to properly use their imagination and reason they need to have moral characters established. Humans can still make mistakes and misuse these two faculties, like Catherine and Marianne, but because of their moral foundations they were able to recognize their follies and change their conducts. As an Anglican Christian, Austen further emphasizes Christian morals as being the most important foundation for guiding the imagination and reason as stated in her letter to Fanny Knight, and reflected in Marianne's character after her humbling experience. Thus, by reading Austen's novels, readers are given an understanding of the imagination and reason should be balanced through the application of morals.

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