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BAKALÁŘSKÁ PRÁCE

Jane Austen's "Villains"

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Prohlašuji, že jsem tuto bakalářskou práci vypracovala samostatně pouze s využitím uvedených pramenů a literatury.

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## Anotace

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# 1 Introduction

Jane Austen is one of the most known writers, praised not only by critics but also by the readers. Although she did not write many novels, they are known and loved all around the world. What helps to continue her popularity are, without a doubt, various TV adaptations of her novels, which are adored by many generations of people and help her name and her books to be remembered.

Society of the Regency Era is typical of many social norms and rules which are also portrayed in Jane Austen's novels. She created a mirror of these norms thanks to her characters. Many of them go against the period's proper behaviour, which is why they represent an essential part of Jane Austen's novels. These are also the characters that are analysed in this thesis. Her villains are very complex, possessing various bad traits and intentions they try to reach at any cost. One could argue who is a real villain and who is not. Therefore, this thesis focuses on Jane Austen's "Villains", which is not only on the genuinely mean characters but also those whose hostile actions have certain reasonings.

Chapter number two of this thesis briefly covers the life of Jane Austen and her novels, and it also defines the meaning behind the word "villains". The third chapter focuses on the history of the Regency Era and the relations of the United Kingdom with other countries. Then, the fourth chapter's main focus is to provide information of the social life of Jane Austen's England. Specifically, it focuses on the relations and manners, education, and free time. The next chapter, number five, deals with Jane Austen's Villains, it provides the analysis of the male and female characters, and the reasons for their conduct. Chapter number six compares the villains, looking for similarities and differences in their actions. The final two chapters are conclusion and bibliography.

Therefore, this thesis aims to provide an overview of the Regency Era, in which Jane Austen wrote her books and which highly influenced her novels and characters. The thesis also aims to analyse the male and female characters that are considered mean and unpleasant, and it additionally tries to provide the background and sometimes even justification of their actions. Finally, the thesis compares the male and the female characters, and it looks into similarities in their intentions and behavioural traits.



## 2 Jane Austen and Her Novels

Jane Austen is one of the most famous writers even today. She was born on the 16th of December 1775 in Steventon into a big family. Jane had seven siblings, six brothers and one sister, and she was the second youngest of them all (Williams, 2012, p. 4).

Jane saw writing as her own amusement and read her stories out loud for her family as well. In general, she received great support from her family members. For instance, her sister Cassandra took care of the house chores so that Jane could fully commit her time to her novels. She started writing *Juvenilia* when she was only eleven years old. In 1790, she wrote the novel *Love and Friendship*, and in 1794, *Lady Susan*. However, the significant novels were written after these two. The first novel by Austen that was published was *Sense and Sensibility* in 1811, but all the novels published in her lifetime were not under her name, she decided to issue them anonymously. It was not until *Persuasion* and *Northanger Abbey* were released after Jane's death that the name Jane Austen appeared on the cover of the novels (Williams, 2012, p. 30, 31).

Jane Austen was a great author who gave readers insight into the typical lives of the gentry, as well as their hobbies, relationships, people's characters, and everyday problems (Herbert, 1991, p. 205). We are told about the income of certain characters, their occupation, the width of their estate, and all the things that accompany these. Her novels are romantic; however, she successfully implemented aspects of realism, which may be one of many reasons why her books obtained such immense fame and recognition. Jane Austen liked life in the countryside, which is an aspect profiled in her books as well (Herbert, 1991, p. 196).

She was also an extraordinary writer because of how well she described everything mentioned above. She was also able to capture powerful female heroines in a way that probably no man would be able to do, and she also provided the readers with information on how these heroines picked the right partners for themselves and all the obstacles in between. On their journey to do so, we, the readers, come across villains, characters that try to mislead or harm the heroines, and characters who behave dishonestly towards others, too, not only the main female characters. However, all the heroines eventually overcome all these villains and get their happy ending.

If we look at Austen's books this way, we might realise that her books were not typical romantic novels as we understand them now, as has been already mentioned; her books are very complex, full of a considerable number of various characters, good or bad, who are

extremely important for the book's plot, as well as for the trajectory of human relations in the novels. That is why the "bad" characters, are the main topic of this thesis. Although some of them may seem evil in the readers' eyes, the characters might have a reason for acting the way they do.

While some of Austen's characters appear to be malicious, and they create distress to others, they are not typical villains. In addition, some of her mean characters cannot even be considered villainous, they are rather unpleasant. None of these characters are demonically evil, like villains in other authors' books. Therefore, it would not be accurate to categorise Austen's characters alongside the real villainous ones that might appear elsewhere. That is why the title of the thesis uses the term "villains" to refer to Austen's unlikable characters, to clear and specify the real meaning behind the title and the topic of the thesis. However, in the rest of this work, the malicious characters are referred to as villains, without the inverted commas, because they are still the worst characters present in the Jane Austen's books.

### 3 History of the Regency Era

The life of one of the most famous writers today, Jane Austen, was sadly not very long. However, she got to live in a very renowned and fascinating period that British history can offer – the Regency era. This era began in 1811, and its end is dated to the year 1820 (Le Faye, 2002, p. 41). Austen did not really include historical events in her books; however, it is essential to know at least some of the major ones of this exciting era of Regency England. In addition, Jane Austen mentioned characters joining the navy and other professions of this kind, so it was undoubtedly a part of her life, as well as of the lives of her characters, although maybe not directly.

King George III had been ruling when Jane Austen was born. He had been on the throne since 1760, and three years after, in 1763, he negotiated an important truce with France after their previous battles (McDowall, 1989, p. 109). His primary focus leaned toward the British realm rather than Germany, which made him the inaugural monarch of the Hanoverian lineage to have this mindset. (Le Faye, 2002, p. 40). The countryside during the years of George III being on the throne was different than it is nowadays; the colour green was dominant, and the land was, in general, prettier (Le Faye, 2002, p. 52).

Sadly, the King suffered from porphyria, a metabolic disorder which is a cause of both physical and mental problems. The first time a Regency was ever mentioned was because of a King's major attack in 1788 (Le Faye, 2002, p. 41). He was unable to handle any matters that were required of him. The Prince of Wales was offered the Regency, and he accepted this offer. However, the King's condition improved; therefore, all the Regency plans were dismissed (Rendell, Sutcliffe, 2015, p. 14). Moving forward to 1811, it was very clear that the King would not live much longer. His health condition was bad, and in addition, his daughter died, which brought the King great grief, and his well-being worsened. Finally, George-Augustus-Frederick, Prince of Wales, got the role of the Prince Regent in February 1811. The previous King, George III, spent the following nine years without vision and hearing, and he eventually died in 1820 (Le Faye, 2002, p. 41). This is where the Regency proper came to an end, and Prince Regent officially became King George IV (Rendell, Sutcliffe, 2015, p. 10).

The new King lived a life full of spending money on expensive clothes, women, and properties. He was known to be careless, and he drank a lot as well. (Le Faye, 2002, p. 44). On the other hand, King George IV brought a new sense of life; he was more active than the previous king (Rendell, Sutcliffe, 2015, p. 6). The King also got illegally married to an older

lady who did not have any title; she was a widow and, in addition, a Roman Catholic; therefore, this marriage never got recognised. The King then proceeded to marry Princess Caroline of Brunswick, and after having a daughter with her, they no longer formed a couple (Le Faye, 2002, p. 44). What is more, the King wanted to end the marriage, and after the coronation, Caroline suddenly died only a few weeks later. There was never any explanation of the cause of her death (Rendell, Sutcliffe, 2015, p. 6).

### **3.1 Foreign Events**

The majority of the eighteenth century in Europe was dedicated to fighting for territory and expanding trade (Le Faye, 2002, p. 45). British colonies were also an essential part of the British economy because things produced in Britain were sold there up until the twentieth century (McDowall, 1989, p. 109). In addition, Britain had been fighting France and Spain for many years throughout the eighteenth century. A big part of the eastern side of Northern America belonged to Britain, but many other parts were passed between the Spanish, Dutch, and French. Furthermore, many disagreements occurred on the Americans' side until the War of Independence took place in 1773. Soon after, in 1776, the Americans came up with the Declaration of Independence (Le Faye, 2002, p. 45). They also received help from the French, Dutch, and Spanish (they offered them troops and ships), which led to the surrender of Britain in Virginia in 1781. Finally, in Versailles in 1783, a peace treaty was accepted, and the Americans gained their independence (Le Faye, 2002, p. 46).

However, the combats did not end yet, and Britain was in danger again. The French Revolution represented ten long years of turmoil, and all of Europe was in fear. Because of this, radical leaders in Britain were put in jail, and the government was scared that any bad ideas concerning violence would reach the army as well (McDowall, 1989, p. 128). In January 1793, Louis XVI was executed; and the same fate met also his wife Marie Antoinette. (Le Faye, 2002, p. 47). The newly formed French Republic initiated a war against Britain very soon after these tragic events. Many battles occurred in the next two decades, and every nation in Europe fought in those. However, the onset of the new century came with at least some relief; the Revolutionary Wars ended, and there was a short break from these conflicts (Le Faye, 2002, p. 48).

In 1799, Napoleon Bonaparte became the First Consul of France, because he had got the power over the government. Although Britain was assured of peace from the side of France, this promise was broken in 1803 when Napoleon declared another war. These

conflicts eventually ended in 1814 because Napoleon had to abdicate (Le Faye, 2002, p. 48). However, later on, he managed to escape Elba, where he was supposed to be exiled, and created an army in France again (Rendell, Sutcliffe, 2015, p. 24). He was defeated for good at Waterloo in 1815 (McDowall, 1989, p. 129). In addition, after the battle at Waterloo, another exile was awaiting him, this time on St. Helena (Rendell, Sutcliffe, 2015, p. 24).

## 4 Social life in the Regency era

Social hierarchy played a distinct role in the Regency era. Generally, three main groups could be observed within the society – “the great, the rich, and the middle class” (La Faye, 2002, p. 73). People belonging to the middle class were also divided into professional classes (doctors, sailors, etc.), and on lower rank belonged farmers and tradesmen. Jane Austen belonged to the landed gentry, people who owned small estates and did not work, and typically wrote books about people of this specific class (La Faye, 2002, p. 73). In general, for people of higher social standings, it was very important to be seen and associated with people of the same rank. It was not a good look to be connected to people who were on the lower side of society; hence, people tried to surround themselves with their equals (Rendell, Sutcliffe, 2015, p. 31).

### 4.1 Relations and Manners

If there were more sons in the family, the oldest one would inherit the property of his father. The inheritance of the mother’s side would then, in some cases, be passed on to the second oldest son. The rest of the sons had to earn money on their own. They would usually join the Army, the Navy, or the church (Le Faye, 2002, p. 73-74).

In addition, marriages were also, for the most part, arranged with the vision of big fortune. Marrying for love was not very common; children were supposed to do as their parents wished (and that was not only in this matter). Of course, particularly, the eldest son was expected to get married and have an heir of his own. Young women of higher classes needed a husband since there was no way they could get a job and secure their own money (Rendell, Sutcliffe, 2015, p. 33). After marriage, the women usually had their first baby during the initial year of the elopement, and the following babies approximately every seventeen months (Le Faye, 2002, p. 116).

Another essential thing in this period was the usage of proper manners. The right introduction represents a very meaningful part of people’s relations (Knowles, 2020). It was expected that two strangers would have to be introduced by another person, usually an acquaintance, to be able to talk to each other (Richardson, 2021). Until such a formal introduction took place, the two individuals ignored each other. It was common for a person from a lower class to be introduced to a person of a higher class, and a gentleman would be introduced to a lady (Knowles, 2020). An example is an introduction from *Pride and Prejudice*, in which Mr Collins wants to introduce himself to Mr Darcy, which is considered

bad manners. Moreover, proper physical gestures were also meaningful. Bows, nods, and curtsies were probably the most used. What is more, handshakes were a sign of familiarity, even intimacy, so men and women typically did not shake hands (Dodge, 2017). For example, Willoughby declines a handshake with Marianne, showing rejection and negative feelings towards her. According to Jennings (2012, p. 210), people from lower classes of society were not always following these manners because there was no one to be concerned about their behaviour and such actions.

Moreover, if a couple wanted to go on a date, there was always a chaperone involved, because it was highly inappropriate to be alone. In addition, couples could not use the first name of the other person, and could not give each other gifts (Allingham, no date). Again, in *Sense and Sensibility*, Marianne gives Willoughby a lock of her hair, which is a very improper behaviour.

What is more, ladies were expected to avoid any situation that could lead to their bad reputation (Richardson, 2021). An example of this is the relationship of Mr Wickham and Lydia from *Pride and Prejudice*. It was a tragedy for her to run away with him, and her whole family would definitely suffer from this act as well if it were not solved with a marriage. However, Wickham would face no consequence, which was typical at that time. Generally, it was very common for a man to marry when older and, before that, travel and gain sexual experiences. Of course, the women they had intimate relationships with were usually of lower class since women in these classes were not that supervised by society, and their wives were then of higher social standing; the standards differed in this aspect. A typical double standard was that it was okay for men to seek prostitutes, but women's reputations could be ruined if they only dared to speak to another man and be alone together with a man who was not their husband. Women were allowed to live more freely only after getting married and having a son since their "duty" of giving the husband his heir was fulfilled, but their lives would never be as free as men's lives (Richardson, 2021).

In addition, women's day was supposed to be spent doing essentially unimportant things, such as sewing, singing or reading – broadly speaking, they committed their time to domestic responsibilities and hobbies. Overall, it might be said that women were seen as inferior to men, compliant, and obedient. Make-up could not be used by women, and their clothes had to cover their skin since they were perceived as their husbands' belongings (Badinjki, 2019, p. 43). Speaking of clothing, the women had to be dressed in a certain way too. They also received an allowance for their expenses on dresses, shoes, and such things by

men, meaning by their fathers or by their husbands (Dodge, “Pin Money and Private Expenses”, 2021). It is more than clear that a woman from a family of wealth could look for a better marriage than a woman from a poorer family. The fathers were the ones to decide the amount of money the daughters could offer to the marriage for a marriage settlement. This allowed the women to have some money for themselves. Hence, the more the ladies brought to the marriage, the bigger their allowance was, but it could also happen that they would receive no money for spending from their husbands at all (Dodge, “Money Matters”, 2021). Money and wealth, in general, are some of the most common reasons for the misbehaviour of the villains covered in this thesis. Therefore, it is essential to mention their importance.

## 4.2 Education

Typically, education was very different in terms of gender. Boys’ education was much more extensive than girls’ education. Small boys who were supposed to pursue careers suitable for gentlemen were taught reading, writing, and basic arithmetic. The classes were provided by a governess, but parents were common tutors as well. In some cases, boys were sent to preparatory, public, and university (Le Faye, 2002, p. 81). Focusing on universities, sons of wealthy families were expected to go to Cambridge or Oxford. However, they often needed more diligence and were not considered very good students. It was very common for such young men to attend university only with the aim of drinking, gambling, and engaging with prostitutes, which was a thing that was not a secret during this time. Men, in general, were not looked at badly for such actions, no matter their age. On the other hand, universities were not full of such undiligent students; scholarships were also available for smart boys from lower-class families, who were grateful for such opportunities and worked hard to have good results (Jennings, 2012, p. 185). However, education was still relatively narrow compared to today's (Le Faye, 2002, p. 81).

Girls usually received education at home; again, parents and a governess were common tutors. However, unlike for the boys, the most important things to learn were needlework and nice handwriting (Le Faye, 2002, p. 87). The importance of neat handwriting is often mentioned in Jane Austen’s books, too. The ability to sing and play the piano was also quite a significant need for girls, as well as painting and reciting (Le Faye, 2002, p. 87). The significance of a musical talent is clear in *Pride and Prejudice*, where one of the female villains, Lady Catherine, shames Elizabeth for not practising properly in the chapter 31. On the other hand, arithmetic was not considered of immense importance for girls; the curriculum for it was, hence, pretty simple (Le Faye, 2002, p. 87). In addition, young girls were very



naive (which is another theme of Jane Austen's books), and usually, there was no sex education provided for them. The only way for them to learn about such things was from an older sister if they had any. Only after getting engaged were mothers willing to enlighten their daughters on this specific topic; however, it was primarily so that the daughter gets pregnant as fast as possible (Richardson, 2021).

### **4.3 Free Time**

As we learn through Jane Austen's novels, the landed gentry families often hosted or visited balls. The families had much free time for such activities thanks to the servants, who did all the necessary work at home. Such dance events could consist of a smaller party of people, dancing in someone's house, or there could be much grander balls with a considerable number of people in a big hall, perhaps even with an orchestra playing for the visitors (Jennings, 2012, p. 204). Moreover, the balls were private or public and represented an important and respectable event, especially for meeting a possible partner (Le Faye, 2002, p. 103). Balls represented a great opportunity for young people to get to know each other quite a lot since the loud music and shared dances provided a good chance to spend some alone time because it was not common for a non-married couple of people of the opposite sex to be seen alone in public together (Jennings, 2012, p. 211), as it has been already mentioned. The dances are another big theme of Jane Austen's books; in each one, we find countless chapters where the families visit such events, meet new people, and create new relationships.

In addition, theatres also had an essential role in social life, as well as whist clubs (for gentlemen), and what also cannot be forgotten, are cards, billiards, hunting (Le Faye, 2002, p. 105, 106), and many other games, which were played not only by men but sometimes also by ladies. In Jane Austen's books, it is also often mentioned that ladies typically spent their free time reading, painting, playing an instrument, engaging with acquaintances, or taking walks. What cannot be omitted is travelling to visit family members or friends, which could take up much time and energy, depending on the means of transport (which were horses and carriages or people could travel by foot) and the distance to the final destination of one's travel (Jennings, 2012, p. 212). Therefore, it is no surprise that characters in Jane Austen's novels spend a lot of their time travelling and visiting various people as well.

## 5 Villains

This chapter focuses on Jane Austen's villains from the novels *Pride and Prejudice*, *Sense and Sensibility*, *Emma*, *Northanger Abbey*, *Persuasion*, and *Mansfield Park*. In Jane Austen's books, villains are characters that are foils to the good characters. Therefore, in her books, there are usually malicious male characters who unsuccessfully try to find a way into the heroines' hearts, and they are in contrast with the true gentlemen, who are able to make the heroines fall in love with them in the end. However, there are also female characters worth mentioning in this chapter, who are far from being good people, and who often inconvenience the lives of others.

As it was mentioned in the second chapter, this thesis does not focus only on the truly malicious characters, who are clearly making problems or hurting others, but also on those who may not be initially perceived as bad but are actually very harmful, too. Similarly, it is also expected that some characters and their behaviour may be justified when analysed why they behave the way they do.

### 5.1 Male Villains

This subchapter analyses male villains from the six novels by Jane Austen. She often used similar patterns of the characters' behaviour, which will be covered later in the thesis. In this part, the villains themselves will be introduced, as well as the reasons behind their contentious behaviour.

#### 5.1.1 Mr Wickham

This subchapter starts with perhaps the most disliked character of *Pride and Prejudice*, Mr George Wickham, who is a soldier. He is the type of man who is easily believed and liked by others. He is good-looking and very charming, which probably makes him feel entitled to do whatever he desires, and many people mindlessly fall for his charms, making it easier for him to get away with many things.

Mr Wickham has a significant advantage, and that is being a part of the militia. In Jane Austen's books, these men seem to be perceived as excellent and trustworthy. Many young ladies, including Lydia and Kitty, run after the soldiers many hours a day because they adore them. Wickham himself is probably very aware of these facts and tries to make the best of it. However, who knows who would believe Wickham if he had other employment in the first place?

One of the most prominent roles in some of his actions is his hatred towards Mr Darcy because of the heritage of Mr Darcy's father. Mr Darcy's father was very good to Wickham; he supported him financially and in education. Mr Wickham then claims that Mr Darcy denied him a rightful inheritance of Mr Darcy's father. In chapter 16, Mr Wickham tells Elizabeth: "He (late Mr Darcy) meant to provide for me amply, and thought he had done it, but when the living fell, it was given elsewhere." (Austen, 2020, p. 58), fuelling Elizabeth's dislike towards Mr Darcy even more. Mr Wickham tries to make Mr Darcy look bad and ruin his social reputation. What fuels his allegations is the fact that Mr Darcy obviously holds a grudge against Mr Wickham, too. However, it is not until later in the story that we discover his reason. Lying and deceiving people are prominent characteristics of his, apart from his already-mentioned pretty face.

Everyone adores Mr Wickham until the breaking point of his story – he runs away with Elizabeth's younger sister, Lydia. Now, in today's society, things would maybe be handled differently, and there would not be a big commotion around this situation. However, it is essential to realise that this was the Regency Era, and the theoretical part of this thesis shows that such action is considered very scandalous. Not only is Lydia the main topic of every conversation, but so is her family. Wickham is so immoral that he does not care about either of these. He puts Lydia and the rest of her family at risk of being secluded and badly perceived by society. Undoubtedly, Wickham knows that marrying this young lady would give him some money since his financial situation is awful. One would argue that he might not even be fond of Lydia and that money may be the only thing that draws him to her. Moreover, Wickham does not even plan to marry Lydia, it is only thanks to Mr Darcy who pays Wickham off, so that he elopes with her. Therefore, not only does Mr Wickham put Lydia in the danger of being on the edge of society, but he is reckless enough to put her whole family in such risk as well.

What is more, Mr Darcy reveals to Elizabeth that Mr Wickham has already tried a similar tactic with Mr Darcy's younger sister, Georgiana. He knew that a fortune would come his way if he married this young girl, and if Darcy did not intervene, the elopement would probably happen in the end.

Finally, after all the horrible events that Mr Wickham has been part of and the information that has submerged about him, people see his true personality and that he, in fact, is just a good manipulator. This is extensively shown in the book, in a conversation between Elizabeth and her aunt after his and Lydia's escape, where Elizabeth says: "That he (Mr

Wickham) has neither integrity nor honour. That he is as false and deceitful as he is insinuating.” (Austen, 2020, p. 198). Mr Wickham is done with lying since everyone finally sees his true self and his malicious intentions.

To sum up, there are many layers in Mr Wickham’s personality. He is good at manipulating people and looking trustworthy, which brings many problems inside the ordinary lives of the Bennet family, as well as other people, like Mr Darcy, whom he tries to bring down. All this considered, he is the only true villain in this novel.

### **5.1.2 Mr Bennet**

Mr Bennet is the father of Elizabeth, the heroine in *Pride and Prejudice*. He is a man of humour, sarcasm, and intelligence, but he has some personality traits that may be considered as very inadequate and bad.

He lives in a household full of women – his five and his five daughters- who sometimes can make his life difficult. He tries to cope with this by distancing himself from them and being in his library most of the time. Mr Bennet’s favourite daughter is Elizabeth, with whom he shares humour and intelligence. It also seems as if he contributed to hers and his first daughter Jane’s education, but he did not participate in his younger daughter’s education, ; later claiming they are not intelligent all the time. He loves his family; however, he never ensures that his daughters have a bright and secure future ahead of them.

Throughout the book, he does not seem a wrong person. Nevertheless, it is shown later in the book that Mr Bennet is essentially an incompetent father. Although he cares about the people around him, he cannot act in their favour. He constantly mocks Mrs Bennet because she tries to find a husband for their daughters, and he never helps her. This is a significant problem because, after his death, the rest of the family would have nothing since Mr Collins would inherit Mr Bennet’s possessions. What is worse, he knows this but chooses to do nothing about it, putting his daughters and wife at risk. In the books, it is stated that “but yet the son was to come, and Mrs. Bennet, for many years after Lydia’s birth, had been certain that he would” (Austen, 2014, p. 216.), which shows that the couple was waiting for a son who would take care of his siblings after their parents’ death. However, this son was never born and “it was then too late to be saving” (Austen, 2014, p. 216).

Moreover, when Lydia leaves with Mr Wickham, Mr Bennet is unable to do anything to solve this issue, and Mr Gardiner has to take his role, eventually, alongside already mentioned Mr Darcy’s money, saving the family’s reputation.

Overall, Mr Bennet is not explicitly malicious in his acts, but his laziness and irresponsibility put the well-being of his family in danger. Sometimes, love is not enough in order to secure a good life for a person's close ones, which is precisely the case here as well.

### **5.1.3 Mr Collins**

Mr Collins is a character in *Pride and Prejudice*. He is Elizabeth's cousin and is to inherit the estate of Mr Bennet since Mr Bennet has no son himself.

To begin with, Mr Collins is a young man who is simple, proud, and foolish; he is essentially considered a burden by the Bennet family. He also manages to embarrass himself on any occasion, making himself look even worse. Elizabeth describes him as: "a conceited, pompous, narrow-minded, silly man" (Austen, 2014, p. 97). Moreover, all he does is being impressed by his own ideas and actions, and he never fails to mention his patroness, Lady Catherine, in every conversation. He functions as her marionette in various occasions; it seems as if he does not have his own mind to decide for himself. In addition, he is a character who is easily impressed by social status, which is presumably why he is so devoted to Lady Catherine, who is a lady of high one. What is connected to this is also that Lady Catherine comes up with the suggestion that Mr Collins should find a wife. He immediately obeys – first in his mind is Jane, then Elizabeth, and finally Charlotte Lucas. This shows that he is not exactly interested in love; he does what is expected of him.

However, his character is vital for the unfolding of the story in the sense that his presence persuades the Bennet daughters to find a husband of fortune in order to be able to take care of their mother and potentially even their younger sisters.

Overall, Mr Collins does no actual harm to the rest of the characters, nor does he show any apparent villainous traits. The reason for his being mentioned in this thesis is because he essentially does make the life of the Bennet family more complicated, and he can also lack proper behaviour from time to time; an instance of this is when Lydia runs away, he states: "The death of your daughter would have been a blessing in comparison of this" (Austen, 2014, p. 208), which is clearly highly inappropriate, more so considering it is his own cousin as well.

### **5.1.4 Mr Willoughby**

Mr John Willoughby, the main villain in *Sense and Sensibility*, will be discussed in this subchapter. He is introduced as this hero who saves Marianne Dashwood after she falls and

hurts her ankle. He carries her back to her house, and since then, her whole family has perceived him as a unique and charming young man.

At first, he is not misbehaving. However, some signs in his actions hint that he may not be as great as everyone thinks. What is meant by this is that he makes terrible remarks towards Colonel Brandon, an older man falling in love with Marianne, which is inappropriate. Mr Willoughby has some negative feelings towards Colonel Brandon because of Brandon's ward, Eliza Williams and it also seems as if Mr Willoughby is somewhat jealous of Colonel Brandon; he is honourable, admirable, and brave, which Mr Willoughby lacks.

Furthermore, his behaviour, alongside Marianne, seems as if these two are engaged, judging by how they act around each other. Marianne even goes as far as giving Mr Willoughby a lock of her hair, which is very inappropriate, as it has been mentioned already. Colonel Brandon even points it out to Elizabeth: "Your sister's engagement to Mr Willoughby is very generally known." (Austen, 1992, p. 127). It is not until later, however, that it is revealed to the readers and Marianne's family that they are not engaged, which makes the situation entirely inappropriate. This thesis has already discussed that engagement was the starting point of a proper relationship and all the things connected to it, which this pair had no right to do in their situation, not being engaged. One might argue that this fact is not considered purely evil, but when it is added to his other actions, it shows that Willoughby is not a good man.

Willoughby's main malicious action is revealed later in the book. He runs away, not correctly explaining the reason for his departure. In addition, he does not maintain any communication with Marianne, except by giving her a brief letter before going away, and this is ultimately the end of their relationship. He leaves Marianne heartbroken and confused about the reason behind his sudden departure. This situation shocks her and her family, who thought they were engaged until now. This itself is an action worth getting the title evil and an action that may be enough to put Willoughby on the list of villains, but his wrongdoings do not end here.

While in London, Marianne meets Willoughby at a social event. Immediately after getting closer to him, she extends her hand for a handshake (a gesture explained earlier in the thesis). Still, Willoughby initially declines this gesture, clearly showing his coldness towards her. However, after Marianne's scream of: "Will you not shake hands with me?" (Austen, 1992, p. 130), Willoughby holds her hand, but "her touch seemed painful to him, and he held

her hand only for a moment.” (Austen, 1992, p. 130). Later, Willoughby sends Marianne a letter that states that his intentions were never connected to love towards her and that he is now engaged to Miss Grey.

Moreover, Colonel Brandon also tells Elinor, Marianne’s sister, that this is not the first time Willoughby has left a young lady alone. He had an affair with Brandon’s ward, Eliza, ending with her getting pregnant, then leaving her alone and destroying her and her child’s life. Now, we have to realise again that this is the Regency Era; a lady cannot just get pregnant when she is not married to a man. This is a massive scandal that Eliza has to endure for the rest of her life. This situation again displays Willoughby’s character; he seduces a parentless girl and then breaks off any possible contact with her. There is no excuse for this.

Although Willoughby leaves, it is somewhat understandable why someone might feel sorry for him. He marries Miss Grey only for one thing – money, which is something Marianne does not have, and that might be the biggest, maybe even the only reason for his decision to leave her. This seems like an awful thing to do, but it is essential to realise that money played a significant role in this period. Willoughby is in an appalling financial situation, and with the pressure of society, he does what he feels he needs to do: marry Miss Grey, who has excellent fortune. The pressure of having enough money got to him, and he gave up in the end, trying to preserve his good reputation as a man of fortune and a luxurious lifestyle. This is, ultimately, the only reason for his break-off from Marianne and his new marriage – Marianne and her family were not as wealthy as to fit Willoughby’s standards and needs.

Finally, although some of Mr Willoughby’s actions are not really excusable and are utterly wrong, the situation with money may leave the readers with a slight understanding of his decision to marry Miss Grey. In addition, this way, Marianne gets to marry Colonel Brandon, who shows his affection towards her throughout the whole novel. However, considering all the information mentioned, he is undoubtedly the biggest villain of *Sense and Sensibility*.

### **5.1.5 Mr Crawford**

Henry Crawford is a character in *Mansfield Park* and the only character to be classified as a villain in this book. Henry is a character that is initially portrayed as a fine man who would be a great match to any of the young ladies in the book. However, as the story progresses, his bad characteristics start to show.

Like most of Jane Austen's villains, Henry is very confident and knows how to use his charms to impress young ladies, although he is not handsome. He is known for being fond of flirting and trying to pursue romantic relationships that do not end in serious commitments and is "apt to gain hearts too easily" (Austen, 2011, p. 333). Furthermore, he lacks empathy and is easily swayed by his emotions and needs. As we have learned in this thesis, such actions are not considered proper.

The worst thing about his character is that he is a great manipulator. He makes ladies fall in love with him without him being really interested in them. Maria and Julia Bertram, the cousins of the heroine Fanny Price, are mesmerised by him. However, Henry cannot settle with just one woman; he must feel wanted. Furthermore, he decides to try to make Fanny fall in love with him to entertain himself and his sister, Mary. What he does not anticipate is that his plan fails, and he falls in love with her instead. But Fanny, being careful, does not believe that his feelings are genuine after all the things she has seen him do to other ladies. Perhaps, Henry does not realise that his reputation is possibly destroyed by all the attempts to make other ladies fall in love with him, ending in their being left alone. Henry sees himself as a man of power who has done nothing wrong and who deserves to love and be loved back by such a pure creature as Fanny.

What is more, after his failed attempt to seduce Fanny, he has an affair with Maria, who is now married. This affair leads to a great scandal, and Maria leaves her husband to run away with Henry. Due to this decision, Maria ruins hers and her family's reputation, but Henry faces no further consequence, simply because he is a man.

So, not only does Henry misbehave throughout the book, but he also puts a bad light on his and Maria's whole family because of his actions. Of course, Maria is also to blame, but Henry is so eager to seek a romantic relationship that he decides to do so with a married woman, which is typical of him.

To conclude, Henry Crawford may not seem evil to some readers, but he does so many bad things that hurt other people that he deserves a place in this chapter. Presumably, some of his characteristics may be the outcome of his upbringing, where he saw that his uncle and aunt had no love for one another, which may have altered his outlook on relationships.

#### **5.1.6 Mr Elliot**

Mr Elliot is a villain from the book *Persuasion*. He is another manipulative and greedy character who would do anything to reach his goals.



Mr Elliot is a cousin of the book's heroine, Anne, and the heir to Kellynch Hall, the estate of the Elliots. He comes to visit his family for two main reasons: to make sure Sir Walter does not marry Mrs Clay and to get the status of a baronet, which is connected to the prevention of the said marriage. He comes as a widowed rich man whose late wife was very wealthy, and it is almost certain that Mr Elliot married her for her fortune instead of Anne's sister, Elizabeth. What is more, he mistreated her, and only half a year after her death, he comes to visit the Elliots to look for a new wife. This shows his character – his wife's death does not sadden him, and his latest goal is to get a new one, preferably his cousin Anne, in order to satisfy his intentions to get the Elliot family's wealth.

Moreover, it is also later revealed that Mr Elliot is the leading cause of poverty in Anne's acquaintance, Mrs Smith. She and her late husband helped Mr Elliot when he was financially unstable, and when he married and came to money, he encouraged Mr Smith to overspend his money. This eventually led to the Smiths' debt and overall financial fall. Mrs Smith describes her disgust towards him to Anne: "Mr. Elliot is a man without heart or conscience, a designing, wary, cold-blooded being, who thinks only of himself, .... He has no feeling for others." (Austen, 2016, p. 153). This quote is sufficient to learn what kind of person Mr Elliot is; Mrs Smith describes his whole personality. Moreover, Mr Elliot allegedly talked meanly about his family and stated that he would sell Kellynch Hall once in his hands.

Therefore, these facts mark the end of any further proper interaction between Mr Elliot and the rest of his family. He then leaves, and there is a possibility of him having an affair with, or perhaps even getting married to, Mrs Clay.

Overall, Mr William Elliot is mean and capable of ruining lives, only seeking money (mainly through marriages with women) and trying to hide all these characteristics behind his amiable behaviour.

### **5.1.7 Mr Thorpe**

John Thorpe is a villain from *Northanger Abbey*. He is the brother of Isabella, a good friend of the book's heroine, Catherine Morland, as well as a friend of Catherine's brother James.

Since the story's beginning, he is portrayed as a very proud and impolite man who is concerned only about himself. This is indicated early in the story in a conversation between Catherine and James: "'Well, Catherine, how do you like my friend Thorpe?'" instead of answering, as she probably would have done, had there been no friendship and no flattery in

the case, ‘I do not like him at all;’ she directly replied, ‘I like him very much; he seems very agreeable’” (Austen, 1993, p. 32). The only reason why Catherine tries to engage with this man is because of his connection to her close ones.

One notable aspect of Thorpe’s character is his tendency to manipulate situations and people for his benefit, often at the expense of honesty and integrity. He also tends to exaggerate his own importance and tries to impress others with false claims about himself. In addition, John’s behaviour towards the protagonist, Catherine, is inappropriate, as he tries to manipulate her feelings and actions for his gain. He believes she comes from a wealthy family; therefore, he tries to get closer to her. However, he usually fails to do so because he constantly makes fun of her and other people, including his mother: “where did you get that quiz of a hat, it makes you look like an old witch?” (Austen, 1993, p. 31), and his sister, who he thought “looked very ugly” (Austen, 1993, p. 31). Moreover, his conversations with other characters in this book often focus only on his favourite occupations, achievements, and possessions: “and all the rest of his conversation, or rather talk, began and ended with himself and his own concerns” (Austen, 1993, p. 45).

Aside from his mean remarks and selfishly led conversations, he also tries to ruin a possible marriage of Catherine and Henry Tilney by telling Henry’s father, General Tilney, that Catherine comes from a low-income family and that they are “seeking to better themselves by wealthy connections” (Austen, 1993, p. 181). This results in General’s disapproval of this idea because he initially thought she would bring fortune into the marriage. Luckily, this issue is later solved, and General Tilney blesses the marriage.

In conclusion, John Thorpe’s worst characteristics are deception, manipulation, and rudeness towards everyone around him. He has no problem harming others, which makes him one of the worst characters of *Northanger Abbey*.

### **5.1.8 Mr Elton**

The next character this thesis covers is *Emma*’s character, Mr Philip Elton. He is not as villainous as other characters included in this thesis. However, he does various things that harm those around him.

Like some of the real villains mentioned, his intentions in the story are related to money and social status. He sees Emma as the means to reach this goal and proposes to her. However, Emma has always perceived him as a friend, which he mistakes for her being interested, and Mr Elton is turned down. He then rejects Harriet Smith, Emma’s close friend,

who is interested in him. Mr Elton also seems fond of her, but it is later revealed that it was only an act to get closer to Emma. This rejection of Harriet is due to her low social status, which shows how much he cares about status and money. Although, it is important to mention that Harriet's social status was so low, because her parents were not married when she was conceived, so there is not a large number of men who would actually want to marry her.

When revealing his love to Emma, Mr Elton is clear about his feelings toward Harriet: "I never thought of Miss Smith in the whole course of my existence; never paid her any attentions" (Austen, 1994, p. 105). This shows how manipulative Mr Elton is; he can do anything regarding his desires and hurt other people in the meantime.

In addition, very soon after Emma declines his hand, he does not wait for anything and marries Augusta Hawkins, who is, not surprisingly, a woman of a higher social status. Mr Elton's character is all about money; he does not need affection, love, or good fortune and needs to be connected with important people.

Considering all this, Mr Elton is a character who intentionally hurts others' feelings. He knows what he wants and unthinkingly tries to achieve it, whatever it takes.

### **5.1.9 Mr Churchill**

Frank Churchill is a character from *Emma* who is initially very agreeable and knows "how to please" (Austen, 1994, p. 152), and it seems as if there is not a single reason for the readers to dislike him. Nevertheless, when his actions are analysed, it is clear that he cannot be considered an amicable person either and that he manipulates others for his own good.

Mr Churchill is the stepson of Emma's close friend, Mrs Weston. He seems like a great suitor for Emma, and he is encouraged to try to get closer to her, which he does. Everyone around him is mesmerised by him, except Mr Knightley, who views him as immature. However, Mr Knightley's thoughts are presumably directed by jealousy because Mr Churchill is getting closer to Emma, Mr Knightley's love interest.

However, it turns out that he is secretly engaged to a lady named Jane and does everything he can to keep their engagement a secret, including his pursuit of Emma. Hence, the reason he is included in this thesis is the fact that he lies to people around him, makes Emma think he is interested in her, and, most importantly, hurts Jane, who has to watch this couple getting closer without her being able to intervene in any way. Mr Churchill leaves both

of these young women, as well as other people who witnessed his behaviour towards Emma, very confused.

To sum up, Frank's behaviour is not as hurtful as the behaviour of the villains. In a sense, it is possible to understand that he is trying to keep his engagement a secret because his aunt, who has a significant influence on him, disapproves of his attachment to Jane. Although he makes some mistakes and sometimes acts dishonestly, he probably did not mean to hurt anyone and did what he had to do to keep his relationship safe. Even when Emma tells him she is sure he had fun lying to them, Mr Churchill replies: "Oh, no, no, no! how can you suspect me of such a thing? I was the most miserable wretch" (Austen, 1994, p. 386).

#### **5.1.10 Mr Woodhouse**

Mr Woodhouse is an older man; he is the father of Emma in the same book. One might be surprised why he is included in this thesis. He is seemingly a lovely man and does not hurt anyone. However, he is very frail and hypochondriac, and he hates any change.

To start with, Mr Woodhouse's main concern is his health and making sure that not a single thing in his life changes. He is a simple man who "was no companion to her (Emma)" (Austen, 1994, p. 2) and "could not meet her (Emma) in conversation, rational or playful" (Austen, 1994, p. 2). He loves his daughter Emma very much, to the point that he fears her getting married and leaving him. He fears her even catching a simple cold, saying that she "is not strong" (Austen, 1994, p. 198). In addition, he acts this way not only towards his daughter but also towards her governess, Mrs Weston, who is leaving them to live with her new husband. Mr Woodhouse never ceases to remind her of this: "Ah, Miss Taylor, if you had not married, you would have stayed at home with me." (Austen, 1994, p. 167), acting as if she was his property, not being able ever to leave and live her own life. He sees all these things as a tragedy, which may ruin his comfortable family life. The things mentioned might not seem very serious. However, his behaviour and constant fears limit Emma's decisions and personal growth. She perceives that her job is to stay with her dad forever, caring for him and making his elderly life as comfortable as possible. Eventually, she gets engaged to Mr Knightley under the condition that they live in her father's house.

All this considered, Mr Woodhouse is not an evil man. He loves the people around him and is afraid of losing them. However, sometimes, his behaviour may seem quite selfish in the sense of the well-being of his close ones, to the point that it may limit their free will and

actual desires. This all is why he is included in this thesis, although he does not specifically harm anyone.

## **5.2 Female Villains**

This chapter focuses on disagreeable female characters. Although male villains prevail in Jane Austen's novels, there are undoubtedly some ladies who cannot be considered amiable.

### **5.2.1 Lady Catherine de Bourgh**

Lady Catherine is Mr Darcy's aunt. She is very arrogant and controlling, expects everyone to do as she wishes, and is "*reckoned proud by many people*" (Austen, 2014, p. 48). Moreover, when she dislikes someone, she lets them know with her attitude towards them. Although, she is not shown as much as other characters, the description of her is sufficient enough to get to know her character.

She is first adequately introduced when Elizabeth and the Collinses come to visit her. Mr Collins constantly speaks very highly about the Lady, so the readers are expecting a lot from her, but it turns out she is not amiable at all. It is clear she looks down on Elizabeth and her family: "Five daughters brought up at home without a governess! I never heard of such a thing" (Austen, 2014, p. 118). She is also very much offended and surprised when Elizabeth is not straightforward with her and "quite astonished at not receiving a direct answer" (Austen, 2014, p. 119) when she keeps asking Elizabeth about her family.

The Lady's true character is shown when she comes visit Elizabeth, scared that she is engaged to Mr Darcy. The Lady again speaks her mind about Elizabeth when talking about the engagement, saying that "honour, decorum, prudence, nay, interest, forbid it." (Austen, 2014, p. 250), she is not afraid to express how much she looks down on Elizabeth's family. Lady Catherine would rather see her nephew unhappy than him marrying Elizabeth, who is, according to the Lady, "determined to ruin him in the opinion of all his friends, and make him the contempt of the world" (Austen, 2014, p. 252).

To sum up, Lady Catherine is a very selfish character who is used to being obeyed. Elizabeth does not do so. Therefore, the Lady threatens her to keep a distance from Mr Darcy. She is also insulting, explicitly mean towards most people, and believes she can do anything because of her social status. These are the reasons she is included in the chapter on true villains.

### 5.2.2 Lydia Bennet

Lydia Bennet is the youngest daughter of Mr and Mrs Bennet; she is fifteen years old at the beginning of the story. Alongside her older sister Kitty, she spends their days meeting with the officers. She is rude, reckless, and spoiled.

She is a character who is hard to tolerate by most of the people around her, except her mother, who is greatly fond of her and Lydia takes is as advantage. Lydia's enjoyment of flirting often makes her whole family a topic of people's gossip. She is also the first one to know what is happening in the town since she spends most of her time there.

The central turning point is her running away with Mr Wickham, which is a shock for everyone, for she does not show any particular interest in him when he is first introduced in the book. Lydia believes Wickham wants to marry her and refuses to come back home, putting her family at risk of disgrace. Thanks to Mr Darcy, who pays Wickham's debts and also bribes him to marry Lydia, the family's reputation is saved.

Lydia comes back home as a married woman; however, she remains "untamed, unabashed, wild, noisy and fearless." (Austen, 2014, p. 221), constantly vaunts about being married, and makes fun of her sisters for being single, which makes Elizabeth "disgusted" (Austen, 2014, p. 221). She is still as troublesome as she was before, spending more than she and Mr Wickham own, constantly avoiding paying off their debts by running away. In addition, she is not afraid to ask Elizabeth and Jane for money because she knows they married much better than she did: "It is a great comfort to have you so rich, and when you have nothing else to do, I hope you will think of us" (Austen, 2014, p. 273).

Although Lydia may not be an amiable character, it is essential to realise that her upbringing definitely affected her behaviour. She is her mother's favourite child. Hence, she is very spoiled, and her father probably gave up on trying since she is his last daughter. As mentioned in a previous chapter, he prefers to hide in his library than raise his daughters, especially Lydia, so "she has never been taught to think on serious subjects" (Austen, 2014, p. 198). Furthermore, it is revealed in the book that the Bennet daughters did not have a governess, which also might have impacted the level of their education. As was mentioned in chapter 4.2, parents were also sometimes teachers to their children, and this is the case in *Pride and Prejudice* as well; it was their mother (who is not a lady of high intelligence) who was in charge of their education.

Overall, Lydia is a character who acts selfishly and thinks only about herself. However, the fact that her parents did not give enough effort into her upbringing makes her behaviour slightly more understandable. Nevertheless, she undoubtedly deserves a place in this chapter of the thesis.

### **5.2.3 Mrs Norris**

Mrs Norris, or Aunt Norris, is a character in *Mansfield Park*, and she is perhaps the most prominent female villain of all of Austen's books; there is no other lady as mean as her in this thesis. She is the aunt of the heroine of this book, Fanny, and she does all she can to make Fanny's everyday life as miserable as possible, and Fanny "had never received kindness from her Aunt Norris, and could not love her" (Austen, 2011, p. 23).

Aunt Norris has many awful traits that are worth mentioning. To start with, she is a tremendous authoritative figure, always needing everyone to act solely the way she expects them to, especially her nieces and nephews. There is an excellent example of this in the book: "but I shall think of her very obstinate, ungrateful girl, if she does not do what her aunt and cousins wish her" (Austen, 2011, p. 150). Her authoritative behaviour creates an environment in which her family members feel compelled to comply with her wishes, contributing to the overall tension within the household. However, she is not mean to all of her nieces and nephews; she favours Maria and Julia; on the other hand, Fanny is the one who is mistreated the most, and Mrs Norris has no empathy, as well as "no affection for Fanny, and no wish of procuring her pleasure at any time." (Austen, 2011, p. 79). On the other hand, Aunt Norris cares about Maria so much that, at the end of the book, she leaves Manfield with Maria after her scandal with Henry Crawford because Maria is "her first favourite, the dearest of all" (Austen, 2011, p. 462).

It is also essential to think about why did Aunt Norris persuade the Betrams to even allow Fanny to live with them. Presumably, Mrs Norris hoped Fanny would be the one to obey her rules. In addition, considering the Aunt's character, she could not really be mean to the Bertram children, and by bringing Fanny into their house, Mrs Norris has a great opportunity to show her real self and let go of her feelings. What is more, she senses that providing Fanny a better home, people will think of her very highly, when she brags about it being her idea.

Moreover, Mrs Norris is always very occupied with her self-importance and with improving her already social status, which is one of the most meaningful things for her. This

is connected also to her coming up with the idea to take Fanny in. She also tries to be perceived better by associating with her wealthy relatives, as well as being included in their family matters, trying to help and find solutions any time needed. Nonetheless, she does not fear to belittle others to succeed in improving her social standing. In general, Aunt Norris is a character-driven by personal ambition rather than a genuine concern for the well-being of her family members.

In conclusion, Aunt Norris is a multifaceted character who is manipulative, unsympathetic, and authoritarian. Her actions impact lives around her, and not in a good way. She thinks highly of herself, although she is only in the shadow of her more successful sister and family and has little money. All of this makes this character one of the worst characters created by Jane Austen.

#### **5.2.4 Mary Crawford**

Mary Crawford is a character in the book *Mansfield Park*; she is the sister of Henry Crawford, who has been talked about before. Mary is a charming, beautiful lady; however, her personality traits are sometimes not as admirable as her looks. Mary can be considered as a contrasting character to Fanny, which eventually shows Edmund that Fanny is the right woman to marry.

Mary is a character that may be perceived as both good and bad. She does not purposefully hurt anyone; nevertheless, sometimes, her behaviour could be a little more amiable. She also lacks morals, which is one of the reasons why Edmund does not marry her in the end. Mary is a woman who does not believe in true love and marriage; her main focus in life is material matters. These facts are presumably connected to Mary's (and Henry's) upbringing. The majority of their childhood was spent with their uncle and his wife. This couple did not get along very well, and after their aunt's death, the uncle decided to share a home with a new mistress. This may have primarily impacted Mary, who does not have a great relationship with their uncle and transformed her outlook on happy relationships, religion, and morality in general. Mary's comments on her uncle spark many conversations among other people about her behaviour towards her uncle, even calling her "*very ungrateful*" (Austen, 2011, p. 62).

Her feelings towards Edmund are genuine, but she cannot accept his plans for the future – to become a clergyman, stating that "A clergyman is nothing" (Austen, 2011, p. 92), which clearly hurts Edmund's feelings. She is also told that he is not to inherit any fortune



from his family, which does not align with the plans for her future at all. As it is stated in the book: “Edmund would be forgiven for being a clergyman, it seemed, under certain conditions of wealth” (Austen, 2011, p. 450), showing that Edmund could do nothing about her feelings about him and his life conditions.

In addition, after the brother takes part in a scandal with Maria, Mary seems to be perhaps the only person who does not see any issue and “tries to gloss it over, and desire to have it unpunished,…” (Austen, 2011, p. 455). Mary also tries to blame Fanny for this scandal, saying: “Had she accepted him (Henry) as she ought, they might now have been on the point of marriage, and Henry would have been too happy and too busy to want any other object.” (Austen, 2011, p. 470). This all leads to Edmund drastically changing his thoughts on Mary’s character.

To sum up, Mary Crawford is a lady with several admirable qualities that are, sadly, sometimes overpowered by the worst ones. She does not do any significant harm to the other characters, but due to her upbringing, she lacks some crucial features to be perceived as an amiable character of *Mansfield Park*.

### **5.2.5 Isabella Thorpe**

Isabella Thorpe is the sister of John Thorpe, who has been already mentioned, in the novel *Northanger Abbey*. Similarly to her brother, she cannot be considered an agreeable person because of her behaviour towards other characters, as well as because of her lack of moral sense.

Isabella becomes friends with the heroine, Catherine, early in the book, and they are very close. However, Isabella is manipulative towards Catherine and possibly feels like she can get closer to Catherine’s brother James through this friendship. Moreover, it seems as though Isabella reaches out to her friend when it is suitable for her and when she needs something. Moreover, Isabella tries to persuade Catherine to get into a closer relationship with her brother John because the Thorpe siblings believe that the Morland family is wealthy. In addition, alongside John, she tries to distance Catherine from the Tilneys, which makes Catherine think of Isabella as “ungenerous and selfish” (Austen, 1993, p. 70).

In addition, more problems occur after James finally asks Isabella to marry him. They receive a letter from James’ father, and Isabella finds out that her fiancé does not come from a wealthy family, and they have to wait two years to proceed with their marriage. After this event, Isabella tries to cover her disappointment in connection with money by acting upset

that the couple has to wait two years to get married. When James writes the news of the end of their engagement to Catherine, he admits: “She (Isabella) has made me miserable!” (Austen, 1994, p. 147), which clearly shows Isabella’s true character. What is more, Isabella does not wait long and finds herself a better suitor, Captain Frederick Tilney. However, he does not show any plans to marry her; therefore, Isabella tries to find her way back to James, saying: “he (James) is the only man I ever did or could love” (Austen, 1994, p. 158), but no one believes her and her plan is unsuccessful.

Moreover, Isabella is not only focused on wealth, but also social status and she lacks understanding of proper social manners. She wears clothes to attract male eyes, and as mentioned in chapter 4.1, women during the Regency were supposed to be reserved with make-up and clothes.

In conclusion, Isabella is a woman without manners, she is also manipulative and unfaithful, and is attracted to money; this results in her hurting the people around her. There is no proper reason for her behaviour to be justified. Therefore, these characteristics are the reason why she is considered a villain.

## **6 Comparison of the Characters**

This chapter focuses on finding similarities between the villains and the “villains” that have been examined in previous chapters. It also aims to search for analogous patterns in their behaviour, as well as in their true intentions. While all of Austen’s characters play a unique role in the story and have distinct personality traits, there are still attributes that can connect the characters.

It is expected that Austen presumably used similar characteristics while creating the characters. Hence, the following subchapters aim to find the similarities within the figures. In addition, this comparison might provide closer look on who is actually the biggest villain or villainess. However, the part of distinguishing the major villains may be quite challenging, since all of the characters have their own flaws and reasons for their behaviour, which was all analysed before.

### **6.1 Comparison of the Male Villains**

The category of male villains is much longer than the one with female villains, containing a big number of characters. That is why there are quite a lot of personality traits, as well as behavioural tendencies the characters share. The characters also often aim for a similar outcome of their conduct. This chapter tries to find the motives of the characters’ conduct that are used the most in Jane Austen’s books.

The first similar behaviour trait covered is the charm of the villains. Here, Mr Wickham, Mr Willoughby, Mr Churchill, and Mr Crawford may be mentioned. All four of them are introduced and initially perceived as charming and trustworthy. They are capable of drawing attention towards them, and have no issue in making other people like them. In addition, these characters know very well how to properly use their charms and their great capability to talk to people for their personal gain. However, the difference is that while Mr Churchill is using his charm to simply just hide his engagement, the rest of the men mentioned are more wicked and take advantage of their good impression in a much more villainous way than Mr Churchill, hurting many people while doing so. Mr Wickham exerts a major effort get people on his side and turn against Mr Darcy, and he possesses an ability to make any woman to like him. However, this never ends well, as it has been mentioned in his analysis. Here, a connection of Mr Willoughby appears. Mr Crawford may not be as bad as these two men, but he still knows how to use his attractivity to seduce women.

In addition, many of the villains share their intention to gain money. Here, these characters can be listed: Mr Wickham, Mr Willoughby, Mr Elliot, Mr Elton. All of these villains long for wealth, as well as higher social status. It is clear that Mr Wickham has been chasing his whole life for money, hurting other people in the process of doing so. He even goes so far that he gets married to Lydia only because of the vision of being paid off for doing so. Mr Willoughby tries to get close to Marianne, until her financial situation is cleared to him, and that is a turning point which leads to him abandoning her. Mr Elliot is no different; his intentions to inherit the Elliot family estate and his usage of Mr Smith's money are essentially significant traits he possesses. Moreover, he possesses a lot of money, so it is not detrimental for him to get more; he is just very greedy. Finally, Mr Elton is very similar to the previous characters. He perceives Emma as an opportunity to gain money and improve his social status, but he does not succeed, so he finds a different rich woman. Hence, the villains listed in this paragraph are focused on money; however, the intentions of their wrongdoings slightly differ. Due to their debts, Mr Wickham's and Mr Willoughby's aims are to earn money somehow. On the other hand, Mr Elliot and Mr Elton do not need the money; they presumably want to have a more comfortable life, they seem to never have enough.

Another notable repetitive pattern is the superficial pursuit in relationships. Clearly, Mr Willoughby, Mr Wickham, Mr Churchill, Henry Crawford, John Thorpe, Mr Elton, and Mr Collins must be mentioned here, which is a long list of characters. It is one of the most repetitive characteristics of Austen's villains. These characters tend to engage in superficial or opportunistic relationships. Mr Willoughby pursues Marianne Dashwood for passion rather than lasting commitment, which creates a big chaos, and then he immediately looks for a different woman. Mr Churchill's pursuit of Emma lacks depth and sincerity, and he only tries to cover his true engagement with a different woman, while using Emma to do so. Mr Crawford is totally wrong in pursuing Fanny practically just for his entertainment and without initial genuine feelings. Mr Thorpe's exaggerated self-importance also highlights superficiality, not allowing his affection towards Catherine to be accepted and returned, since he is a very annoying selfish man. Mr Elton's motives to better his social status drive his romantic pursuits with Emma, but also with his wife Mrs Elton, who is a wealthy woman, which Mr Elton sees as an opportunity. Finally, Mr Collins's intention to find a wife is highly influenced by Lady Catherine, who was the one to suggest it. Mr Collins is presumably not properly interested in getting eloped; he does not want to make the Lady change her opinion about him. Therefore, his chase after a wife is not a concept created in his head.

It must be stated that Mr Woodhouse and Mr Bennet stand out as villains. Mr Bennet is a character with quite many bad traits; however, he essentially cannot be compared to the rest of the villains. Mr Bennet is not a possible love interest; he does not try to pursue a lady, and he does not long for a higher social status. He is simply an older man who has given up on trying to fix the things he did wrong, a man who is relatively unconcerned with what is happening to the people around him. Mr Woodhouse is more annoying than villainous. While Mr Woodhouse tries to give his daughter the best life possible, although he sometimes goes too far, Mr Bennet essentially only shares a household with his daughters. There is no intention on his side to secure his daughters' future. In addition, one significant contrast between these two is that Mr Woodhouse is very hypochondriacal and anxious, which creates a certain tension in his household. He is also very concerned with the people he loves, but again, sometimes it is too much. Mr Bennet, on the other hand, is a cynical and ironic man who is so out of touch with the real problems of his family that it has a destructive impact on the rest of the family members. Moreover, his daughters and wife do not concern him, which significantly differs from Mr Woodhouse.

In addition, issues in morality can be observed in essentially all the male villains. Although all of them have their own flaws and act wrong in various situations, all of them are immoral in a way. All the characteristics of the figures mentioned earlier in this chapter suggest that all the characters go against some social norms of that time or create a situation which makes others to end on the edge of the society. Even though some of the missteps are worse than the others, they are all quite evident.

In conclusion, Mr Willoughby, Mr Wickham, and Mr Elliot appear to be the worst villains of Jane Austen. Although it is hard to put all of the main villains in order from the most to the least malicious, it may be argued that their actions made so many people's lives miserable, sometimes even destroyed forever, at least according to the classifications above, that it is impossible to overlook these facts. It is clear that the rest of the characters are horrible people in many aspects as well, but they cannot be put on the same level as these three men. This is a great representation of why the name of the thesis contains the word "villains". Austen was capable of writing malicious characters, but there not that many of them, and still even the worst ones not the typical villains people are used to.

## 6.2 Comparison of the Female Villains

Based on the previous chapters of this thesis, it is obvious that there are a lot less female villains than male villains that are worth mentioning. However, like the previous subchapter, this one also focuses on their comparison regarding the most commonly used motives of the female villains.

To begin with, manipulation is the first trait the thesis focuses on, since it is used often by Austen. All of the female villains fit in this category. Firstly, Aunt Norris is controlling primarily over Fanny; however, she has such tendencies towards almost everyone around her. She likes when people act the way she wants and if they do not, she is very capable of creating a problem because of it. Isabella Thorpe, on the other hand, is manipulative in her pursuit of advantageous matches. She feigns affection and friendship towards Catherine Morland while secretly pursuing romantic interests that could advance her social standing. Lady Catherine uses her wealth and influence to manipulate others, particularly in her attempts to control the romantic lives of her nephew, Mr Darcy, and Elizabeth, fearing their possible engagement. The Lady is presumably used to being able to manipulate everyone, especially Mr Collins, as was mentioned before. Therefore, when someone goes against her wishes, she is not pleased. Next is Mary Crawford, she knows how to make people feel good about themselves, leading to her being trusted by them. This allows her to make them act how she wants to succeed in her desires while concealing her true intentions. A character worth mentioning here is also Lydia. Although she is not as manipulative as the others, she tends to influence her sister Kitty and her mother because she knows she is her favourite child. Lydia tries to seize every opportunity to make her mother act the way Lydia wants to. Overall, these characters like to have a certain amount of power in their hands. Although each approaches it slightly differently and for a different reason, it is a common trait found in Jane Austen's books. While Aunt Norris and Lady Catherine presumably mainly want to feel and be perceived as powerful, Mary, Isabella, and Lydia tend to manipulate for their personal gain and not really to be seen as women of power.

Social status is another big topic related to some of these ladies: Lady Catherine, Mrs Norris, Mary Crawford, and Isabella Thorpe. While Lady Catherine is a wealthy and influential aristocrat accustomed to having her opinions obeyed and her wishes fulfilled due to her noble status, primarily by Mr Collins, the other two women try to improve their social standings. As mentioned previously, Mrs Norris is very focused on reaching a higher social standing. She does so by overly engaging with her wealthy relatives and giving them advice,

for which she later takes credit. This all gives her the advantage of people perceiving her as someone more influential than she is. The next character is Mary, who, in particular, tries to reach a better social status by seeking a marriage with a wealthy and influential man while pushing away people who care about her. She is so focused on looking for the best for her that she misses the opportunity to marry Edmund, who is fond of her. Similarly to Mary, Isabella goes for men of wealth and influence while drifting away from those who possess a genuine interest in her, all to find a rich man to marry. Both of these ladies try to stand higher on the social scale, wanting to do so by an advantageous marriage. In contrast, Mrs Norris tries to look better by using her close ones, exploiting their influential status to do so. Lady Catherine is not trying to improve anything with the connection to her status, which makes her different from the rest. However, she constantly uses her power over others to do whatever she wants them to do.

In conclusion, two significant aspects influence the behaviour of the female villains: manipulation and social status. The female characters are similar in these, although they usually differ in exhibiting these aspects according to their own needs. However, there are still certain similarities present in their actions. According to the seriousness of the females' conduct, Lady Catherine and Aunt Norris are presumably the worst female villains. In addition, as it has been mentioned before, it is clear that Jane Austen's male characters are more villainous than women characters, and there is also more of them. An explanation for this may be the fact that women in the Regency society were living a restricted life full of rules to follow to keep their social status and to avoid any possible issues, as was mentioned in the theoretical part of the thesis. Therefore, Austen had no choice but to reflect on this aspect to keep her novels as authentic as possible.

## 7 Conclusion

This thesis analysed Jane Austen's "Villains" and provided insight into the life in the Regency England. The thesis' main emphasis was on the characteristics of the chosen literary figures and the background of their conduct. Jane Austen efficiently depicted many social rules in her novels, and her villains helped to do so. These characters are pretty complex, possessing many, sometimes quite hidden, characteristics important for unfolding the novels' stories.

Jane Austen clearly focused on putting more bad traits into her male villains, leading to the majority of the disagreeable characters in this thesis being men. The male characters usually try to use their charm to impress the heroine, although they fail because their true nature and intentions are revealed. On the other hand, the female villains are often women who are somehow connected to the heroine, and they create various obstacles that the heroine has to overcome to reach her happy ending with the man of her interest. As expected, sometimes it is challenging to categorise who is the true villain and who is the "villain", which again demonstrates the choice of the thesis' title. Some characters misbehave solely because it is advantageous for them, others do so because they may have some reason for it; this goes for both the male and female characters.

In the chapter of the character comparison, it has been revealed that the male villains are driven mostly by longing for more considerable fortune, using their charms, faking relationships and acting immorally throughout this whole process. Characters who entirely stand out are Mr Bennet and Mr Woodhouse, who are the fathers of the heroines, and each of them has his issues that could be worked on. However, both of them are different from the rest of the male villains, who are usually quite similar in their conduct and aims of their wrongdoings, revealing that Jane Austen used similar patterns when creating these characters.

Focusing on female villains, two significant elements of behaviour have been observed: manipulative tendencies and longing to improve their social status. Although the women differ in pursuing these aspects, they tend to act according to them, and they are usually as important as the male villains for the storyline, portraying how life in the Regency Era worked.

Finally, it is safe to say that men represent the majority of Jane Austen's villains. They are similar to one another, but they still tend to have their particularities, which differentiate them from the rest of the male villains. On the other hand, female villains are usually not as



malicious as male villains. However, the females also possess various toxic traits that eventually connect them together at least to some extent, making it impossible not to include them in this thesis, although there is not many of them in Jane Austen's novels.

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