Thesis written by
Erica Eileen Cicero-Erkkila

Approved by
_______________________________________________, Advisor
_______________________________________________, Chair, Department of English

Accepted by
_____________________________________________________, Dean, Honors College
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Introduction

In *Professions For Women*, Woolf argues that for most women, especially women authors, there comes a time when one must decide to fully embrace or kill the fictitious “Angel” that society expects women to be. The Angel that Woolf describes is the embodiment of the social norms and expectations of the time that excludes the self. This Angel’s role in the lives of women was to suppress the inner self that encourages women to strive for lives beyond the domestic sphere. This self is defined by Estes as, “Healthy wolves and healthy women share certain psychic characteristics: keen sensing, playful spirit, and a heightened capacity for devotion…fiercely stalwart and very brave” (Estes 4). This self is very instinctual and in touch with the world around them and is the opposite of Woolf’s Angel because the Angel is a being that has no instinctual aspects but takes on the opinions and characteristics of the men who direct her. Since women’s lives revolved around the domestic sphere it was considered a faux pas if a woman embraced her self because there was no room for this wolfish self when an Angel was supposed to be present. Woolf wants women to kill the idea of the Angel that society expected her to be just as Woolf herself claims to have done. Yet Woolf’s description of the Angel emphasizes her self-sacrificing nature:

She was intensely sympathetic. She was immensely charming. She was utterly unselfish. She excelled in the difficult arts of family life. She sacrificed herself
daily. If there was chicken, she took the leg; if there was a draught she sat in it-in short she was so constituted that she never had a mind or a wish of her own, but preferred to sympathize always with the minds and wishes of others. Above all-I need not say it- she was pure. Her purity was supposed to be her chief beauty-her blushes, her great grace. (Woolf 2153)

This selfless woman is a model of what all women were expected to be: someone who has no connection with her inner self or the reality of her own desires. Society wanted women to embrace this Angel because when a woman is absolutely selfless and looks to the men in her life for her answers and opinions she cannot yearn for a life outside of the domestic. She will therefore not be intellectually able to imagine herself in a life other than that of the domestic. Society brainwashed women into believing that they had to be this Angel society made guilty about having any amount of selfhood which might sully this angelic, selfless ideal. However, Jane Austen, Charlotte Bronte, and Louisa May Alcott present characters who possess their self while fighting against the Angel mold. Emma Woodhouse is a young woman who, in the beginning, knows her self and rebels as much as possible against the Angel. Jane Eyre seeks to find a balance between self and the Angel to live a socially sanction life that involves some inner fulfillment. Jean Muir is a woman who has always embraced her self and learns to manipulate the idea of the Angel in order to have control over her life. These characters, like Woolf, must negotiate the demands of the Angel and their inner selves because society has trained women to believe that they need to make the Angel the voice of their conscience. When a woman allows the Angel to consume her mind and become her conscience she can become like
Emma Woodhouse- a woman who gives up self to fit into the socially prescribed domestic role. However Woolf, describes her own battle with the Angel as murder because Woolf found that it was impossible for her to live a life of fulfillment while maintaining any part of the Angel. Woolf writes:

I turned upon her and caught her by the throat. I did my best to kill her. My excuse, if I were to be had up in a court of law, would be that I acted in self-defense. Had I not killed her she would have killed me. She would have plucked the heart out of my writing. For, as I found, directly I put pen to paper, you cannot review even a novel without having a mind of your own, without expressing what you think to be truth about human relations, morality, sex. (Woolf 2153)

Woolf brutally murders the Angel which shows the resentment that women develop for the Angel. The brainwashing that society does to women when they are children creates resentment within them. If women’s self is strong enough to recognize the damage that the Angel can do to the entire being of a woman. Jane Eyre experiences this brainwashing when her aunt fails to socialize her and sends her to Lowood. Throughout the entire novel Jane fights her self and the Angel and is only at the conclusion of the novel able to find true happiness when she learns how to balance her Angel and her self. Emma is like Jane because initially she has a balance between her Angel and her self but she allows her Angel to kill her self. According to Woolf’s texts this murder of self will destroy all possibilities of happiness. Jean Muir is a very different character from Emma and Jane because her Angel has been murdered long before the start of the novel, if she ever
existed, and during the novel Jean merely pretends to be consumed by her Angel. Woolf’s resentment and brutal murder of her Angel shows the extent of anger that a woman can feel towards this mold of what a woman should be because this Angel can destroy the very essence of individuality within a woman. Woolf figuratively kills her angel out of “self-defense” because the Angel was killing Woolf’s inner self that makes up the essence of her creativity and very being. The Angel that society expects women to conform to takes the creativity out of women because it forces them to conform to the notions of what society deems as proper while leaving no room for individuality. Woolf believes that is the “The Angel in the House. It was she who used to come between me and my paper when I was writing reviews. It was she who bothered and wasted my time and so tormented me that at last I killed her” (Woolf 2153). Woolf further supports her metaphor of the destructiveness of the Angel by suggesting that this Angel hinders her creativity and she was forced to kill it. Without some form of creativity and individuality a woman becomes mindless and is forced to follow the direction of men because she is unable to think for herself. The Angel that is coming between Woolf and her work is the idea that if men knew what she was doing they would disapprove. Woolf describes this disapproval,

Men, her reason told her, would be shocked. The consciousness of what men will say of a woman who speaks the truth about her passions had roused her from her artist’s state of unconsciousness. She could write no more. The trance was over. Her imagination could work no longer. This I believe to be a very common
experience with women writers—they are impeded by the extreme conventionality of their own sex. (Woolf 2154)

Woolf suggests that women’s training to always gauge their actions by men’s reactions impedes the creative genius of women, or their wolf self, because women begin to fear that they will appear too shocking and will no longer be accepted. Therefore they are unable to write because the Angel in their minds becomes so overpowering and destroys their self. This torment that Woolf experienced was common for women of the time because society so thoroughly brainwashed women into believing that they were doing something wrong when they embraced their self. She further explains the murder of her Angel, “now that she had rid herself of falsehood, that young woman had only to be herself. … but what is ‘herself’” (Woolf 2153). This false self that society forces women to become is like a masked exterior that a woman’s thorough brainwashing by the patriarchal society has created and forced women to wear. Woolf suggests that women have been so thoroughly brainwashed that they no longer have a comprehension of their inner self selves.

The self that society attempts to eradicate in women, this self is like a primitive wolf that is hard to suppress within any woman, even if the self is competing against the Angel. Clarissa Estes in Women Who Run With the Wolves describes the inner self that all women possess as a wolf that is instinctual and fiercely protective against the attempts of the Angel. Estes discusses the issue of the societal oppression of women and how women are forced to give up their wolves for the Angel that they are expected to be. Estes writes,
“A woman’s issue of soul cannot be treated by carving her into a more acceptable form as defined by an unconscious culture, nor can she be bent into a more intellectually acceptable shape by those who claim to be the sole bearers of consciousness” (Estes 6). Estes connects the self, or the wolf, with the very soul or self of a woman and how “an unconscious culture” throughout time has tried to change women into something that they are not by destroying their very soul or self. Society was not comfortable with what women are-instinctual, spirited, creative therefore they try to change them into something that seems more generic not so unique. This is exactly the case with Emma, Jane, and Jean because these women are extremely unique characters who have been judged by society for their spirited individuality. Although society may force women to be more like the Angel they still have a connection to their self no matter how much they attempt to mask it. Estes argues, “Even the most repressed woman has a secret life, with secret thoughts and secret feelings which are lush and wild, that is, natural” (Estes 10). Even though women are forced within the domestic and may pretend that they are the Angel their self is secretly repressed and they have a secret life. A woman may try to eradicate her self through the brainwashing of society but Estes argues that the self is too much like a wolf, too resilient, to allow societal oppression to destroy it. Without an understanding of the wolf or the self a woman loses what is so confident and unique about her because she no longer has touch with the inner consciousness that makes her so different from others. This is why Emma’s marriage to Mr. Knightley is so disturbing because his goal throughout the novel is to destroy Emma’s self and force her into the Angel role; therefore, their marriage can never be one of equality of understanding because Emma
has no inner consciousness and is forced to look to Knightley for guidance. Jane Eyre cannot initially marry Rochester because he tries to change her and force her to suppress her self. After Bertha’s death Rochester no longer wishes to change Jane and is able to accept her self which means that their marriage is that of equality and she does not risk losing her self as Mrs. Rochester. Jean does not risk losing her self because she never allows society to suppress her self or to change her. Marriage to Sir John is her goal that will allow her financial independence and comfort. Jean knows that she will have to pretend to be an Angel but she never allows the Angel to consume her and destroy her self. Estes writes about the “her” or the self, “Without her, women lose the sureness of their soulfooting”(Estes 10). To Estes, “soulfooting” is the confidence that a woman has due to her instinctual connection to self. Without this connection a woman cannot thrive; therefore, it is easy for men and society to brainwash women into becoming a soulless Angel who resides within the domestic without the sureness of self that required of all people to ensure happiness and self-confidence because without a connection to their self they have no soulfooting and have trouble connecting with their instinctual self. If a woman conforms to the demands of society by giving up self for the Angel she become the kind of woman that society expects her to be.

While suppressing the selfhood of women, society forced women into the homes because the domestic sphere effectively encloses women from the larger world. Men were able to occupy the domestic sphere but also had their own worlds outside the home. Woman however were not exposed to this more adventurous gentlemanly world; therefore, they would not have the opportunity to want to change their lives. Charlotte
Perkins Gilman describes domestic life from the perspective of a child witnessing the monotony of the mother:

the child, keeps ever before his eyes the fact that life consists in getting dinner and in getting money to pay for it, getting the food from the market, working forever and ever to cook and serve it. These are the prominent facts of the home as we have made it…Man has advanced, but woman has been kept behind. (Gilman 185)

Life for women within the domestic has always been centered on seemingly trivial things like dinner. Over the course of centuries female children have watched their mothers in this domestic monotony and have expected this to be their lives one day because that is all they have ever known. Men have advanced outside of the home and have worked at improving their minds but women have been left to the same task that their grandmothers had been doing for centuries. Society has forced women to remain in their domestic roles by creating social norms and laws that prevent women from stepping out of their stereotypical lives and becoming more like their male counterparts. Gilman describes a woman’s work within the household as a type of slave labor because society forces women into their positions within their homes. Gilman writes, “A home life with a dependent mother, a servant-wife, is not an ennobling influence”(Gilman 186). When women are forced to remain within their homes and become servants for their families they are not being good influences on their children because these children see the extent
of the normal and acceptable oppression that their mothers are forced to suffer under and begin to think that this is right.

Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries society demanded that “womanly virtue resided in piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity” (www.library.csi). This “cult of domesticity” provided the basis for how women were brought up, trained, and socialized. Austen’s *Emma* (1815), Bronte’s *Jane Eyre* (1847), and Alcott’s *Behind a Mask* (1866) are three novels that represent how their female protagonists cope with their society and how they value their selfhood. Through the influential characters that these texts portray the reader develops an understanding of how the authors felt women should negotiate their socialized enclosures depending on their circumstances. These novels represent three types of socialization: successful, partial, and subversive. These texts offer examples of how women negotiate their socialized enclosures and explore the danger that the restrictive cult of domesticity posed for authentic female selfhood.
Emma’s Destruction of Self: How Austen’s Emma Loses Her Self to the Demands of the Society

Jane Austen’s novel *Emma* is a depiction of a young woman who initially values her true self but is forced to decide between self or fully embracing the socialized Angel. It is Knightley, rather than Mr. Woodhouse, who is the primary enforcer of Emma’s socialization because he sees in her the potential to be the ideal Angel according to the standards of the patriarchal society. Knightley also represents the society through his attempts at manipulating Emma into becoming the ideal domestic woman. In the beginning of the novel Emma has a tendency “to think a little too well of herself” (Austen 7) which suggests that she is a young woman who loves her self and has not allowed society to influence or diminish her sense of self. Emma does eventually give her self up because she is influenced into thinking that her self is something to be ashamed of and that it would prohibit her from becoming Knightley’s wife. This is not a tale of a feminine awakening but rather, a tale of a successful socialization that gives the reader a picture of how women were only ‘ideal’ Angel of the domestic world if they lost themselves and their notions of self.

Mr. Woodhouse’s hypochondria allows Emma to remain acceptably unmarried and act as her father’s caregiver which gives her the opportunity to embrace her self because of her widowed father’s financial and social position, Emma does not have to marry for either
money or position. Although Emma lives within a patriarchal world she is able to maintain her selfhood in a way that most young women cannot because her father provides for her financially which prevents her from being required to marry. Many women of the time are forced to marry out of financial necessity all Emma must do is help her father maintain his monotonous lifestyle. This assistance that Emma provides her father allows her to appear as the Angel of his house while still maintaining self. Mr. Woodhouse’s financial assistance requires Emma to ensure that his monotonous lifestyle is upheld in Harfield and respected throughout Highbury. Her father does not require much other than an obliging nature towards his health-obsessed attitude, “You and I will have a nice basin of gruel together. My Dear Emma, suppose we all have a little gruel’”(Austen 96). Emma is able to ensure that Mr. Woodhouse is provided with his gruel and that their friends and neighbors cooperate with the fanciful behaviors of the ill old gentleman. Although Mr. Woodhouse is a gentleman he behaves like an old woman with his needy obsession towards his ill health:

The effect of decayed gentlemanliness that he produces is a tour de force of Jane Austen’s, nothing else; for Mr. Woodhouse is really an old woman, or the vacuous, mild-natured, weakly selfish sort very common to novels and (possibly) to life. He has not single masculine trait and his only distinction lies in the transfer of sex. He is Mrs. Bates elevated to the dignity of Hartfield. (Mudrick 192-193)

Mr. Woodhouse is one of the most powerful gentlemen in Highbury due to his large fortune; however, his nonsensical hypochondria and self-proclaimed invalid state of
health lowers him to the dignity of Miss Bates in the readers’ eyes. He is not masculine in the stereotypical way because his “weakly selfish” behavior is considered feminine because weakness is not associated with the masculine in a patriarchal society. The typical characteristics associated with men within this society are strength, forcefulness, assertiveness, and instinctual nature. These characteristics are found within Emma but not her father because her father behaves much more like Mrs. Bates and is like a weak feminine Angel instead of a man in full possession of his self. Mr. Woodhouse’s more “womanly” position allows Emma to take control of many aspects of her and her father’s life which pleases her doting father who finds no fault in his obliging caretaker. In fact a sort of role reversal takes place as Mr. Woodhouse acts more fail and “womanly” while Emma takes on the strong decisive attributes normally granted to men as she orders their lives. Mr. Woodhouse allows Emma to embrace her self as much as she pleases as long as she performs her caretaking duties towards him. An instance of when Emma is not acting like a perfect Angel but rather behaving more like a woman full of self is when she tells Mr. Knightley that she does not wish to be friends with Jane Fairfax. When Emma tells Knightley, “‘I wish Jane Fairfax very well; but she tires me to death’”(Austen 84) she is stepping away from what Knightley believes to be her social duty of befriending the orphaned Jane. Jane is someone that Emma has little interest in because she is reserved and revered. These things do not encourage Emma to develop a friendship with her and instead she befriends Harriet Smith. Emma uses her instincts to determine that she would be more compatible as a friend with Harriet than Jane because she finds Harriet more interesting. Therefore Emma steps away from the Angel when she decides
not to pursue a close relationship with Jane and instead befriends Harriet. Since Emma does not slip in her duties towards her father she is easily able to remain in his eyes a perfect Angel and her therefore finds no fault in her. Knightley is bothered by Mr. Woodhouse’s permissive disregard of Emma’s social conformity because he believes it is Mr. Woodhouse’s job as Emma’s father to teach and enforce social norms which encourage embracing the Angel; he, therefore, takes it upon himself to educate Emma on the proper decorum of the domestic selfless Angel.

While tending to her father Emma does not take on the characteristics typically associated with women who are consumed by the Angel. Although Emma takes primary care of her father, she is not selfless while doing so because her daily activities demonstrate her less than angelic inner self. Emma understands her role she does not assume passive selflessness. Mr. Woodhouse is so lacking in his patriarchal masculinity that he allows Emma to escape the “passively suffering” role prescribed to her by her sex and further demonstrate the gender reversal of these two characters, because of this Emma is able to ignore “The patriarchal ideology of the period, an ideology best characterized as teaching women to view themselves as subordinate or dependent upon, and at the service of the men in their lives”( Shaffer 21). Austen presents it as the loving duty of a child to a parent when the society wants Emma to submit to her father with no concern for herself because she is supposed to be completely dependent upon Mr. Woodhouse. However nowhere does this care of her father make Emma seem like his subordinate. Rather she demonstrates to him that she is easily able to take on the role of the Angel while she secretly possesses self as she manages him efficiently. For instance,
even though he requests that everyone be served gruel, Emma manages him and the situation so only he eats the unappetizing gruel. Furthermore Emma is able to be the highest ranking woman in the society of Highbury since she is mistress of Harfield. This role simply requires her to be obliging to her doting father. In fact one critic rightly notes that Emma

reigns over Highbury as if she were queen. No other Austen heroine is as beautiful, as rich or as independent as Emma. Not only does she have social prestige and economic privilege that give her power over her small community of Highbury... Emma realizes that if she were to marry she would have to relinquish much of her power to a husband, a man she could not possibly hope to manage as easily as she manages her father. (Tobin 50)

By avoiding marriage Emma is able to maintain her selfhood with a patriarchal society that would demand her to become a selfless domestic creature. The power that Emma receives as mistress of one of the most prominent estates in Hartfield gives her power to “reign” over the society of Highbury as a social queen. Moreover, Hartfield is not entailed, meaning it is not an estate that will pass to the oldest male relative, which allows Emma to be a potential inheritor of her father’s estate. This potential inheritance will enable Emma to be financially independent for life and never be forced into a loveless marriage that will require her to become consumed by the Angel. Another critic asserts that, “Emma is unique among Jane Austen’s heroines in that she is rich enough to think that she does not need a marriage with a proper man-with property- in order to exist
properly in society” (Tanner 180). Emma’s potential inheritance allows her to remain free from the burden of marrying a man for financial security. Therefore Emma, if she chooses, she never has to live under the rule of a husband who would not allow her the freedom that she experiences with her father. Emma’s life is in the service of her father; however, this role allows her to escape the obligations of a husband and children who would restrict her self far more than her father does and force her to completely become the Angel. Emma recognizes the freedom that she has outside of matrimony:

I shall never be a poor old maid; and it is poverty only which makes celibacy contemptible to a generous public! A single woman, with a very narrow income, must be a ridiculous, disagreeable, old maid! The proper sport of boys and girls; but a single woman, of good fortune, is always respectable, and may be as sensible and pleasant as anybody else. (Austen 83)

Emma’s future, unlike most young women of the times, is financially and socially secure. Moreover, Emma’s father does not want her to marry as this would leave him alone which is a great fear for him in his self-proclaimed ill state of health. It is very easy for Emma to please Mr. Woodhouse in his hypochondria. As long as Emma makes sure that he is regularly provided with his warm basin of gruel he is permissive with Emma so she can do and act as she pleases. However if Emma had a husband she would be required to submit to his demands which would most likely involve conformity to the social order of the Angel who has no self. Therefore Knightley attempts to correct the gentle deficiencies of the permissive Mr. Woodhouse and influence Emma into giving up her self because it
intimidates him that Emma never has to marry and conform to the Angel. Knightley takes on a paternal role with Emma because he recognizes the possibility that Emma will never marry and conform to the Angel because of the ideal situation she has with her father. Therefore, he becomes parent to Emma in order to educate her against her self and encourage her to marry which would force her to abandon her self for the life of an Angel. Throughout the entire novel Knightley attempts to shame the behavior in Emma that her father dotes upon or does not notice. He does this as a means of counteracting the social education that Mr. Woodhouse has given Emma. Emma’s situation at Hartfield allows her to find some measure of freedom within the confines of domesticity largely because she remains unmarried and maintain her selfhood. Mr. Woodhouse is an important factor in the cultivation of Emma’s ability to maintain self, but Mrs. Weston as her former governess has also allowed Emma to become a less than Angelic mistress of her father’s household.

Emma’s mother dies when she is a young girl and Mrs. Weston becomes a segregate mother to Emma and she allows the young and headstrong Emma to distance herself from the submissive conformity to the Angel. Although the reader is never given a scene of Emma’s childhood it is assumed that Mrs. Weston’s encouragement of Emma’s self and lack of persistence of the Angelic conformity took place because Mrs. Weston defends Emma’s behavior to Knightley. She says, “‘Where shall we see a better daughter, or a kinder sister, or a truer friend? No, no; she has qualities which may be trusted; she will never lead any one really wrong; she will make no lasting blunder; where Emma errs once, she is in the right a hundred times’”(Austen 38). When Knightley
is so quick to criticize Emma for her behavior that does not perfectly portray the Angel, Mrs. Weston defends Emma by acknowledging that she is not perfect but that she is a very kind and good natured woman who can be looked kindly upon by everyone. Mrs. Weston practically raised Emma and knows Emma’s faults but is unwilling to condemn her for possessing self because this self comes as a result of having authority within her father’s household. This authority does not allow her to have a carefree life of behave as a selfless Angel because of her immense responsibilities that her father is unwilling and unable to take care of. According to Hoffman, “Mrs. Weston acknowledges and exacerbates Emma’s sense of comfortable authority by remaining in a subordinate position”(Hoffman 1). Hoffman argues that Mrs. Weston has taught Emma to embrace her authority within her father’s household by teaching her to rule over others as a dominant figure. This, he believes, was done in a way that made Mrs. Weston the seemingly subordinate person in their relationship. Therefore Mrs. Weston has taught Emma from childhood that it is necessary to embrace self and establish herself as the dominant figure in society because this behavior is necessary for the mistress of Hartfield. Emma’s ability to manipulate her surroundings are possible due to the education by Mrs. Weston and the acceptance of her father, therefore she befriends Harriet Smith who does not have the intellectual capabilities as Emma does nor the education and this allows Emma to shape Harriet’s mind and self as Emma’s has been shaped throughout her life.

Harriet Smith knows nothing of her self and is not as intelligent as Emma; still, Emma finds her a desirable companion who can be taught to understand her self.
Knightley does not support this friendship because he believes that Harriet will encourage Emma’s good opinion of her self and distance Emma from the Angel even more because Harriet looks to Emma for advice in most matters which has the potential to make Emma arrogant and too sure of herself in Knightley’s opinion,

‘But Harriet Smith-I have not half done about Harriet Smith. I think her the very worst sort of companion that Emma could possibly have. She knows nothing of herself, and looks upon Emma as knowing everything.’ (Austen 37)

Knightley believes that Harriet is “the very worst sort of companion” because she does not have an understanding of her self which is viewed as a favorable quality in a woman within society. However, Harriet’s lack of self could be encouraged by Emma if Harriet “looks upon Emma” as an omniscient person. This encouragement goes against the societal mold of selflessness, or Angelic behavior, that women are expected to possess and would encourage Harriet to want to imitate Emma’s understanding of self and find an understanding of the self that society has forced her to suppress. Therefore Knightley believes that just as he attempts to cultivate Emma, Emma attempts to cultivate Harriet. While such Pygmalion impulses are common for males, women traditionally are the Galatea’s of male influence and care. Austen’s Emma puts herself in the male position when she makes Harriet’s improvement her project. Knightley, of course, objects to Emma appropriating the male prerogative to “school” women: “‘I am not to be talked out of my dislike of her intimacy with Harriet Smith, or my dread of its doing them both harm’”(Austen 38). Knightley also disapproves of Emma’s curriculum as she is
attempting to teach Harriet to value her self more highly than society and Knightley thinks she should. He thinks that this will do “them both harm” because it will encourage Emma’s self while developing a self in Harriet.

Emma encourages Harriet to think outside of the confines of the society when she suggests that Harriet does not have to marry Robert Martin simply because he has asked for her hand. Emma understands that Harriet must marry out of financial necessity; however, when Robert Martin writes Harriet a letter asking for her hand in marriage Emma sees Harriet’s hesitation in her uncertain description of the matter. What this gives Emma the opportunity to encourage Harriet to think well of herself and realize that a woman does not have to marry a man just because he asks her, “‘A woman is not to marry a man merely because she is asked, or because he is attached to her, and can write a tolerable letter’” (Austen 53). Emma uses the influence that she has over Harriet to show her a different way of perceiving her marriage potential. This is done in a very similar fashion as to how Knightley attempts to manipulate Emma into conforming to the ways of the Angel which is why Knightley disagrees with the relationship between these two women. Throughout the novel Knightley uses subtle manipulative hints to encourage Emma to conform to the ways of the Angel; for example, when Emma suggests matchmaking Knightley suggests this pursuit would not be appropriate: “‘Invite him to dinner, Emma, and help him to the best of the fish and the chicken, but leave him to chuse his own wife. Depend upon it, a man of six or seven-and-twenty can take care of himself’” (Austen 15). This subtle suggestion had been repeated in different ways throughout their conversation so Knightley is able to get inside Emma’s head and make
her understand what he thinks her behavior should be like. Emma knows exactly what Knightley thinks she should do in varying situation and is attempting to repeat his opinion enough to make her conform to his views while making her feel that she has come to the decision on her own throughout the conversation. This tactic is what Emma attempts with Harriet because she uses subtle hints that allow Harriet to know Emma’s opinion while saying that opinion in a few different ways which allows Harriet to conform to Emma’s opinion throughout the conversation. Knightley recognizes the dangers that Emma’s seemingly masculine influence could have over Harriet’s decisions to fully enter the domestic world as a wife and relinquish the small amount of self that Emma has encouraged within her. Knightley discourages Emma in her relationship with Harriet because he sees that when Emma takes on such Pygmalion impulses towards Harriet she is stepping farther away from the confines of the domestic and the Angel. Knightley has been an influence over Emma for her entire life which encouraged her to imitate him in a way with her Pygmalion impulses towards Harriet; furthermore, his strong influence has encouraged Emma to fall in love with Frank Churchill who is closer to Emma’s age and does not attempt to be an oppressive force on Emma as Knightley is.

Emma believes that she is in love with Frank Churchill because he is close to her own age and does not demand that she become completely consumed by the demands of the Angel because he encourages what Knightley views as her faults, or her less than Angelic behavior. Frank is Mrs. Weston’s stepson and is very close to Emma in age and social status which creates the ideal scenario for a romantic relationship to develop. Emma is able to be herself around Frank because he shares many of the faults that
Knightley finds in Emma and he is therefore a person who will not judge Emma for her behavior that demonstrates her self, and in many ways, he has similar shortcomings as Emma. However these are not necessarily viewed as shortcomings from anyone other than Knightley because Frank is simply embracing his right to masculine self expression. This connection between Emma not behaving as the Angel and Frank moving freely within the patriarchal society allows the two to connect such as when they point out Jane Fairfax’s flaws, “‘There is safety in reserve, but no attraction. One cannot love a reserved person’”(Austen 190). Although Frank is secretly engaged to Jane, he pretends to share in Emma’s dislike of Jane’s reserved nature which is something that the society deems as appropriate characteristics for a young woman. Emma’s reluctance to befriend Jane is something that Mr. Knightley has always disliked; however, Emma is able to develop a friendship with Frank that is centered on his acceptance of her self without the demand that she become the Angel. Knightley does not like Frank because he poses a threat to all of Knightley’s attempts at teaching Emma to become the ideal Angel. If Frank and Emma marry, which would be a socially appropriate match, Knightley knows that Frank will never force Emma to conform to social norms of the Angel because Frank relishes in his ability to express himself with Emma who is understanding of what Knightley views as Franks shortcomings, “Mr. Knightley…we know that his legitimate disapproval of Emma’s conduct derives some of its animus from unnecessary jealousy on Frank Churchill’s account”(Lodge 181). Mr. Knightley disapproves of the way Emma behaves when she is with Frank Churchill because she is easily able to embrace what Knightley views as her shortcomings while with Frank when these shortcomings are simply the
possession of self outside of the Angel. Furthermore Knightley is jealous of the regard that Emma has for Frank because she is not willing to see the faults that Knightley so willingly points out in the young man since Emma finds him so relatable. This ability for Emma to relate to Frank makes Knightley nervous because they do have the potential to make an acceptable match in which Emma would not have to continue to be educated by Knightley in matters of her social conduct and Angelic behavior this shows Emma’s reluctance towards Knightley’s teachings because she is initially unwilling to give up her self and finds in Frank a person who does not attempt to destroy her self. Emma notices that “Mr. Knightley certainly had not done him [Knightley] justice”(Austen 185). This observation demonstrates Emma’s willingness to ignore the criticisms of Knightley and form her own opinion about Frank whom she finds accepting of who she is, unlike Knightley. Frank Churchill is a character who is accepting of Emma’s self and does not shame her for not acting more like Jane Fairfax who is Knightley’s ideal socialized woman.

Jane Fairfax is a character whom Knightley encourages Emma to become friends with and emulate her behavior throughout the novel; however, Emma does not like the idea of befriending Jane because of Jane’s complete conformity to the Angel. Jane is such a model for the ideals of the society that she is Emma’s “only serious contender- indeed a more conventional lady novelist of the period would have made her the heroine”(Lodge 183). Jane is Emma’s “only serious contender” because she is viewed by the society as a paragon of virtue which would have normally made her the subject of other novels with the target audience of young women. Although Emma is the highest ranking woman in
the society of Highbury, Jane is her only potential threat because she is seemingly an ideal Angel within the standards of society. Emma does not envy Jane for her social graces; she simply wishes to distance herself from the comparisons that Knightley makes between Jane’s alleged superior social accomplishments that stem from her absence of self and absolute conformity to the Angel ideal. Throughout the novel Knightley tries to encourage Emma to develop a friendship with Jane which he hopes will help influence Emma into becoming like Jane; however, Emma has never cared to be friends with Jane because she represents a woman who has no understanding of self. Jane’s lack of self-understanding is proven through her complete conformity to the acknowledge accomplishments of the domestic and that of the Angel. Emma has never wanted a friendship with Jane because they have so little in common. Emma confesses “I wish Jane Fairfax very well; but she tires me to death” (Austen 84). Within the society Jane is considered the ideal Angel because of her many accomplishments and lack of self; therefore, Emma becomes annoyed by the way people speak of Jane because Emma is always considered beneath the socially accomplished caliber of Jane. Therefore it is understandable that Emma would prefer to befriend Harriet over Jane because Knightley never makes Emma feel inferior or inadequate when comparing Harriet to Emma. It is interesting that Knightley feels the need to defend Jane since Jane does decide that her loyalty to her fiancé is stronger than her moral notion against lying. When Jane repeatedly lies to the society of Highbury about her engagement with Frank she decides that her loyalty to Frank and his wish to lie about their engagement are more important than Jane being a beacon of virtue and never telling a lie. Jane lies to protect Frank from
the wrath of his aunt who would not approve of the match. Knightley argues that Frank “had induced her to place herself, for his sake, in a situation of extreme difficulty and uneasiness, and it should have been his first object to prevent her from suffering unnecessarily” (Austen 417). Jane lies in an attempt to protect her fiancé from being disinherited; therefore, her lie is socially acceptable because she is looking after the best interests of Frank which is what an Angel is always expected to do. Knightley is easily able to forgive her lies because she does so in order to protect Frank; however, Jane’s lies make her beneath Harriet as an ideal friend for Emma because a woman lying goes against the strict social expectations of the time. Knightley does not view the situation in this way because he is willing to defend Jane’s lies and encourage her friendship with Emma. He believes Jane’s lack of self and complete trust in her future spouse makes her the superior woman to encourage Emma’s suppression of self because although Jane should have told the truth about their engagement to protect her own interests she does not because she has so little self, due to her Angel, that she was willing to trust that Frank would find the solution for their situation since society deemed decision making a man’s job. When Emma eventually does conform to the type of woman that Knightley wants her to be she is very similar to Jane because she allows society to suppress her self. During this time Emma performs actions that she would not have done before such as marry a man who encourages her to suppress her self, “What does she say? Just what she ought, of course. A lady always does” (Austen 404). Although Emma does not break social barriers before the proposal, she never performs an action in accordance with societal expectations that would be directly related to an Angel. Jane’s influence is
represented in this instance because Emma does what she “ought” she is exemplifying the conformity that society expects of her because women in the novel *Emma* are expected to conform to the Angel and behave in a way that pleases the representation of society: Knightley. Jane is a favorite of Knightley’s because she upholds social expectations and is self-less; her friend, Mrs. Elton, also upholds the self-less expectations of society while attempting to have some control of her friends because society does not allow her to control her own life.

Austen suggests that Mrs. Elton is the kind of person that Emma will turn into after she suppresses her self to fit into Knightley’s ideal Angelic mold. Mrs. Elton is a woman who tries to exert control over the people around her because she is a character who has no understanding of self; and therefore, tries to control other people’s lives in order to establish control over something attainable. Mrs. Elton is a woman who has conforms entirely to the Angel and has no understanding of self. Her lack of self is demonstrated through her conversations which show her obsession with unimportant things. Johnson argues, “Mrs. Elton turns all references to the evils of distance, to the fineness of fine ladies, to the seclusion of the best estates”(Johnson 479). Her conversation revolves around the proper, and seemingly dull, topics of the domestic and the socially sanctioned conversations for a lady. She is a cautionary example character of what women become, or remain if they do not have a strong notion of their self. When Mrs. Elton learns of Jane Fairfax’s plans to become a governess she decides that taking control of Jane’s impoverished situation will help Mrs. Elton gain some amount of control over Jane and Jane’s life choices even though Jane specifically tells her that she is
Mrs. Elton’s help. Mrs. Elton ignores that Jane does not need her help by saying,

Trouble! aye, I know your scruples. You are afraid of giving me trouble; but I assure you, my dear, Jane the Campbells can hardly be more interested about you than I am. I shall write to Mrs. Partridge in a day or two, and shall give her a strict charge to be on the look-out for anything eligible. (Austen 279)

Although Mrs. Elton claims to be interested in Jane and helping her for the pure pleasure of friendship Mrs. Elton is really helping Jane to find some control over a situation and attempt to pursued Jane to follow her advice. If Jane were to follow Mrs. Elton’s advice this would give her a gratification of helpfulness and power that she is unable to achieve while she is consumed by the Angel. Mrs. Elton oversteps her bounds with Jane by trying to take control of Jane’s undesired search for employment. Overstepping her bounds is something that is very common of Mrs. Elton because she always needs to feel needed and in control of the situations around her. Mrs. Elton’s insistence on helping Jane is more of a controlling burden than a friendly assistance which demonstrates the lack of power that Mrs. Elton has in her own life because she is desperately grappling for control over any small situation in life, whether she is asked for help or not. Since Mrs. Elton does not recognize that her help is not wanted she demonstrates her lack of self-knowledge and her insistence of “helping” demonstrates her desire for control. This is as a result of her own lack of self-knowledge of something that Emma gives up when she conforms to Knightley’s moral compass and becomes his wife. Mrs. Elton is the
archetype of the Angel because she has no notion of who she is as a person outside of the socially prescribed role of Angel and is therefore forced to meddle in other people’s lives in order to find some fulfillment. Emma’s conformity into becoming more like the selfless Mrs. Elton occurs at Boxhill when she mistakenly allows her annoyance of Miss Bates to become evident.

At Boxhill Emma accidentally offends Miss Bates who has no understanding of self; however, Austen allows the reader to understand that Emma’s comment is intended as a joke even though it is interpreted as spiteful. The lack of awareness of self that Miss Bates has is exemplified by her nonsensical and tedious chatter. When Miss Bates continues with her dull topics Emma tells her, “‘you will be limited as to the number—only three at once’”(Austen 347). Although Emma’s statement comes off as a rude comment, it is clear that Miss Bates’ dull chatter is out of control and Emma unconsciously tries to reinforce her need for self understanding in order to tame her chatter. Emma has an understanding of her self and finds women like Miss Bates, who have no understanding of self and are consumed by the Angel, to be tiresome. Therefore when Miss Bates is speaking Emma tries to limit her dull chatter which is caused by the restrictions of society. Some critics argue that Emma’s comment towards Miss Bates, “‘devastates Miss Bates by wittily but cruelly indicating that she is a noisy nuisance’”(Tobin 45).This is an overstatement because this suggests that Emma is purposefully attempting to shame Miss Bates for her lack of self-knowledge. Emma recognizes that Miss Bates’ chatter is annoying but Emma has enough hold on her own sense of self that she does not need to hurt people to make herself feel superior. Tobin is
quick to criticize Emma with overstatements of her behavior even though she did not intentionally hurt Miss Bates. Emma may have hurt the feelings of an old family friend, but Emma is young and so full of the knowledge of her own self that it is difficult to restrain her criticism of Miss Bates, who has no knowledge of self whatsoever. Still, critics believe that Emma:

is wrong, does wrong, can speak wrong (Boxhill), judge wrong, and can use her power(hers because of her permanently ailing, hypochondriac, dozing father) in a way that can be destructive to other people’s lives and happiness. (Tanner 176)

However Emma’s small criticism of Miss Bates does not become “destructive to other people’s lives and happiness” because Miss Bates easily continues her monotonous duties as a woman consumed by the Angel even after Emma’s criticism. After Emma apologizes to Miss Bates the incident is forgiven which further demonstrates how Emma’s comment is not intentionally destructive as a result. It is preposterous to say that Emma uses her power within society in a destructive way because in no way does she try to exert her power upon Miss Bates, she simply says a cross word to Miss Bates. Emma continuously makes Miss Bates’ life more comfortable by inviting her to dine at Hartfield, and bringing her vegetables and meat from Hartfield; therefore, Emma would not want to purposefully attack Miss Bates in order to demonstrate power over her because Emma has always treated Miss Bates with kindness and respect. It is not uncommon for two old friends to say a cross word to one another and that is the case at Boxhill with Emma and
Miss Bates. The Boxhill scene so interesting because Emma says one cross thing to Miss Bates after showing her great kindness and society shames Emma for her actions.

Knightley uses the Boxhill scene to support his attempts at suppressing Emma’s self. Knightley shames Emma because she offends Miss Bates who has been a friend to Emma since infancy. Instead of Knightley pointing out that Emma hurt the feelings of her old friend he accuses her of malicious intent, “‘How could you be so unfeeling to Miss Bates?’”(Austen 351). It was not very kind of Emma to make a rude comment towards Miss Bates but she did not intent for it to become a statement with unfeeling intent. His problem with the Emma’s actions has to do with the idea that Emma was not acting like the typical selfless Angel; rather, she acts impulsively according to her first whim so he shames her for her behavior. The Boxhill scene allows Knightley the ideal opportunity to shame Emma once more for her self and try to eradicate it. Emma internalizes Knightley’s reprimands and begins to examine her life from his perspective. Knightley shames Emma with the knowledge of Miss Bates difficult financial situation; and therefore, Emma is expected to take pity on her and have more remorse for offending Miss Bates. After this instance, Emma does decide to conform to Knightley’s opinion and apologizes to Miss Bates in a subtle way that demonstrates her decision to follow Miss Bates in her example of suppression of self and Angelic conformity. Emma has so few things to truly feel remorse for that she begins to examine her thoughts, because her actions rarely give cause for social or personal disapproval. Society, in the form of Knightley, has attempted to control Emma by shaming her and convincing her to internalize that shame. Hoffman argues that, “Emma’s moral and social improprieties are
most fully recognized at the moment she acknowledge her love for Mr. Knightley.
Thereby indicating a relinquishing of her autonomy to male authority; she takes her
proper place within the social hierarchy”(Huffman 1). Her total examination of self and
regret for her past thoughts and actions, shows that after she allows Knightley’s lectures
to become internalized, she becomes like Miss Bates and completely loses her self.

After Knightley shames Emma at Boxhill she internalizes his words and begins to
believe that she has committed grievous violations of social protocol towards Miss Bates.
Emma has been so thoroughly shamed by Knightley that she even goes so far as to mourn
her ungrateful thoughts. The narrator describes Emma’s state of consciousness that she
“had been often remiss, her conscience told her so; remiss perhaps, more in thought than
fact, scornful, ungracious”(Austen 323). The idea that Emma regrets her very thoughts
that were never acted upon or spoken aloud demonstrates how she has internalized
Knightley’s lectures and shame. The symptom of true shame and complete conformity to
society draws a parallel to Stockholm syndrome. Stockholm syndrome is, “An
extraordinary phenomenon in which a hostage begins to identify with and grow
sympathetic to their captors”(Medicinenet.com). Although Knightley does not physically
take Emma captive he brainwashes her into identifying herself with his ideals of the
Angel and she becomes sympathetic towards his constant criticism of her. This constant
criticism is like a kidnapping of the mind that Knightley does over a long period of time
to make Emma into the woman he thinks she should be. She begins to regret all of the
actions that Knightley has shamed her for, “she offends the Eltons; she hurts Jane Fairfax
by ostentatiously flirting with Frank Churchill; and she devastates Miss Bates by wittily
but cruelly indicating that she is a noisy nuisance”(Tobin 45). Although Emma never intends to hurt people’s feelings she accidentally does at certain points in the novel which is a very common thing for most people and Knightley is always there to criticize her for this common flaw. Some scholars have argued that it is necessary for Emma to regret her behavior that has been influenced by her self, “While picnicking at Boxhill, Emma…for the first time in the novel Emma experiences the discomfort and vexation that the narrator implies are necessary to secure her happiness”(Tobin 45). However Emma is happy before she internalizes Knightley’s criticisms, she is able to maintain some self and she does not intentionally hurt anyone while she is embracing her self. Her loss of self and essentially her conformity to Knightley and the Angel does not signify her happiness; rather, the destruction of self and loss of the potential for true happiness. Emma knows that she had hurt Miss Bates’ feelings at Boxhill, but there was no need for Knightley to make her feel ungrateful because Emma would never spitefully hurt anyone as Mrs. Elton would, even the annoying Miss Bates. Emma allows herself to change too much to please Knightley and by allowing that much change she destroys her potential for happiness. Without her self Emma will never be able to be honest in any of her relationships since happiness in relationships with others requires one to be honest with themselves and love their whole self. However Emma is shamed into suppressing that self and is therefore unable to be truly happy in a relationship. Emma’s capitulation of self begins after Knightley shames her about her behavior at Boxhill. Throughout the novel Emma, Knightley attempts to force Emma to abandoning her selfhood or at least her satisfaction with herself; therefore, it is significant that Emma allows his critique of her behavior to
affect her state of self after Boxhill. Throughout the entire novel Knightly attempt to shame Emma into becoming the Angel which contributes to her eventual suppression of self at Boxhill as a result of the culmination of shame. This could contribute to Emma reexamining the importance of her self after the Boxhill scene when she is in a moment of guilt and coming to the conclusion that relinquishing her commitment to self could be a good thing. When Emma decides to capitulate her self in order to become Knightley’s wife it is clear that she has allowed his shame to overcome her. This shameful guilt that Emma experiences is the reason why she wishes to marry the enforcer of society in order to be forever tamed into domestication and Angelic behavior that results from the loss of self.

When Emma becomes “enlightened” by Knightley’s shame at Boxhill she convinces herself that she must marry him because Knightley’s social lessons throughout the novel have finally made Emma into his ideal domesticated Angel and without his continued education of self-suppression she runs the risk of embracing her self once more. It is curious that a woman who has no financial need to marry, and who has adamantly stated that she will never marry decides to marry a man who has never and will never accept the self that she cherishes. When Emma decides, “that Mr. Knightley must marry no one but herself!” (Austen 382) the reader cannot help but question why she has allowed his critique of her behavior to finally resonate after the Boxhill scene. Throughout the novel, Knightley attempts to make Emma suppress her self and become the socialized Angel. This tactic of constant critique and attempted shame finally works on Emma by making her want to become the ideal domestic Angel and wife for
Knightley. Shaffer comments about the life that Emma has to look forward to as Knightley’s wife, “the desirable life for women is centered on domesticity and women’s subordination to husbands and family” (Shaffer 22). Therefore when Emma enters into the matrimonial sphere she is giving up her freedom and sense of self in order to embrace society’s notion of domestic felicity. However this abandonment of self is out of desperation for Knightley whom she convinces herself,

is everything Emma admires, and when she realizes she loves him and needs his approval, she moves much closer to aligning herself with him and his values. Austen has made sure from the start of the novel that we recognize his role in educating Emma (Tobin 55).

Emma becomes so desperate for Knightley’s approval in her moment of shame that she convinces herself that she must marry him in order to “align” herself closely to him and to become absolutely consumed by his social values. Knightley desires to suppress Emma’s self and force her into complete Angelic conformity. However Emma will never be truly happy with Knightley because he will never allow her to embrace her whole self because she must conform completely to his values. Emma’s moment of desperate shame forces her into a marriage with a man who can never allow her true happiness because he refuses to marry her if she demonstrates any self.

After Knightley shames Emma at Boxhill Austen’s narrative tone shifts by utilizing more negative terms, which further exemplifies the negative change that Emma, as the principle character of the novel, goes through. The narrator uses terms such as:
“anger against herself, mortification, and deep concern...vexed...beyond what she could conceal...agitated, mortified, grieved” (Austen 352). These terms change the tone of the narrative in a way that exemplifies Emma’s state of mind; she has been so shamed by Knightley that she feels she must give up her self in order to be a harmless member of society by embracing the Angel that he so desperately wants her to become. Since Emma is the novel’s center of consciousness the majority of the narrator’s commentary reflects Emma’s inner state of being; therefore, when these words become negative, it is clear that Emma’s inner self has gone through a drastically negative shift.

Knightley waits to propose to Emma until she has proven to him that she has given up her desire for self. When Emma has conformed to Knightley’s social outlook and demonstrates her regret for her former faux pas she becomes marriageable in Knightley’s eyes. The reader understands Emma’s feelings of shame and regret when she is walking to apologize to Miss Bates and keeps her eyes on Donwell, “Her eyes were towards Donwell as she walked” (Austen 354). Emma’s conformity to the social protocol of the time and her visual attentiveness to Knightley’s estate is a symbolic representation of Emma visualizing her socially sanctioned marriage to the representation of society-Knightley. Tobin argues that Knightley, is everything Emma admires, and when she realizes she loves him and needs his approval, she moves much closer to aligning herself with him and his values. Austen has made sure from the start of the novel that we recognize his role in educating Emma and trying to teacher her not to abuse her position; his presence
as an authority figure acts as a restraint on Emma and a reassurance that reason, common sense, and true English manners will reign (Tobin 55)

Emma’s becomes desperate for Knightley’s approval of her socially acceptable suppression of self because she has allowed him into the inner workings of her consciousness. Emma searches for Knightley’s approval when she is seeking penance for the actions that he found to be so shameful. But only after he knows that Emma has reconciled with Miss Bates does he allow his long standing emotions for her to influence him into proposing marriage. However, it is unlikely that Knightley ever had real feels of love for Emma because he is so willing to change her and make her into the woman that he wants her to be. If Knightley truly loved Emma he would not wish to change her. In the novel he is trying to create his ideal woman which does not involve loving the woman that Emma actually is. However he is able to manipulate her into believe that marriage to him is what she wants. Emma shows her readiness to marry Mr. Knightley when “Her eyes were towards Donwell”, meaning she kept look at Donwell, or Knightley while she was participating in a domestic visit that he encouraged her to do throughout the novel. If Knightley had been in love with Emma since she was thirteen years old why would he wait to propose marriage for such a long period of time since she has been of marriageable age for five years at this point in the novel? The expectations of the society that Knightley requires of Emma before the proposal demonstrates that Emma is “a narrative close in which a flawed heroine finds her ‘perfect happiness’ with a wiser husband who instructs her, but he neglects Austen’s flexibility with the marriage plot—that is, her willingness to close narratives with relatively equal partners”(White 75). He is
clearly waiting for her to conform into the woman that he tried desperately to turn her into: a woman with no sense of self or the ideal Angel. After Knightley proposes to Emma she behaves in a manner that demonstrates her true conformity to socialization. This conformity demonstrates the inequality of the match because Knightley will always be the one that Emma has to look to for support on suppression of self and his opinions on correct social conduct. After the proposal the narrator describes the beginning of Emma’s social conformity as the future Mrs. Knightley, “What does she say?-Just what she ought, of course. A lady always does”(Austen 404). The idea of Emma doing exactly what she “ought” is something that would not have been done in the first volume of the novel because she was concerned enough for her selfhood that she would not allow social conventions to entirely shape her decisions. However with Knightley’s proposal she does “Just what she ought” as Knightley, or society, had been pushing her to do throughout the entirety of the novel. Emma believes that marriage to Knightley will secure her ultimate happiness because she convinces herself that she is in love with him. However the happiness that she will find with him means that,

Emma’s ultimate happiness is identified with learning to see the world as Knightley sees it, with acceding to his judgment on all important matters, and finally with bowing to that man in loving but inevitably submissive vows of matrimony.(White 73).
Emma’s loss of self in all matters results from Knightley’s shame of her and his demands that she conform to his outlooks. She will never experience true happiness through her marriage to Knightley because she is forced to change and suppress her self.

As a representation of the society Knightley recognizes the influence that Emma’s self has over her domestic endeavors. Although Emma does not neglect her duties as mistress of Hartfield, or to her father, she avoids romantic connections for her self which is considered a deviation from the norm since a woman’s place within the patriarchy was to be married when she becomes of age. Knightley recognizes Emma’s contentment with her position as mistress of Hartfield because she is able to attain enough freedom to satisfy her which is why he attempts to educate her against her self and towards complete conformity to the Angel. Knightley also does not think Emma’s friendship with Harriet is a healthy relationship for either young woman because Emma’s confidence in her self has the potential to grow and Harriet has the possibility to learn about her self. Therefore Knightley encourages Emma to step away from her Pygmalion friendship with Harriet and fully embrace the customs of the society by losing her self and not encouraging self in others. Furthermore Knightley attempts to abolish the potential for a romantic relationship between Frank and Emma because Frank allows Emma to embrace her self and what Knightley believes to be her shortcomings which has the potential to lead to a marriage of where Emma is encouraged to embrace rather than suppress her self. Knightley does encourage Emma’s nonexistent friendship with Jane because he recognizes in Jane the ideal Angel of the society who has no sense of self. Knightley finally succeeds in shaming Emma into suppressing her self and becoming the ideal Mrs.
Knightley. Knightley’s final success in shaming Emma demonstrates how throughout the novel he attempts to force Emma to give into is social values have finally succeeded. Knightley’s persistent criticism of Emma allows him to succeed in eventually shaming her to entirely give up her self and become his wife in order to maintain her selfless state of being.
Jane’s Defiant Self: How Brontë’s Jane Eyre Maintains Self in Society

Charlotte Brontë’s, *Jane Eyre*, is a novel that demonstrates society’s attempts to destroy Jane’s sense of self; Jane yearns for the ability to have self throughout the novel. While at Gateshead, Mrs. Reed’s attempts to socialize Jane are unsuccessful because the young Jane refuses to allow society to beat her into submission, as John Reed symbolically attempts. At Lowood, Jane is able to suppress her self in order to gain an affectionate maternal bond with Miss Temple and Helen, but her self demands liberation the moment Miss Temple leaves the school and is no longer present to enforce the expectations of the Angel on Jane. After Rochester’s proposal Jane is forced to leave him in order to relinquish her former insecurities of self which is done when she confronts St. John Rivers who tries to force Jane into complete abandonment of self and conformity to society. When Jane finally becomes Mrs. Rochester she is able to do so with out of the fear of losing self because of Bertha’s death which is symbolic of Jane learning how to stand up for her self and not allow society to destroy it. *Jane Eyre* is a novel that depicts a young woman whose sense of self never allows for the notion of the domestication to suppress her for long, due to her self’s’ constant reemergence and ability to overcome the pressures of society.

Mrs. Reed is a representation of the Angel because throughout the initial Gateshead section of *Jane Eyre* she tries to punish and exclude Jane from the Reed
family circle. She does this with the hopes of forcing Jane into suppressing her self and instead adopting a more selfless identity. Jane describes the relationship that she has with her aunt,

Me, she had dispensed from joining the group; saying, ‘She regretted to be under the necessity of keeping me at a distance; but that until she heard from Bessie and could discover by her own observation that I was endeavoring in good earnest to acquire a more sociable and childlike disposition, a more attractive and sprightly manner- something lighter, franker, more natural, as it were- she really must exclude me from privileges intended only for contented, happy, little children.’”(Brontë 5)

Mrs. Reed excludes Jane from her family circle because Jane’s disposition is unlike the typical selfless Angelic child of the era. The selfless Angel mold is expected even of a young girl; therefore, Jane’s lack of a “lighter, franker, more natural” disposition shows that Mrs. Reed believes her to be absent of the “natural” qualities that are expected of young Angel at the time. Jane’s self does not allow her to be a “contented, happy, little child” because Mrs. Reed punishes Jane for having self and looks upon her with resentment due to the late Mr. Reed’s favoritism of his niece. Mrs. Reed’s resentment towards Jane for Mr. Reed’s devotion to Jane makes it impossible for Mrs. Reed to become a loving figure of socialization in Jane’s life. Her absence of love towards Jane is the reason why Jane refuses to allow Mrs. Reed to suppress her self through exclusion and punishment. Aunt Reed expects Jane naturally to suppress her self and conform to
society without guidance. Jane’s reluctance to become a selfless figure of society is viewed as a masculine rather than feminine trait which is the reason why Jane’s self needs to be eradicated in the eyes of Mrs. Reed because in a patriarchal society women are not permitted to take on the roles of a man instead they are expected to be the Angel. Therefore Baumlin argues, “Jane’s early years are marked by ambivalence, by an oscillating series of negative and positive images of the masculine, or animus within her” (Baumlin 3). Jane is excluded from the Reed family, in part, because of her stereotypical masculine knowledge of self. The true impact of Mrs. Reed’s exclusion of Jane is Jane’s inability to look upon her family with any feeling of sympathy because the Reeds are so consumed by the customs of the society world and lack of self. Jane feels as if “I was like nobody there; I had nothing in harmony with Mrs. Reed or her children, or her chosen vassalage” (Brontë 12). Aunt Reed’s attempts at punishing the young Jane go awry because Jane’s exclusion only affirms her animosity towards society and the Angel; and therefore, strengthens her grasp of self while pushing her further away from Mrs. Reed’s control.

Brontë exemplifies Mrs. Reed’s position as a socializing force in Jane’s life during the Red Room scene. Jane becomes frightened but Mrs. Reed will not allow her out of her punishment without perfect submission to her aunt’s authority and therefore, submission to the demands of society and the Angel. Mrs. Reed refuses to show Jane mercy when she says, “it is my duty to show you that tricks will not answer: you will now stay here an hour longer, and it is only on condition of perfect submission and stillness that I shall liberate you then” (Brontë 14). Mrs. Reed’s punishing threat
demonstrates her demand for Jane’s “perfect submission” to society and the Angel. She even goes so far as to claim it is her “duty” to socialize Jane and turn her into a selfless young woman. Mrs. Reed attempts to punish, and scare Jane into relinquishing her selfhood and embracing the ideal Angel. Jane does not give in to societal pressures no matter how fearful she is of the “haunted” Red Room. Jane begs her aunt to “‘have pity!...I cannot endure it’”(Brontë 14); however, Jane is unwilling to allow herself to succumb to her aunt’s demands of “perfect submission.” According to Rich, “In the Red Room, Jane experiences the bitter isolation of the outsider, the powerlessness of the scapegoat to please, the abjectness of the victim”(Rich 471). Jane had previously experienced isolation from the Reed’s due to her self and when she is in the Red Room is trapped as a way to please Mrs. Reed that her outburst of self has been thoroughly punished. In many ways Jane becomes a victim to society when Mrs. Reed refuses her pleas of release because she allows a little girl to experience terror as a means of encouraging her to become the Angel. Mrs. Reed’s demands for Jane to change and submit to the customs of society are similar to Knightley’s demands on Emma to change throughout the novel Emma; however, both young women at first refuse to submit. This demanded submission is asking too much of Jane because it would mean that everything which makes her so different from her family would disappear and she would become like her aunt and cousins, who have no knowledge of self and are consumed by the idea of the Angel. Jane’s passion in the red-room is symbolic of her symbolic resistance because she moves farther away from society and embraces her unsocialized self. Some critics interpret this self as an escape “In the red-room, however, little Jane chooses (or is
chosen by) a third, even more terrifying, alternative: escape through madness”(Gilbert 341). It is unmistakable that after Jane’s terrifying encounter in the red-room she is a changed person. While at Gateshead she is unwilling to even pretend to conform to society’s demands of the Angel because Jane becomes so consumed by the maddening punishment of the red-room which pushes her farther away from the domestic sphere which she is expected to happily occupy. Gilbert and Gubar argue that the red-room is the most significant experience that Jane has at Gateshead and it “forces her deeply into herself”(Gilbert 340) which means that her Aunt Reed fails at socializing Jane and destroying her selfhood. Fundamentally, Mrs. Reed is the reason behind Jane’s firm grasp of self.

After Jane’s experience in the Red Room, she changes as a character because she is no longer willing to be civil to Mrs. Reed, which demonstrates her firm grasp of self and repulsion of customs of society. Mrs. Reed forces the Angel on Jane in a very similar way to Knightley’s constant attempts of socialization towards Emma. When Mrs. Reed tells her children not to go near Jane she is met with Jane’s firm reply of, “They are not fit to associate with me”(Brontë 22). This reply demonstrates Mrs. Reed’s failure to properly educate Jane about relinquishing her self because Jane is willing to protest verbally against her benefactress’s slander. After Jane’s initial meeting with Mr. Brocklehurst she further demonstrates her refusal to submit to the expectations of society when she tells her aunt,
'I am not deceitful: if I were, I should say I loved you; but I declare I do no love you: I dislike you the worst of anybody in the world except John Reed; and this book about the liar, you may give to your girl, Georgiana, for it is she who tells lies, and not I.' (Brontë 30)

Jane’s statement shows her firm grasp of self, and Mrs. Reed’s failure to properly force Jane into suppression of self because Jane refuses to pretend that she has affections for her family who wish to destroy her coveted self. Mrs. Reed associates Jane’s self with deceitfulness and describes her as such to Mr. Brocklehurst but Jane refuses to allow this lie to taint her and defends her self. Jane’s aunt is unable to understand the love Jane has for her self because she is a selfless Angel of society.

Another reason for Mrs. Reed’s bitterness towards Jane stems from jealousy because Jane is able to retain her self. Her Aunt Reed is jealous because she has no knowledge of self; and therefore, is cruel to Jane because of her lack of understanding. Mrs. Reed’s lack of self is demonstrated during the Red Room scene when the narrator describes her contempt for the attributes that are characteristic of the self. The narrator says, “she sincerely looked on me as a compound of virulent passions, mean spirit, and dangerous duplicity” (Brontë 14). This look that Mrs. Reed gives her niece demonstrates her lack of self because if she had any amount of self she would have some compassion for Jane’s struggle with her “dangerous duplicity.” When Jane returns to Gateshead to visit her dying aunt, Brontë exemplifies Mrs. Reed’s jealousy when she informs Jane of the fortune and family that was kept from Jane as a punishment for her self and Mrs.
Reed’s own jealousy of Jane’s unwillingness to become the Angel. Aunt Reed tells Jane, “I disliked you too fixedly and thoroughly ever to lend a hand in lifting you to prosperity… the fury with which you once turned on me, the tone which you declared you abhorred me the worst of anybody in the world” (Brontë 203). Mrs. Reed cannot tolerate Jane because Mrs. Reed is so thoroughly entrapped within the Angel that she cannot understand why her husband would ever stoop so low as to take in the orphaned daughter of a clergyman. However Mrs. Reed is so thoroughly entrapped that she does not have any understanding of Jane’s conviction of self and is therefore envious of Jane’s self. Due to the patriarchal social structure women are pitted against other women because they are forced to compete for attention and gratification for their Angelic behavior. Mrs. Reed’s jealousy is further evident through her prejudice towards Jane as a result of her husband’s favoritism of his orphaned niece. Mrs. Reed expresses her disdain for the young Jane Eyre on her death bed, “I hated it the first time I set my eyes on it- a sickly, whining, pining thing!...Reed pitied it; and he used to nurse it and notice it as if it had been his own: more, indeed, than he ever noticed his own at that age” (Brontë 197). Aunt Reed was jealous of the affection that her husband showed toward his niece, who was the product of a marriage that Mr. Reed’s family never approved of for the late Jane Reed. Since Jane was the daughter of a poor clergyman, and an heiress, Mrs. Reed believed the child should be raised at a distance. Instead her husband showed the child pity which fueled Mrs. Reed’s envy of Jane and demonstrates her own lack of self which may have fueled some compassion for an orphaned child. If Mrs. Reed had been more secure in her relationship with her husband’s then she may not have hated her young
niece to whom her husband showed needed attention. Mrs. Reed’s jealousy of Jane stems from her own insecurities and lack of self. Mrs. Reed’s blatant disdain for Jane is so evident that even her son begins to attempt to force his cousin into becoming a selfless figure of society.

John Reed further supports his mother’s attempts of forcing Jane into the Angel because he constantly reminds Jane of her place as an inferior within the household and therefore, an inferior within society. When Jane is in the library he reminds her, “‘You have no business to take our books…they are mine; all the house belongs to me’” (Brontë 8). Jane’s use of Reed’s books shows her yearning for knowledge which is something that Reed does not want to encourage because Jane finds reading to be a great pleasure in life and he does not want to encourage her education when she still has not suppressed her self. Although Jane feels that Reed is a tyrannical male figure in her life, she is expected, according to the conventions of society, to endure his abuse. Rich argues, “as a female she is exposed to male physical brutality and whim; as an economically helpless person she is vulnerable in a highly class-conscious society” (Rich 471). Jane is looked down up on by Reed because she is a dependent in his mother’s household and possesses self which he believes gives him the right to enforce “physical brutality” when he chooses on Jane. In an effort to protect her self Jane attacks John Reed he, “ran headlong at me” (Brontë 9). Jane fights Reed in an attempt to demonstrate that she will not relinquish her self to his intimidating persuasion. In the library, Jane’s “decision is made for her. She is found by John Reed, the tyrannical son of the family who reminds her of her anomalous position in the household, hurls the heavy volume of Bewick at her, and
arouses her passionate rage” (Gilbert 340). John Reed therefore forces Jane into embracing her self and cherishing it because he physically assaults her with the book that represents her self and her rebellious place within the household as a rebel against the norms of society. This book represents her rebellion and self because Reed does not want Jane to read the books that belong to him; however Jane disregards this and reads his books anyways. Reed’s refusal to allow Jane reading material shows that he wants Jane to live in ignorance and not have enough intellectual knowledge to maintain self by not depending on men to supplement her knowledge. This forces Jane to protect her self by stirring her “passionate rage.” This illustrates Jane’s “refusal to submit to her social destiny” (Gilbert 338) as a woman living within the domestic and suffer the abuse of her patriarchal tyrants. Jane articulates to Reed her true opinion of him as a tyrannical patriarch, which demonstrates her lack of the feminine modesty found within the stereotypical selfless domestic Angel, “You are like a murderer- you are like a slave-driver- you are like the Roman emperors!” (Brontë 8). Jane’s accusation that Reed is “like a murderer” exemplifies his position as a representation of society, like Mr. Knightley, attempting to destroy Jane’s self. Furthermore Jane compares Reed to “a slave-driver” which articulates his position as a man in society attempting to turn Jane into a domestic slave within the confines of the domestic.

After Jane defends her self to John Reed she faces her nurse maid, Bessie, who is a woman who lives within the barriers of the domestic social world; however, Bessie endeavors to mold Jane into a selfless Angel using kinder manner towards Jane than Mrs. Reed uses. Bessie is the first kind figure who attempts to eradicate Jane’s self. Although
Bessie shames Jane for her attack of John Reed she pities Jane and punishes her with reprimands instead of banishment as Mrs. Reed would do, “‘For shame! For shame!...What shocking conduct, Miss Eyre, to strike a young gentleman, your benefactress’s son! Your young master’”(Brontë 9). Bessie attempts to “shame” Jane into forfeiting her self and embracing the barriers of the Angel, which allows Jane to feel the true severity of her actions. Jane has transgressed the customs of the Angel completely in order to defend her self against John Reed. LaMonaca argues, “*Jane Eyre*’s…themes inevitably furthers our understanding of the novel’s gender politics; that is we see more clearly what is at stake for Jane in her struggle against male control”(LaMonaca 2). What is at stake for Jane if she continues to fight male authority is she will become a social outcast. This position as a social outcast will force Jane into a life completely outside the barriers of the domestic and into a lifestyle that she had never know. This is why Bessie attempts to reprimand Jane for her actions and force her to understand the extent of the damage that she could have done to her position within society. This Jane’s love of self is stronger than her love of Bessie so instead of submitting meekly to Bessie’s reprimands and Reed’s tyrannical rule, she continues to rebel by pertly asking, “‘Master! How is he my master? Am I a servant?’”(Brontë 9). Jane does not understand the kindness that Bessie is showing towards her because Jane is so young and has a firm grasp on her self which prevents her from recognizing that all women are expected to become selfless Angels; and therefore, submissive to their “master” whom in Jane’s case is John Reed. Reed is the first male character who attempts to destroy Jane’s self, but Reed has no real
power over her; however, Mr. Brocklehurst as superintendent of Lowood has enough
totality over Jane to force her into submission to the Angel.

Mr. Brocklehurst represents society because he has engineered Lowood
Institution to systematically destroy the self of young girls. Mrs. Reed sends Jane to
Lowood because Mr. Brocklehurst prides his institution on providing an education that
will “‘mortify in [Jane]…the worldly sentiment of pride’”(Brontë 28). This is appealing
to Mrs. Reed because she has unsuccessfully attempted to destroy Jane’s self and decides
that Brocklehurst is the best person to continue in attempting to break Jane of her habit of
selfhood. According to Rich, Mr. Brocklehurst “is the embodiment of class and sexual
double-standards and of the hypocrisy of the powerful, using religion, charity, and
morality to keep the poor in their place and to repress and humiliate the young women
over whom he is set in charge”(Rich 472). Mr. Brocklehurst’s goal is to use “religion,
charity, and morality” to shame the young pupils of Lowood into becoming selfless
Angels who represent domesticity and the humble appearance that an Angel is expected
to portray in a patriarchal society. The humbling appearance that Brocklehurst forces
Lowood girls is expected to lower the young girls’ “sentiment of pride”; and therefore,
destroy their self in order to become the selfless Angels trapped in the limitations of
society. Mr. Brocklehurst therefore represents society because he designs Lowood as a
school that will teach young women to be ashamed of selfhood. Therefore this school
encourages them to find a false gratitude in the confined selflessness of the domestic.
After Jane had been a student of Lowood for an entire quarter she still had a strong grasp
of self. Since Jane still possesses self Mr. Brocklehurst attempts to humiliate Jane in front
of her fellow students in order to force her into societal submission. Mr. Brocklehurst attempts to shame Jane by his public and negative redefinition of her selfhood:

‘it becomes my duty to warn you, that this girl, who might be one of God’s own lambs, is a little castaway: not a member of the true flock, but evidently an interloper and an alien. You must be guarded against her; you must shun her example: if necessary, avoid her company, exclude her from you sports, and shut her out from your converse.’ (Brontë 56)

Brocklehurst attempts to alienate the students against Jane in order to force her into giving up her self and submitting to the Angel. Brocklehurst hopes that this will force Jane into giving up her self just as Knightley hopes to shame Emma into suppression of self. He assumes that if Jane does not have any friends amongst her classmates she may become so lonely that she will give up her self. However Jane makes friends who encourage her to submit to the Angel through their kindness. Mr. Brocklehurst’s attempts to socialize Jane are very similar to Mrs. Reed’s methods because they both try to exclude Jane in order to force her into submission.

Helen Burns for the short time that she is in Jane’s life, has a great impact in teaching her how to become a selfless Angel. Brontë demonstrates Helen’s position as an influencing representation of the selfless Angel through Helen because Helen is constantly encouraging Jane to submit to the demands of society and give up her self. Rich states, “Helen gives her a glimpse of female character without pettiness, hysteria, or self-repudiation” (Rich 473). Helen is able to be the model for Jane of how to behave as a
selfless Angel. All of the “pettiness, hysteria, or self-repudiation” that Jane may have previously experienced through her self are to be suppressed through Helen’s way of selfless compliance to social demands. Helen says: “‘Hush, Jane! You think too much of the love of human beings, you are too impulsive, too vehement… should we ever sink overwhelmed with distress, when life is so soon over, and death is so certain an entrance to happiness’”(Brontë 59). Helen silences Jane’s impulsive yearning for revenge after Brocklehurst’s accusations of Jane which demonstrates Helen’s acceptance of society and her influence over Jane because Jane looks to Helen as an example of a good Christian girl, and therefore, wants to emulate her calmness about the situation and the proper behavior to have. Furthermore, Helen’s belief that death is “so certain an entrance to happiness” suggests her belief that she thinks that women should endure their suffering in the world in order to find eternal salvation and happiness. Although Helen Burns is a young girl she has influence over Jane because Jane yearns for the acceptance of friendship; and therefore wishes to conform to the demands of the Angel in order to please Helen. Jane internalizes the lessons that she learns from Helen about how to become a selfless Angel because while at Lowood she lives her life in order to please Miss Temple and her other teachers, which involves the suppression of self, and embracing the Angel. However Jane does not allow these lessons to destroy her strong self which demonstrates Jane’s yearns for freedom from Lowood. Helen is not the only influence over Jane’s self while Jane attends Lowood Miss Temple is a more maternal influence over the impressionable Jane.
After Jane’s experience with Mr. Brocklehurst she looks up to Miss Temple as a maternal figure and wishes to please her; therefore, it is easier for Miss Temple to help educate Jane about the customs of society through love than through the exclusion that Jane had previously experienced. Although Miss Temple tricks Jane into conforming into a more selfless domestic Angel by providing loving affection for her, in the end she still does encourage and teach Jane how to become a conformed selfless woman. Jane was orphaned as an infant and yearns for the maternal bond that she has never previously experienced. Miss Temple’s loving attempts at educating and encouraging suppression of self are successful because Jane sees in her the mother for whom she had always yearned. Brontë portrays Miss Temple as a maternal figure. She is also a force that helps Jane learn to suppress her self. Miss Temple transfers to Jane her ability to have “no wings rush in her head, no fantasies of fiery heath disturb her equanimity, but she will feel sympathetic anger” (Gilbert 345). Miss Temple teaches Jane that a true selfless Angel must learn to tame her “fiery” passions and learn to “feel sympathetic anger.” This does influence the young Jane into behaving within the confines of the Angel and not to hide her anger when patriarchal tyrants like Mr. Brocklehurst assert control. When Brocklehurst attempts to assert control over Jane by humiliating her in front of her class with false accusations of her bad behavior and ingratitude towards her aunt, Miss Temple shows Jane kindness by allowing Jane the opportunity to prove her innocence. However Miss Temple must consult Mr. Lloyd in order to prove Jane’s innocents. She says, “‘I know something of Mr. Lloyd; I shall write to him; if his reply agrees with your statement, you shall be publically cleared from every imputation’” (Brontë 60). Although
Miss Temple is being kind by giving Jane the opportunity to assert her innocence. Miss Temple makes it clear that she must consult a man to prove Jane’s statement against Brocklehurst’s claims. Since these women live within a patriarchal society, it is not possible for Jane to prove her innocence against a man—Mr. Brocklehurst and his slander, without the word of another man. In a patriarchal society, men are the superior beings and women are considered so inferior that even their defense against slander is irrelevant without a man’s word to support them. However, the day that Miss Temple leaves Lowood to be married is when Jane’s self and yearning for freedom from the confinement of the Angel appears again. Brontë demonstrates the power that Miss Temple has over Jane through Jane’s description of eight years of her time at Lowood: “I believed I was content…I appeared a disciplined and subdued character” (Brontë 71). Jane uses weak terms such as “believed” and “appeared” in order to demonstrate the illusion that she was living within the domestic as a result of Miss Temple’s influence; and therefore, her life centered around being a passive selfless woman. Miss Temple’s “continual solace” (Brontë 71) for Jane is a symbolic representation of her continued reminder for Jane of the importance of embracing the Angel and suppressing self. After Miss Temple leaves to be married, the maternal connection that she has with Jane disappears, leaving Jane to contemplate her own freedom and self which she had given up eight years ago. Her self was suppressed at Lowood in order to please Miss Temple, but it never disappeared entirely. As Miss Temple pulls away in a carriage with her new husband, Rev. Mr. Nasmyth, Jane watches them out the window and, “desired liberty; for liberty I grasped; for liberty I uttered a prayer; it seemed scattered on the wind then
faintly blowing” (Brontë 72). That Miss Temple’s exit from the novel gives rise to Jane’s immediate yearning “for liberty” demonstrates the hold that Miss Temple, as an influencer of self suppression, had over Jane because just a few minutes after Miss Temple is out of Jane’s life the old yearnings for freedom from the Angel and self consume Jane, “Despite Miss Temple’s training, the ‘bad animal’ who was first locked up in the red-room is, we sense, still lurking somewhere, behind a dark door, waiting for the chance to get free” (Gilbert 349). The “bad animal” is the self that Jane forces under repression while Miss Temple is a prominent figure in her life. This demonstrates that as long as Jane has the opportunity to desire the maternal love that Miss Temple had to give her, that was the duration of the time that Jane’s self-suppression would last.

Jane learns how to be a domestic Angel through Miss Temple and Helen Burns, but she does not allow these lessons to completely suppress her self; instead, she finds a balance between self and society in order to live within the confines of the society and the Angel. According to Gilbert and Gubar Jane finds, “What she has learned from her two mothers is, at least superficially, to compromise. If pure liberty is impossible” (Gilbert 347) Jane is able to suppress her self while under Miss Temple and Helen’s influence because this pleases them and gives Jane an established unity of selflessness with these women. Jane never truly gives up her self completely which is demonstrated when she no longer has Helen or Miss Temple to guild and support her. Jane’s existence within the barriers of the domestic and the Angel while still embracing her self is shown when she advertises for new employment. She uses an abbreviated name to not be exposed to society for her lack of contentment. Jane says, “‘A new servitude!...it does not sound too
sweet; it is not like such words as Liberty, Excitement, Enjoyment…answers must be addressed to J. E. at the post office”’ (Brontë 73). Jane calls her search for employment a yearning for a new “servitude” because she knows that it is out of the realm of society for a selfless Angel to yearn for. A selfless Angel of the domestic is never supposed to question her position in life, rather embrace it. Jane wants, “Liberty, Excitement, Enjoyment” because these things would take a woman out of the world of the domestic and into the male sphere, “The position of governess seems to have been appropriate because, while it was paid employment it was within the home” (Peterson 6). Jane utilizes the lessons she learned from Miss Temple and Helen Burns in order to decide to become a governess because she knows that the governess trade is one of the only socially acceptable positions for a woman within society. However Jane’s self does not allow the influence of society to overcome her and her discontentment becomes a yearning for a new situation.

When Jane arrives at Thornfield Hall she meets her next maternal socializing figure in Mrs. Fairfax. Jane’s relationship with Mrs. Fairfax becomes similar to her relationship with Miss Temple because she wishes to become an agreeable companion to Mrs. Fairfax. Jane is treated like a visitor of Thornfield Hall which is different than most governesses would have been treated because governesses were essentially educated servants and would not be treated with the respect of a guest. Mrs. Fairfax says to Jane, ‘I am so glad you are come; it will be quite pleasant living here now with a companion. To be sure it is pleasant at any time …[Leah and John] are only
servants, and one can’t converse with them on terms of equality: one must keep them at due distance.’ (Brontë 82)

Mrs. Fairfax shows her loneliness to Jane and her excitement to have a “suitable” companion within the household which allows Jane to warm to Mrs. Fairfax. This allows Mrs. Fairfax to take the position as an example of Angelic selflessness in Jane’s life. Mrs. Fairfax shows a connection to *Emma* and in particular Jane Fairfax who becomes an example to Emma of what true selfless social conformity should be like. Jane’s wish to please Mrs. Fairfax is evident from the beginning when she narrates, “My heart really warmed to the worthy lady as I heard her talk: and I drew my chair a little nearer to her, and expressed my sincere wish that she might find my company as agreeable as she anticipated” (Brontë 83). Jane physically moves closer to Mrs. Fairfax which is symbolic of her moving back under the influence of the Angel under Mrs. Fairfax’s maternal guidance. Furthermore Jane wishes “that she might find my company as agreeable as she anticipated” which demonstrates that Jane wishes to be agreeable to Mrs. Fairfax and become an acceptably selfless companion for the older woman. Mrs. Fairfax is much like the socializing figures who are previously present in Jane’s life because Mrs. Fairfax, “like the ambiguous architecture of Thornfield itself, suggests at once a way in which the situation at Thornfield reiterates all the other settings of Jane’s life” (Gilbert 348). Mrs. Fairfax as a representative of society has influence over Jane which is further evident when she believes Jane to be moving away from the barriers of society and embracing her self too much with Mr. Rochester. Mrs. Fairfax warns Jane, “‘I am sorry to grieve you,’ pursued the widow; ‘but you are so young, and so little acquainted with men, I
wished to put you on your guard’” (Brontë 226). Mrs. Fairfax is reminding Jane of how improper it would be for Jane to embrace her self and participate in premarital affairs with Mr. Rochester. Mrs. Fairfax reminds Jane of the necessity to tame her self and embrace the selflessness of the Angel while with Rochester.

Jane’s first encounter with Rochester on the road to Thornfield Hall demonstrates her temporary escape from the domestic and Rochester’s acceptance of Jane’s assistance in his time of need. Jane becomes tired of constantly remaining within the domestic and the Angel and uses her day off to escape her confining situation. She describes, “I was tired of sitting still in the library through a whole long morning” (Brontë 94). Jane escapes her confining situation within the domestic by going for a walk which is symbolic of her temporarily stepping away from the selflessness of domesticity and the Angel. However when Jane is on her way back to Thornfield she encounters Rochester before she knows that he is the master of the estate. It is significant that they first meet when Jane is allowing herself a reprieve from the selflessness of domesticity and the Angel. Since Jane is taking a break from the conventions of society she allows herself to ask if this stranger requires her assistance which would be something that many women would have feared to do because being alone with a strange man could potentially compromise her virtue. Jane describes, “I asked him the question: - ‘Are you injured, sir?’” (Brontë 96). Although it may seem like the polite thing for Jane to offer her assistance to an injured man she is still disregarding the potential repercussions that society could have for her if she puts herself in a compromising position. However Rochester accepts her help and asserts his disregard for the assumed inferiority of her sex by allowing her to help him. He says,
“‘You must just stand on one side’” (Brontë 96). When Rochester gives Jane directions about how to best assist him he shows that in his time of need Jane’s sex does not prevent her ability to help him and therefore raises her status from inferiority. Furthermore Jane at this time is not acting as the selfless Angel that society expects her to be because she has symbolically stepped out of doors and temporarily away from the selfless Angel she must be while in the domestic. Therefore their first encounter, which is the event that makes Rochester romantically interested in Jane, is when he sees her as a woman full of self and not attempting to be the selfless Angel she is expected to be. Rochester does not want Jane to be a selfless and suppressed woman who has not understanding of who she is because he finds Jane to be a compatible companion as she is while embracing her self. When they return to the domestic Rochester questions Jane about her accomplishments because the selfless Jane is very different than the one he met on the road to Thornfield.

Rochester wants to have an understanding of who Jane is when they return to Thornfield because she is a woman who possess evident self yet suppresses that self while within the confines of the domestic. He questions Jane to find out what is behind this rare woman who attempts to balance self and the selflessness of the Angel. Rochester inquires, “‘fetch me your portfolio, if you vouch for its contents being original; but don’t pass your word unless you are certain: I can recognize patchwork’” (Brontë 106). Rochester is asking Jane to prove that she possesses the accomplishments required of a governess because when he initially met her she was not behaving as the selfless creature that society demands Angel to be and therefore her ability to teach Adele how to become a socialized Angel is in question. Rochester’s attraction to Jane is further asserted when
she is able to embrace the selfless Angel and still possess self. This is a very difficult thing for Jane but she is easily able to remember to not lose her self while she is forced to act and be a certain way within the domestic. Jane becomes a mystery to him because this balance that Jane desperately holds onto is rare within the patriarchal society. Jane is so different from other women that he tells her Adele’s origin which is not something that he would tell a delicate completely selfless Angel.

Rochester tells Jane about Adele’s French mother because he knows that Jane will not judge Adele for the actions of her mother since Jane possess self, like Celine Varens, but Jane is able to control her self enough to stay within the barriers of society. Jane and Celine have a connection to one another because both women have not allowed society to completely eradicate their self however Celine lived completely outside of the barriers of society and the Angel since she embraced her less than virtuous passions as Rochester’s mistress. Rochester admits, “I never thought there was any consecrating virtue about her: it was rather a sort of pastille perfume she had left, a scent of musk and amber, than an odor of sanctity” (Brontë 120). He admits to Jane that Celine’s virtue was an illusion such as perfume because she allowed her self to consume her and could not possess the virtuous aspects of a woman who lives within the barriers of the Angel. Rochester leaves Celine when he finds her cheating on him which shows Jane the instability of Rochester’s commitment towards his lovers because Rochester did not expect Celine to be virtuous and at the first sign that she lacked virtue he leaves her. This story later allows Jane to decide to leave Thornfield Hall because becoming his mistress would destroy Jane’s virtue and position within society. Furthermore if she became his mistress Jane will have
the risk of Rochester growing tired of her and leave as he left Celine. In the end Rochester left his former mistress because of her lack of faithfulness or virtue like an Angel of society and if Jane become his mistress she would completely destroy her virtue and he may leave her because he finds the societal notion of Angelic virtue to be a motivational factor in the longevity of his relationships. Jane cannot become Mr. Rochester’s mistress because this would force her to live outside of the barriers of the Angel and society and therefore become like the monstrous Bertha. Jane would be considered a fallen woman, and according to Roberts: “the fallen woman, as Victorians liked to call the victim of seduction”(Roberts 63). Jane would become a “fallen woman” if she entered into an unsanctioned union with Rochester and she would therefore live outside of the barriers of society and the Angel. Although Jane considers running away with Rochester and pretending to be his wife, she knows that her existence outside of the barriers of society and the Angel will result in her own unhappiness because her balance between self and society will be lost, “Rochester’s ultimate secret, the secret that is revealed together with the existence of Bertha, the literal impediment to his marriage with Jane, is another and perhaps most surprising secret of inequality”(Gilbert 355). At the beginning of Jane’s relationship with Rochester she believes they are equals and the existence of a living Mrs. Rochester proves Jane’s superiority to the lofty Mr. Rochester. Jane claims to be truly loved by Rochester and to be able to reciprocate his regard, “Not a human being that ever lived could wish to be loved better than I was loved; and him who thus loved me I absolutely worshipped: and I must renounce love and idol”(Brontë 269). Jane knows that she must renounce her love for him because she “worshipped” him too
much which would allow him to restrict her within the domestic while society would view her as a deviant because she would be virtuous. Furthermore Jane asserts her love of self to Rochester when she says, “‘I care for myself. The more solitary, the more friendless, the more unsustainable I am, the more I will respect myself…I will hold to the principles received by me when I was sane, and not mad- as I am now’” (Brontë 270). Jane states that she cares for herself too much to compromise that self by becoming Rochester’s mistress which she claims would force her to lose her self. Her self knowledge allows her to realize that “Rochester…ended up appearing to offer a life of pleasure, a path of roses (albeit with concealed thorns), and a marriage of passion” (Gilbert 356) which would lead Jane to ruin because Rochester’s all-consuming passionate relationship would force her to lose her relationship with her self. Furthermore she asserts that she has become “mad” and must act on her “sane” thoughts. This alludes to Bertha because Jane is having trouble saying no to Mr. Rochester, but she must embrace enough of her self as exemplified by Bertha in order to maintain the balance that she has created within the barriers of society and the Angel.

Rochester first falls in love with Jane because he is attracted to her strong self; however, after their first engagement he loses sight of the importance of her self and attempts to force her into becoming a selfless Angel consumed by social customs. Jane assumes that after the wedding she, “‘shall continue to act as Adele’s governess; by that I shall earn my board and lodging, and thirty pounds a year besides. I’ll furnish my own wardrobe out of that money, and you shall give me nothing’” (Brontë 230). Jane tries to show Rochester her desire to marry him out of love, not out of financial gain. She does
not want to be treated as the aristocratic Mrs. Rochester, instead she wants to earn her own way, and make her own money so she does not have to receive gifts from her husband or have to ask his permission to purchase her clothing. Jane’s assumption of her role in Adele’s life and how this role will affect their marriage shows her confidence in his wish of equality. However Rochester does not like this idea because his opinion of her begins to slip towards the notion of the selfless Angel, instead of the Jane whom he fell in love with due to her strong self because, “His need for her strength and parity is made clearer” (Gilbert 353) when Rochester attaches himself to her honesty and impartiality of him in the beginning of their relationship. His changed regard for Jane towards a selfless Angel of social custom is evident when Rochester sings her a song which suggests lovers die with one another. Jane cannot help but states, “‘I had no intention of dying with him-he might depend on that’” (Brontë 233). This statement is symbolic of Jane’s refusal to allow her self to die due to her relationship with Rochester. She refused to allow him to change her and become the death of her self even though the manifestation of her self-Bertha, does die.

After Berta’s death, Jane marries Rochester because her all-consuming risk of embracing self as Bertha disappears because she is able to take complete control over the balance that she has established between the Angel and self. Jane’s control is exemplified when she is speaking with Rochester and he is upset by St. John’s proposal and wishes Jane to leave; however, she refuses to go because of her strong grasp on her self-knowledge. She says to him, “‘Shake me off, the, sir- push me away, for I’ll not leave for of my own accord’” (Brontë 378). This demonstrates her determination to stay with
Rochester and her firm hold of self because she does not allow herself to become
intimidated by his persistence of exile, instead she calmly refuses. Jane knows that she
wants to be with Rochester, and her balance allows her to become more assertive.
Furthermore when she says, “Reader, I married him” (Brontë 382), this demonstrates her
grasp of self and the balance that she has learned because she does not allow the notion
that the selfless Angel of society that is expected for her to be to take over her marriage
and cloud her self. Griesinger argues, “Brontë’s treatment of women’s issues and
concerns in the novel, including…equality of marriage” (Griesinger 3) is a very important
aspect because Brontë does not allow Jane to marry Rochester until he has proven
himself to be her equal. Furthermore Jane uses first person narration which asserts that
she is making her own choices and is able to balance her self while not letting Rochester
take advantage of her. The selfless Angel is supposed to be grateful that a man would
marry her; rather, Jane has a balance of her self to know that she is the one who honors
him with her hand in marriage. Jane’s control over the balance that she maintains
between her self and the Angel allow her to marry Mr. Rochester as an equal instead of a
subservient domestic Angel.

Although Jane surrounds herself with women who embrace society, Bertha
Rochester is the symbolic representation of what could happen to Jane if allows her
selfhood to outweigh her knowledge of social expectations. Brontë uses the character of
Bertha as a representation of Jane’s duel nature, her self. Bertha appears throughout the
text when Jane is at risk of losing her firm grasp of self which demonstrates Jane’s dual
reflection of self through Bertha because Bertha, or Jane’s self, tries to protect her from
becoming too entrapped within society. Bertha is “Jane’s psychological double, whose
behavior mirrors Jane’s...forbidden, repressed rage at and rebellion against social
inequalities and sexual restraint which prevent women from realizing their fullest
expression of self”(Fisher 161). However Jane is unaware of this connection with Bertha.
Bertha is “the archetype that guides one on...a journey towards individuation, toward a
conscious ego-self relation- is the animus, the masculine ‘other’ within”(Baulmin 4). Her
selfhood is considered masculine because women were expected to be selfless Angels in
the patriarchal society since men are the ones who possess self and dictate to women
what they should do and think. Therefore self is masculine because only men are socially
permitted to possess self. Bertha is the physical manifestation of the inner self that Jane
possesses. Gilbert and Gubar argue, “Jane first hears the ‘distinct formal mirthless laugh’
of mad Bertha, Rochester’s secret wife and in a sense her own secret self”(Gilbert 348).
When Jane is touring Thornfield Hall with Mrs. Fairfax Jane hears Bertha’s laughter
which is the symbolic representation of Bertha warning Jane of her potential to lose her
sense of self. This laugh is Bertha’s signature indication that she is present and
understands Jane and is attempting to warn Jane about future dangers to her self. Jane
comments, “Did you hear that loud laugh’...The laugh was repeated in its low, syllabic
tone, and terminated in an odd murmur”(Brontë 91). Mrs. Fairfax tells her that the
laughter is from Grace Poole. Although the narrator informs the reader that Mrs. Fairfax
had no knowledge of Bertha’s existence, her attempts to shield Jane from the alleged
maddening laughter of Grace Poole, or Bertha, is symbolic of society’s attempts to ignore
the Bertha side of Jane. According to Rich, “We see little of Bertha Rochester; she is
heard and sensed rather than seen” (Rich 476). Despite society’s attempts to eradicate Jane’s sense of self, it never is destroyed due to Bertha’s continual presence which is shown through her laughter and her actions. When Jane is on the roof of Thornfield attempting to escape the confines of the domestic she hears Bertha’s laughter. This laughter is a symbolic representation of Jane putting her selfless Angelic conformity aside and allowing her self to rule her temporarily. Jane says, “I could not account for the sounds she made” (Brontë 93). At this point in the novel Jane believes that Grace Poole is the one making all of the strange noises in the attic. Even though Jane does not know at this point that it is Bertha who is making the strange noises when she goes to the roof, it is Bertha calling to Jane’s self. Bertha not only makes her presence known through laughter she also attacks Rochester in an attempt to defend Jane’s self.

Bertha catches Rochester’s bed on fire as a means of defending Jane after Jane does not react to Rochester’s tales of sexually exploiting women. Bertha however sets his bed on fire which shows the potential destruction of Jane’s self in marriage. Bertha’s noise the night of the fire is described as,

a demoniac laugh- low, suppressed, and deep… I thought at first the goblin-laughter stood at my bedside… Something gurgled and moaned… Tongues of flame darted round the bed: the curtains were on fire.” (Brontë 126-127)

Bertha’s laughter is described as “demoniac” which shows the societal notion of what a woman becomes if she allows her self to overpower her Angelic role within society. Bertha allows her laughter to be heard by Jane because this laughter is her symbolic
signal to Jane that Bertha has defended her self. She is described as having a “goblin-laughter” which further asserts her un-human quality of embracing her self. Rich says of Bertha “Her presence is revealed by three acts when she escapes into the inhabited part of the house. Two of these acts of violence against men – the attempted burning of Mr. Rochester in his bedchambers”(Rich 476-477). Bertha tries to burn Rochester because she is trying to defend Jane from Rochester’s oppression since Jane cannot defend her self without Bertha’s help. Therefore Bertha’s presence being revealed through her acts of violence is significant because it shows that for the self violence is the only defense and therefore turns Bertha into a monster. Since Bertha is described by Jane as monstrous, this demonstrates Jane’s position within the barriers of the social Angel and her inability to recognize her self. Therefore Bertha’s need to force Jane to reexamine her position as a selfless Angel and pay more attention to her self. Bertha’s message is understood when Jane sees Mr. Rochester within the flames and decides to not call for help, but instead to rescue him herself, “Not a moment could be lost…I rushed to his basin and ewer…I heaved them up, deluged the bed and its occupant…by God’s aid, succeeded in extinguishing the flames which were devouring it”(Brontë 127). Although Jane is selflessly helping save a man’s life, she steps out of the barriers of society by entering Mr. Rochester’s bedroom because she is not married to him. This is no small action. Bertha symbolically used Jane’s moral knowledge to influence her to step outside of the barriers of society; and therefore, embrace her self.

When Bertha attacks her brother, Mr. Mason, she is demonstrating the untrustworthiness of male authority figures to women in society. Bertha’s brother
encouraged her to marry Rochester who forced her into an attic cage. Therefore, her attack on him allows Jane to realize the true nature of the situation because Bertha is betrayed by a man she trusted. Bertha is unwilling to relinquish her self, and she is warning Jane against the betrayal that she may experience is Jane puts her trust in the wrong person. Jane describes Mr. Mason after his attack as being lifeless which shows the extent of Bertha’s anger towards him. Jane says, “I recognized in his pale and seemingly lifeless face-the stranger, Mason: I saw too that his linen on one side, and one arm, was almost soaked in blood” (Brontë 178). Bertha is able to physically punish her brother for his betrayal and is showing Jane that these men do not deserve to be trusted but punished because men like Mason and Rochester use manipulative techniques to destroy the self. This physical punishment was witnessed by Jane in order to teach her a lesson of whom to trust when self is in danger.

Bertha becomes destructive with Jane’s wedding gifts as a symbolic representation of Jane destroying her self as she enters into a marriage with Rochester. After Jane becomes engaged to Mr. Rochester and he tries to adorn her with new clothes and jewelry, Bertha destroys Jane’s veil in an attempt to assist Jane’s self against Rochester’s attempted suppression into his domestic world. This also shows the dangers of marrying a man who has lost sight of his attraction for Jane’s self. Jane describes, “But presently she took my veil from its place; she held it up, gazed at it long, and then she threw it over her own head, and turned to the mirror…on the carpet…the veil, torn from top to bottom, in two halves!” (Brontë 243). Jane is terrified of the monstrous Bertha but Bertha’s warning is still evident from her action of putting on the veil and then
tearing it. Brontë shows the connection between Bertha and Jane because Bertha assumes her role as a part of Jane, as Jane’s self, when she physically wears the veil. Their duality is present throughout the novel but in this instance Jane and Bertha become one person united in the protection of self. The situation that Jane is entering into by marrying Mr. Rochester is a marriage that would destroy her self and force her to conform to the selflessly Angelic demands of society. Gilbert and Gubar argue, “In her world, she senses, even the equality of love between true minds leads to the inequalities and minor despotisms of marriage” (Gilbert 356). Jane’s dual self, Bertha, is warning her of the danger’s that she has the potential to encounter if she marries Rochester because it would result in a marriage of inequality. The tearing of the veil demonstrates what Jane’s self will become if she marries Mr. Rochester, she will be forced to only embrace the socially sanctioned selfless Angel part of her; therefore, “Bertha is still another—indeed a more threatening-avatar of Jane. What Bertha does, for instance, is what Jane wants to do…Jane Eyre secretly wants to tear the garment up. Bertha does it for her” (Gilbert 359). Not only is her Bertha warning Jane against marriage she is also embracing the secret desire that Jane possesses which is to destroy the veil and the marriage. Jane knows that this marriage will destroy her self and she does not want that to happen. However Jane lives properly within the confines of the social Angel so Bertha has to be the one to act on Jane’s impulses. Bertha is responsible for stopping Jane’s first wedding to Rochester because Bertha is still legally married to him which prevents Jane from making an unequal match that will destroy her self.
When Bertha is finally recognized as Mrs. Edward Rochester, her appearance allows Jane to be warned of the dangers of entering into a match with Mr. Rochester because she has the potential to turn into Bertha. Bertha is a woman who desperately to grasps her self; and therefore, becoming a monster in society’s eyes. Jane describes Bertha’s appearance,

What it was, whether beast or human being, one could not, at first sight, tell: it groveled, seemingly, on all fours; it snatched and growled like some strange wild animal: but it was covered in clothing; and a quantity of dark, grizzled hair, wild as a mane, hid its head and face. (Brontë 250)

Bertha is more monster than woman because she has completely thrown away the idea of the Angel and embraces her self which is considered a monstrosity. Bertha’s appearance is a warning to Jane because Bertha is married to Mr. Rochester and is forced to choose her self or a selfless existence within society because she is unable to live within the domestic while still having self. Bertha’s existence of self represents the stricter enclosure within the domestic as punishment for her possession of self. Bertha’s appearance forces Jane to truly consider her actions with Rochester because she is able to maintain self and the customs of the Angel while she is in a non-sexual relationship with him, but if she becomes his mistress or his wife then Jane will being joining Bertha in her attic cage of self. Therefore Jane leaves Thornfield and eventually finds her family where she faces another threat to her self in St. John Rivers.
St. John Rivers is a character who attempts to eradicate Jane’s self through education and marriage. While with the Rivers Jane begins to learn Hindostanee instead of German due to St. John’s insistence. He says, “I want you to give up German, and learn Hindostanee” (Brontë 338). His desire for Jane to change her course of study is a symbolic representation of St. John’s attempt to make Jane change and become consumed by the selflessness of the Angel. He continues to explain, “He then en on to explain that Hindostanee was the language he was himself at present studying: that, as he advanced, he was apt to forget the commencement; that it would assist him greatly to have a pupil with whom he might again and again go over the elements” (Brontë 338). Although St. John claims that it is the language that he wants to teach Jane he really wants to “again and again go over the elements” of the selfless Angel within society by making Jane learn something she is not wholly interested in learning. This is symbolic of St. John trying to mold Jane into the woman that he wants her to be. Jane leaves Thornfield Hall and simply reenters into a situation where a man is attempting to change her into a socialized selfless Angel. St. John proposes to Jane to permanently force Jane to succumb to his attempts of socialization.

When Jane is proposed to by St. John Rivers and she denies him out of self preservation. Jane knows that she can never be happily married to St. John because he is unable to accept that she possesses self. Therefore she must deny his proposal which demonstrates that she will not compromise her self for him. He goes so far as to claim that Jane was not meant for a love match which shows St. John’s belief that Jane was meant to be his selfless wife and risk her life to assist his ministry. He tells her, “God
and nature intended you for a missionary’s wife…you are formed for labour, not for love’” (Brontë 343). St. John believes that Jane was made to be his helper in life and not his equal partner whom to love because he views her as so inferior to him that her only purpose would be to help him in a foreign land full of disease that the British people had not been exposed to. Beaty states, “that she marry him and accompany him to India. If she accepts, she knows it will probably mean her early death, and so will the sacrifice of choosing this life for the eternal, divine love over human love” (Beaty 493). This show his lack of regard for Jane not only as a woman, but also as a future mate because he is believes she is not worth his affections she only deserves to be his helper. St. John’s anger about Jane’s refusal to marry him shows the societal view that women should be selfless Angels and disregard their own health and happiness to please the men in their lives. Jane does not need to marry St. John after she receives her inheritance because her position as a single woman becomes socially acceptable once she is wealthy.

Jane’s place within society is symbolically secured when she becomes a financially independent woman and does not need to marry St. John much like Emma Woodhouse. Therefore Jane is able tells St. John that in a marriage she “‘should desire somewhat more of affection than that sort of general philanthropy you extend to mere strangers’” (Brontë 351). When Jane explains to St. John that she needs to be married to a man who her equal and will love her, not a man who simply wants her for philanthropic reasons, she is demonstrating her kindness towards his feelings, yet her firm self underneath the surface does not allow her to make a match that will not bring her happiness.
Jane Eyre and Emma Woodhouse are two characters whose stories parallel one another in many key aspects. Both Jane and Emma possess self while people in their lives believe they should eradicate that self and become selfless Angels of society. Although Emma is not plagued during her childhood with women who intend to gently socialize her, as Jane experiences, Emma does have Knightley who is representative of society and attempts to shame her into becoming a selfless Angel. Jane experiences many men who take on Knightley’s position within her life such as John Reed, Mr. Brocklehurst, Rochester, and St. John all of whom attempt to change her and make her into what they believe is the ideal selfless Angel. Jane is able to fight these men and find a balance between self and society before she marries. However Emma gives up her balance to marry Knightley who would never tolerate his wife possessing self. Emma marries a man who is not her equal because he cannot accept her for who she is, while Jane is able to marry Rochester because he understands that he cannot change her and must love her for her self. Finally both Jane and Emma are financially secure women who do not need to marry to secure their futures. This is important because they are able to make their matches with the knowledge that they never do have to marry. Although Emma and Jane may appear to come from two very different situations in life their female unity under the oppression of a patriarchal society links them and their stories.

Jane Eyre encounters many people who attempt to eradicate her self and turn her into a selfless domestic Angel. Although Jane does learn the proper behavior of a woman within a patriarchal society she never allows her self to be destroy. At Gateshead Jane allows her self to rule over her and she becomes a social outcast and is sent to Lowood.
At Lowood Jane experiences the maternal connection to Miss Temple which allows Miss Temple to teach Jane the ways of society and how she is expected to behave. Helen Burns becomes a brief example to Jane of how a young girl should selflessly tolerate the punishments of her superiors according to social protocol. However Jane’s self begins to consume her when Miss Temple marries which is why she must go to Thornfield under the supervision of Mrs. Fairfax who takes on the maternal socializing role in Jane’s life. Jane comes face to face with her self and does not allow it to consume her and she escapes because Jane’s ultimate happiness is found by remaining within the barriers of society and still embracing self. After Bertha’s death Jane returns to Rochester to find that he has become her equal match because he no longer wishes to change her or make her suppress her self. *Jane Eyre* is a novel that depicts the struggles that women go through in a patriarchal society and how Jane is able to fit into society while still embracing her self.
Jean’s False Self: How Alcott’s Jean Muir Manipulates Society

Jean’s Masked Self: How Alcott’s Jean Muir Defeats Society

Louisa May Alcott’s, *Behind a Masks*(1866), demonstrates the masks that women are forced to assume in order to achieve a comfortable life within the confines of society. Jean Muir is a divorced woman who knows that the only way to redeem her standing within society is to become a proper married women; however, for Jean to attain this she must assume symbolic masks of stereotypical femininity to hide aspects of her self that society deems as too radical or indiscreet. Although Jean does assume these masks she never loses sight of her real self and become consumed by and the Angel she must appear to be in order to fit into society. Jean’s single-minded focus on her real self and her masks allows her to maintain her original pursuit of marriage and a comfortable future.

In a patriarchy all women are forced to wear masks yet most have been brainwashed into believing that the stereotype that their masks portray are forced to become is their true selves; in reality, these masks force women to suppress their true identities. Alcott’s Jean Muir understands the importance of the masks that society expects her to wear and uses this feminine disguise in order to become the ideal domestic Angel and achieve her goals, “In order to survive economically, Jean Muir, the heroine of the story, adopts the masks of femininity”(Fetterley 1). Society demands that Jean possess masks of femininity
or she will be unable to make a proper marriage within society and establish a comfortable future for herself which is the goal that she is attempting to achieve as she pretends to be a young downtrodden governess. Jean’s haggard appearance and age are representations of the life that she led outside of the domestic Angel while fully embracing her self and how she needs to hide the evidence of her self from society by using her masks. Since Jean is the divorced wife of an actor she has had a tumultuous life that is not viewed as socially acceptable since she behaved less than virtuously. Jean’s true self is a “haggard, worn, and moody woman of thirty at least”(Alcott 12) whose appearance reflects the difficulties she has had and the self that she outwardly embraced. Yet she must hide this self from the world and Alcott tells the reader that “The metamorphosis was wonderful, but the disguise was more in the expression she assumed than in any art of costume or false adornment”(Alcott 12). Although aspects of Jean’s masks are literal device that she uses to her advantage, Alcott demonstrates that many women are forced to assume masks to hide their inner selves from the world and fit into the Angelic stereotypes that are enforced by society, “Jean Muir [has the]…abilities to operate behind an extraordinary variety of masks”(Hackenberg 1). Jean is unlike most women because she uses her stage make-up along with her intelligence to generate different masks that allow her to hide her self from the world which is a feat that most women are unable to accomplish without complete loss of self. Jean’s use of make-up is significant because it physically demonstrates that she is forced to adopt a certain looks in order to fit into society and exhibit socially sanctioned Angelic behavior; however, her true self is safe and intact underneath all of her makeup and falseness of appearance and
behavior. This is not the case for many women living within a patriarchy because many do not use their masks as a shield to protect their inner selves; instead, they allow society to brainwash them into believing that the masks they are forced to maintain are their true self. This brainwashing causes many women to lose their selves and become consumed by their masks. Jean is constantly aware of the masks that society forces women to wear and is able to use this knowledge to her advantage while maintaining her self. Since Jean uses her masks or as both a shield to protect her self from the brainwashing of society and as a tool to attain her goals even though society forbids her to get it by more forthright means. This preservation of self hidden underneath her masks of social propriety allows her to manipulate the people around her because they do not expect a woman who seemingly lacks self to have ulterior motives behind her actions; such as, finding a wealthy husband to establish self. These motives are not things that brainwashed women think of because society demands that their lack of self creates an Angelic ignorance that could never have ulterior motives. Therefore Jean is able to utilize the assumptions of society to her advantage by making herself seem like a typical brainwashed woman and encourages the Coventrys’ to fall in love with her through intelligent manipulation.

Jean encourages the Coventrys’ to fall in love with her by manipulating social conventions to her own advantage. She assumes a number of masks designed to appeal to the stereotypical ideas that the individual members of the Coventry family hold concerning the behavior and proper place of women within the domestic sphere. Jean demonstrates her intelligence when she consciously attempts to win the favor of the entire family because this favor allows her to become closer to the eligible men and have
them fall in love with her, “Muir’s aim is to seduce one of the Coventry men into marrying her, and in order to do this she must seduce the rest of the family into trusting her” (Schewe 5). Women who have been brainwashed by society would not be intelligent enough to manipulate people and Angelic social customs to achieve a goal of marriage as Jean does. Jean’s initial appearance within the Coventry household demonstrates her dedication to pleasing the Coventrys’ who strictly uphold the customs of the upper class. Coventry’s adherence to social customs by arriving on time, “She is…an impressive master-observer who uses the details she discerns in her environment to both play to the patrician family she serves and to skillfully ‘play’ them, manipulating them to achieve her own ends” (Hackenberg 1-2). Jean’s skillful manipulation of the expected role that the Coventrys’ expected her to fill is impressive because she uses her powers of observation in a way that allows her to foresee what they will expect of her and what they will surprised with. Jean makes sure that the Coventry’s are constantly being surprised by her so that they wish to spend time with her which gives the gentleman an opportunity to fall in love with her. She further intrigues them with the look in her eye that she cast about the room which makes the family want to know more about her, “she cast on the household group a keen glance that impressed them curiously; then her eyes fell, and bowing slightly she walked in” (Alcott 5). Throughout the novel Alcott manipulates the use of Jean’s eye contact as a tool to manipulate others with innocence or passion creating an intriguing quality in the mysterious governess. Jean allows her eyes to fall in the presence of the Coventry’s because this action makes her appear humble and supports her mask of Angelic social conformity. In this case Jean intrigues her audience with her
keen gaze appears intelligent due to its curiosity but is followed by her use of strict social decorum, “Alcott invests her central character, Jean Muir, with mysterious powers to influence those around her…Alcott grants her heroine the traits indelibly associated with mesmerism in the nineteenth century: a piercing gaze…and a mysterious power to conform others’ wills to her own”(Gaul 1). This glance is the beginning of the Coventrys’ interested in Jean because she is able to manipulate her masks towards the entire family in a way that encourages them to favor her for her seemingly proper social behavior and her mesmerizing gaze which peaks their interest in her. Her purpose to find a husband and live a comfortably rich life while still embracing her self is always safe within her while she intrigues the Coventry’s with her exemplary behavior in domestic and social accomplishments.

Jean begins her use of different masks with Mrs. Coventry whom she pleases through her domestic accomplishments. The first evening that Jean enters the Coventry home Mrs. Coventry asks Jean to demonstrate her accomplishments, “‘Be kind enough to go and play an air or two. I can judge by your touch; I used to play finely when a girl’”(Alcott 6). Jean wins Mrs. Coventry’s favor when she is willing and able to demonstrate her accomplishments which gives Mrs. Coventry confidence in Jean’s ability to educate Bell about the necessary Angelic skill of the time, “Jean piques the family’s interest with her charming manner, even as the narrator reveals to the reader that she is enacting a charade”(Gaul 3). Jean has a thorough understanding of the customs of society and is easily able to fool Mrs. Coventry into believing that her charming manners can improve Bella. In many ways Mrs. Coventry is attempting to find a replacement for
herself within Bella’s life because she is too ill to teach her daughter how to become an accomplished young Angel; and therefore, she is unable to teach Bella the skills necessary to make a proper match within the upper classes of English society. Jean utilizes her knowledge of the customs of society as a means of pleasing Mrs. Coventry because she knows that the only way for her matrimonial plans to succeed is if she first wins the approval of the matriarch of the family who is responsible for her employment. This approval will allow her to move freely throughout the Coventry estate and establish different ways for her intended husband to fall in love with her without fear of displeasing her employer and losing her position. Jean manipulates Mrs. Coventry into believing that she is a young woman of conformity who has mastered the art of decorum within society; even though, Jean still maintains her self underneath her disguise. Furthermore Jean shows appropriate docility and selflessness to the sickly Mrs. Coventry when she offers to decorate her chamber with nosegays to help improve her spirits, “ask her if I may have the pleasure of making her a daily nosegay; for I should find real delight in doing it, if it would please her”(Alcott 17). Jean’s offer of arranging a nosegay for Mrs. Coventry every morning is another part of her utilization of her masks because she knows that Mrs. Coventry is trapped within her chamber for most of the day and enjoys the freshness of flowers but rarely has the opportunity for such pleasures; therefore, Jean manipulates her fondness for nosegays and asks for the pleasure of providing a bit of happiness to Mrs. Coventry daily as a way of further assuring her favor in the eyes of her employer. Mrs. Coventry is not only fond of the flower arrangements
themselves she is also pleased that Jean, unlike most of the household, is willing to take
time out of her day to do something that shows older woman:

Muir’s seduction of…Mrs. Coventry is simple and fairly harmless: her meek
demeanor, simple clothing, and hint of sadness—all markers of the sentimental true
woman—as well as her beautiful playing and singing, and her willingness to serve
tea and gather flowers to win over both mother and daughter. (Schewe 6)

This offer is an example of Jean’s utilization of her masks because her kindness towards
Mrs. Coventry is not only pleasing to the matriarch of the Coventry family and instantly
affords Jean her approval this also allows Jean the opportunity to demonstrate her false
kindness in order to interest Sir John, Edward, and Bella. Jean wears different masks
while performing her role as the brainwashed Angel within society because she pretends
to be selfless by bringing pleasure to an ill woman; when actually, she is using this
kindness as a means to interest most of the family and further her manipulation. Jean’s
manipulation of Mrs. Coventry is performed flawlessly because she knows what this
brainwashed older woman expects of her selfless behavior. This intelligent knowledge
gives Jean the ability to manipulate the matriarch into favoring Jean and the rest of the
family’s favor is therefore soon to follow.

Jean uses her masks to become a selfless governess to Bella and teach her the
expected accomplishments of young Angel within society; and in the process, Jean
endears herself to Bella through her kind and intriguing teaching methods. Jean is able to
use her intelligence to understand what masks to adorn to manipulate Bella into favoring
her; therefore, she creates a fun atmosphere for Bella and in the process encourages the young girl to become fond of her and the studies that she previously disliked while Lucia was responsible for her education. Bella shows her favor of Jean when she enthusiastically says, “I’ve been enjoying myself immensely. Jean is so interesting, so kind and clever. She didn’t bore me with stupid grammar, but just talked to me in such pretty French that I got on capitally, and like it as I never expected to, after Lucia’s dull way of teaching it” (Alcott 20). Bella’s favor of Jean becomes known among the Conventry’s which helps Jean’s purpose of being liked throughout the household.

Although Jean is merely acting out her role within the household she does succeed in teaching Bella a small amount of subject matter that a young Angel is expected to know along with providing her an example of the use of masks. Jean does not openly teach Bella that all women must wear masks the young Angel ultimately understands the necessity of manipulating behavior as a means of fulfilling societal expectations. Jean cleverly encourages Bella to enjoy her lessons and learn from them. Jean’s understanding that Bella’s improvement and favor will allow her to earn the favor of the household demonstrates her intelligent ability to manipulate her masks with different people and at opportune times.

Jean manipulates her masks with Edward to make herself appear as the embodiment of the stereotyped Angelic perfection and interest in his masculine attentions; furthermore, she pretends to have little interest in his older brother Gerald which inflates Edwards confidence and makes him believe that he has won a beautiful young woman’s attentions instead of his older brother. Jean manipulates Edward by
appealing to his insecurities as the younger brother and creates in him a false sense of
happiness which makes him fall in love with her. Edward expresses his appreciation for
Jean’s when he describes the happiness he feels when he is around Jean, “‘She would
make a man of me. She puts strength and courage into me as no one else can. She is
unlike any girl I ever saw; there’s no sentimentality about her; she is wise, and kind, and
sweet…I know her…I love her so!’”(Alcott 37). Jean’s knowledge of Edward’s need to
feel special and masculine stems from her perceptive intelligence that she is able to
utilize when around Edward and encourage him to find her attractive as an ideal wife.
Jean does not allow Edwards love to brainwash her into suppressing her self by flattering
her. Jean’s manipulation of her masks allow her to be outwardly sweet and wise with
Edward because she is able to change the masks that she wears while in society as a
result of her knowledge of what he finds endearing. Furthermore Edward is interested in
Jean because she shows little regard for his brother. As the youngest son Edward is
dependent upon his older brother to establish his career and Gerald is the master of the
Coventry estate; therefore, when Jean shows Edward more regard than she shows Gerald
she is demonstrating to Edward that although his brother is the more powerful man she is
seemingly interested in Edward for reasons beyond wealth and power. Jean uses her
intelligence to manipulate Edwards affections for her while maintaining her hidden self
from the destruction of society.

Jean understands Gerald’s aversion to being persuaded so she uses her masks to
increase his curiosity about her seemingly mysterious absence in his presence. Gerald is
accustomed to being idolized as the master of the estate and Jean does not demonstrate
Angelic submissiveness to his masculine “superiority.” The first evening that Jean is in the Coventry household she demonstrates to Gerald his inability to intimidate her seemingly weak Angelic composure when she overhears his private conversation, “I possess a quick ear, and cannot help hearing what is said anywhere in the room. What you say of me is of no consequence”(Alcott 9). Gerald is unused to women who do not adore and idolize him because his mother and Lucia are very interested in pleasing him; however, when Jean informs him that his criticism of holds no importance she peaks his curiosity because he is not used to anything but submissive idolization from women. Jean utilizes her masks to portray a woman who rigorously follows the norms of society; therefore, when she informs Gerald that she can hear what he says about her and it does not affect her; she is showing him that she does not regard him as other women who live in the domestic sphere do. Jean knows that a woman who does not show interest in Gerald will intrigue him. Therefore so she keeps up her mysteriously absent pretense during the beginning part of her stay within the family she, “piqued indolent Gerald by her persistent avoidance of him”(Alcott 25). Jean uses her masks as a way to fake Angelic modesty because she claims to avoid Gerald so she does not bother him; however, she knows that the more she avoids Gerald and the more attention the rest of the household pays to her. This makes Gerald frustrated that he does not have the opportunity to participate along with his family in Jean-centered activities, “she is playing another role for Gerald, knowing that she must use different means of seduction to win the different members of the family”(Schewe 6). Jean utilizes her masks and allows her intelligence to contribute to her mysterious absence towards Gerald. Jean’s
mysterious masks are further supported when Edward stabs Gerald and Jean is able to assist the doctor with his care, “She was…steady and self-possessed, and her eyes shone with a strange brilliancy as she smiled a reassuring smile that made her lovely” (Alcott 35). This mask of steady self-possession that she uses to comfort Gerald adds to her act of being able to comfort him in his time of need while still making herself mysteriously aloof. However Jean makes herself more mysterious to Gerald when she assists in his recovery but does not stay in his presence for long periods of time while he is recovering. Jean recognizes Gerald’s childish nature of wanting to have or understand all that is intriguing to him; therefore, she makes herself hard to get which encourages him to be even more attracted to her. This interests Gerald because he is isolated to his sick bed and given time to think about his latest encounters with Jean and is unable to understand her. This makes Jean’s masked personality makes Gerald fall in love with her because no other woman has shown so little interest in him. Finally Jean uses her masks to play the weak feminine role that society expects her to be when she lies to Gerald about Sydney threatening her reputation. When Jean informs Gerald that Sydney is threatening her all-important reputation she allows him to understand the danger she is in because in a patriarchal society a woman’s virtue is all she has,

“I should not fear; but he menaces that which is dearer than life- my good name. A look, a word can tarnish it; a scornful smile, a significant shrug can do me more harm than any blow; for I am a woman.friendless, poor, and at the mercy of his tongue. Ah, better to have died, and so have been saved the bitter pain that has come now!” (Alcott 59).
Therefore Jean uses her masks to play a weak Angel in need of Gerald’s help which makes him feel stronger than the lazy person his family knows and expects him to be. When Jean allows Gerald to assist her, even though it is just a lie, she uses her intelligence because she knows what will make Gerald fall in love with her yet she allows her masks to cover the inner self that she wishes to hide from him.

Jean uses different masks with Sir John as a way of portraying herself as a young caring woman who is in need of his masculine assistance which appeals to him because this makes him feel needed and cared for. Sir John likes the masks that Jean creates of youth and beauty because she shows him attention that he normally does not receive from young women as a result of his young and attractive nephews, “Jean soon succeeds in making both brothers fall in love with her but her goal is to secure the affections of their elderly uncle, Sir John, and thereby gain rank, wealth, and security” (Gaul 3). Although both Coventry brothers are in love with Jean she knows that marriage to Sir John offers the greatest end to her goal because of his wealth and social rank. When Jean finds Sir John in the garden her first morning in the Coventry household they have not been properly introduced which allows Jean to use her masks of meek Angelic admiration in a way that flatters and intrigues the older man, “‘I was going to say, love him. I will say it for he is an older man, and one cannot help loving virtue and bravery’” (Alcott 14). Jean appeals to Sir John’s heroic past and suggests that she loves him for his “virtue and bravery” which flatters the older man who has not had feminine admiration in some time due to his nephews’ youth and wealth. Also Jean understands that when she recognizes Sir John’s past successes she is showing him that she sees beyond the aged man he has
become but rather sees the victorious youth that he once was. Therefore when Jean uses her masks to flatter the once heroic Sir John she is able to intrigue this man because he begins to wonder if a girl of her seeming youth could love an old man like himself in a romantic way; therefore, Jean uses her masks to endear herself to Sir John by playing on his need to inspire admiration. Furthermore Jean offers her solicitude to Sir John by reading to him every night because he enjoys the tone in which she reads to him and is unable to read to himself do to his failing eye sight. Therefore Jean use her masks to be a caring and dependable companion for the lonely older man because she read,

with a fluency which made every fact interesting, every sketch of character memorable, by the dramatic effect given…He had tried readers, but none suited him, and he had given up the plan. Now as he listened, he thought how pleasantly the smoothly flowing voice would wile away his evenings, and he envied Bella her new acquisition. (Alcott 24)

Jean is able to use the experience that she acquired while married to an actor in order to manipulate her masks; and in turn Sir John, she pretends to be an accomplished reader who intrigues the educated old man with her way of making history texts sound like novels. Although Jean is simply reading she is able to use her masks to make herself seem like an educated young Angel who has a great talent for reading aloud; and therefore, becomes a favorite of Sir John because he struggles to read to himself and she knows that the idea of a nightly reading companion would greatly please the older gentleman. Also Jeans academic intelligence intrigues Sir John because he enjoys
learning and can see in Jean a companion willing and eager to expand her mind. Therefore Jeans manipulation of her masks to make her seem educated, and enthralling her reader further endears Jean to Sir John. She becomes a reading companion to the older man and is able to entertain him and provide companionship that his family is uninterested in. Jean also appeals to Sir John’s masculine yearning to assist a young woman in need when she fabricates her past making her seem like a young aristocrat who, through no fault of her own, has fallen into an unfortunate situation. Jean leads Sir John to believe that she is the daughter of Lady Howard which would make her a member of the aristocracy and an eligible match for Sir John because of their similar social classes, ““Her mother was Lady Grace Howard, who ran away with a poor Scotch minister twenty years ago’”(Alcott 47). Sir John believes that Jean was born an equal but has fallen under hard times due to the decisions of her mother to marry beneath her social class. This makes Jean a socially acceptable match, even a match that would be favored by society for Sir John because he could be viewed as the hero who rescued Lady Howard’s daughter. Jean’s fabricated past appeals to Sir John’s sympathies because she is a young Angel of noble blood who is forced to work for survival which is considered a very unfortunate situation in society because Jean was born into the aristocracy but her situation is not one of leisure. Not only is Jean able to appeal to Sir Johns sympathies of seeing a woman of aristocracy fall to hard times, she is also able to make herself seem like a socially acceptable match for Sir John because of her mother’s ranking as a lady. The final way that Jean appeals to Sir John’s masculine sympathies is when she informs him of the pressure that she feels to leave her employment with the Coventry’s because
Edward’s mind has allegedly been poisoned by Sydney’s slander. Jean reads Sir John the note written in his nephew’s hand as a way of demonstrating to him the legitimacy of her claims and the severity of her compromised virtue she reads, “I have seen Sydney; he has told me all; and, hard as I found it to believe, it was impossible to doubt, for he has discovered proof which cannot be denied…I give you three days to find another home, before I return to tell the family who you are”(Alcott 77). This unfeeling note allows Jean the opportunity to use her masks in a way that makes herself seem helpless under the male powers of slander. This note affords Sir John the opportunity to rescue Jean from her present situation and marry her after she has proclaimed her love for him. Jean uses her masks in this situation to appeal to Sir John’s yearning to protect Jean from slander and ruin which would ruin her in the eyes of society because her virtue would be compromised. She also appeals to Sir John’s emotional attachment to her when Jean proclaims her faithful love for him even though he is much older than his eligible nephews. Jean is able to utilize her masks in many ways with Sir John in order to encourage his attachment to her; and therefore, result in her marriage to him and the achievement of her ultimate goal of social and financial stability.

Lucia suspects Jean’s masks and understands the manipulation that drives Jean because although Lucia is not in a desperate situation as Jean she still has her own social ambitions and tools of manipulation. Lucia’s ability to suspect Jean’s manipulation stems from her own masks, like Jean, Lucia is forced to adorn different masks to please the patriarchal society. Lucia’s masks are evident when she attempts to manipulate Gerald into falling in love with her. Although Lucia is not embracing her masks to the extent that
Jean does, she is wearing masks that she feels will please Gerald because she knows that if her and Gerald marry she will have enough financial and social stability to live a comfortable life within the domestic sphere. Lucia’s clear emotional attachment for Gerald contributes to the masks she wears to encourage Gerald to marry her, “poor Lucia loves you so much” (Alcott 42). Lucia’s devotion to Gerald strengthens her masks by showing her affectionate nature would make her the perfect Angelic wife because she would be emotionally devoted to Gerald despite his short comings, “beautiful cousin Lucia, in love with Gerald” (Schewe 5) is something that is evident to Jean from the beginning of the novel. Although Lucia is in love with Gerald but she also has a financial necessity to marry him. Lucia’s “pride, her coldness” allow another example of her utilization of her masks because pride and coldness are not something typically found in a woman who has fully embraces the societal stereotype of the Angel because women are expected to be meek and sweet which would not allow for the stereotypical characteristics of the masculine including pride and coldness. It is important that Lucia is one of the few characters in the novella who does not trust Jean’s motives from the beginning because this distrust of Jean demonstrates Lucia’s understanding of Jean’s masks and her ulterior motives towards the Coventrys’; therefore, if Lucia has an understanding of the masks that Jean uses to hide her self and manipulate others then Lucia must also have masks that she uses to make her way within society. Although Lucia may not be conscious of the masks that society has taught her to utilize she does have enough of an understanding of the requirements that society places on women
which forces women like Jean to manipulate others using her masks for her own advantage.

Hester Dean, Lucia’s maid, is also able to see through Jean’s masks because Jean suggests to her friend Hortance that Dean could be a threat to Jean’s marriage plot. Dean is the only character who Jean believes has the potential to ruin her marriage plot. This is significant because Jean takes no notice of Mrs. Coventry or Bella because both are completely consumed by the stereotypes of the Angel and Lucia has a sole purpose to marry Gerald. Therefore Dean’s position as a potential threat to Jean’s plan show’s Dean’s strong self and how she does not use masks to hide her cunning self from Jean, “Dean, the maid of Vashti, appeared as if watching me. She had evidently seen the letter in my hand, and suspected something. I took notice of her, but must be careful, for she is on the watch” (Alcott 101). Dean is “on the watch” for Jean’s masks to slip because Dean herself has a firm grasp of self which allows her to see through Jean’s masks and discover the plot that Jean is planning with the Coventry men. Alcott suggests that all women no matter their social standing have the potential to possess self and hide that self under masks of social propriety. Jean’s fear of Dean’s discovery of her marriage plot is significant because it demonstrates that Dean has an understanding of self as Jean and is therefore able to see through Jean’s masks.

Jean encourages the Coventry men to fall in love with her while maintaining her self underneath her masks these masks allow her to accomplish her ultimate goal of marriage to Sir John. When Jean’s plot is discovered by Edward the Coventry’s are
appalled at Jean’s behavior because it seems so improbable that a woman who pretends to be consumed by her role as the Angel would ever want to manipulate people by using such a strong self. Jean’s self is not evident to most of the family because the majority of the Coventrys’ cannot comprehend the idea of a woman being intelligent enough to maintain self and mask it for society. However Jean does warn the Coventry men from the beginning to not fall in love with her and not to trust her, “I am a witch, and one day my disguise will drop away and you will see me as I am, old, ugly, bad and lost. Beware of me in time. I’ve warned you. Now love me at your peril”(Alcott 86). Although they think of these warnings a type of flirtation, Jean is clearly telling the truth about her motives and her masks. The entire time that the Coventry men are falling in love with her, Jean does not allow her “disguise” to slip because she understands that the stereotypes of society and the idea of the Angel are not what define her self; and therefore, she is never consumed by these stereotypes like other women are. Furthermore she does not allow the Coventry’s to suppress her self by making her feel a part of a family which could encourage her with love to give up her self to completely fit into their family. The entire time that she is manipulating their affections for her she is able to maintain enough of a hold on her self that she does not allow the demands of her role within society to consume her and eradicate her self. This strong hold of self while pretending to be an Angel that has thoroughly conformed to society appalls the Coventrys’, “My poor Bella, what a companion for you!”(Alcott 102). The Coventrys’ are upset that they were unable to see through Jean’s masks and discover the self that had been hidden from them all and has influenced Bella’s education of how to become a lady,
and encouraging the men to fall in love with her. The idea of a woman with such a strong self that is hidden under masks of social decorum and Angelic behavior teaching the young Miss Coventry is very upsetting to Mrs. Coventry because as governess Jean is responsible for teaching Bella the proper accomplishments and behaviors of an Angel within society. However Jean’s clear grasp of her self is viewed by Mrs. Coventry, who is completely consumed by the stereotypes of the Angel, as a terrible thing because Jean could have nurtured Bella’s self and pushed her away from the confines of society; and, taken her away from the ignorance of the true selfhood that is enforced within the domestic sphere. Furthermore the idea of the Coventry men falling in love with Jean while she maintains such a strong self underneath her masks of social propriety is upsetting to them because they were so easily fooled by her act. It is difficult for them to comprehend that a woman, who is considered mentally and socially beneath them, would have enough intelligence to fool their “superior” male minds. It was simple for Jean to manipulate the Coventry men because she has a vast knowledge of the Angelic stereotypes that society insists on and this easily allows her to construct a false persona which allows her maintain her fictional masks and hide her inner self.

When Jean marries Sir John she knows that while he lives she must wear her masks; however, she does not allow this to eradicate her knowledge of self. Jean’s self does not disappear after her marriage because she always remembers her plot and the comfortable lifestyle that her masks provide for her. Sir John demonstrates to Jean his loving attachment to the person she pretends to be while masked when he orders the carriage, “as he gave the order, a smile broke over her face, for the sound assured her that the game
was won” (Alcott 104). In the end all Jean wants is to live comfortably within the boundaries of society which she is able to do as Lady Coventry and when she marries Sir John she knows that the marriage game is over and she no longer has to worry about her position within society. The knowledge that she will have to wear her masks to please Sir John does not destroy Jean’s self because she knows that if she is masked she will be comfortable and secretly able to embrace her inner self. Jean knows that Sir John is a kind man and would not completely entrap her within the ideals of the Angel; and therefore, she is easily able to embrace her self while married to him because he provides the financial support that Jean needs to live as an acceptable figure within society and act as she pleases while not completely overstepping the boundaries of society. As long as Jean wears her masks around Sir John and pretends to be his loving wife she will be given the time and resources to embrace her self as she pleases.

Although Jean and Emma are two characters from very different classes of society they both are forced to embrace different masks to fit into society and the ideals of the Angel. Jean and Emma are very similar characters because Emma is able to manipulate her father into allowing her self just as Jean marries an older man who she can easily manipulate into allowing the self and social acceptability that she needs. Jean’s ability to manipulate Sir John is demonstrated shortly after their marriage when she convinces him not to believe what his relatives say about her, “‘Remember your promise: love me, forgive me, protect me, and do not listen to their accusation’” (Alcott 102). Jean’s ability to manipulate Sir John into ignoring his relatives’ accusations that are supported by proof against his new wife who seemingly loves him demonstrates Jean’s power of persuasion
over Sir John and ability to easily manipulate him. Jean is always one step ahead of everyone while maintaining her plot and is able to convince her husband that she loves him and the accusations against her are false which Sir John will believe as long as Jean wears her masks of innocence and pretends to be a loving wife. This is similar to the way that Emma manipulates her father because as long as Emma wears her masks of a good and loving daughter her father will allow her to embrace self when she is not obliging his hypochondria. If both of these women wear their masks in the presence of the wealthy older men in their lives they will have the ability to please these men and establish trust and the self that both women desire. One of the only differences between Jean and Emma’s yearning and establishment of self is that Jean is forced to marry as a way of creating enough financial stability to allow her to have an acceptable position within society while maintaining self. However Emma is an heiress to her father’s estate and is able to maintain her manipulation and established self as long as she continues to pretend to be the loving and caring daughter that Mr. Woodhouse expects her to be. Both Emma and Jean are two women who have a strong understanding of the importance of self and are able to use their individual circumstances to manipulate the wealthy older men in their lives as a means of establishing self.

Alcott’s Jean ironically calls to mind Bronte’s *Jane Eyre*. Jean is a governess who marries above her social class. Jean is able to maintain a strong hold on her self while pretending to have proper social decorum and Jane is forced to suppress parts of her self in order to fit into society:
this governess, like her almost-namesake Jane Eyre, will be a cogent observer of the
domestic scene. Unlike Jane Eyre, however, who as a governess remains a quietly
unobtrusive observing presence, Jean shortly proves to be both a canny observer and
a fully active investigator of the story’s unfolding events. (Hackenberg 4)

Jean uses her powers of observation to her advantage when she asserts her role as a
helpless governess in need of sympathy from the powerful family. Jean uses the idea of a
governess being alone in the world and forced to do some kind of work in order to
support herself as mask that encourages the Coventrys’ to pity her; and further supports
to her marriage plot. When the Coventry’s enquire about Jean’s personal history she
informs them that she is an orphan and, “‘I have not a relation in the world’”(Alcott5).
Jean identifies with and uses a Jane Eyre stereotype by using her masks as a way to seem
like the weak governess who needs assistance from a loving family who could make her
life better, “Alcott was increasingly influenced by Bronte both on the surface of her
writing (she borrowed plots) and in the deeper thematic construction of her
work”(Butterworth-McDermott 2). During this plot Jean is able to maintain strong hold
on her self because she understands the entire time that this is simply a plot; however,
Jane Eyre struggles to maintain her self while the demands of society are forcing her into
conformity to the Angel. Jean marries Sir John, the brother in law of her employer, under
the pretense that she in nineteen and he is an old man while Jane Eyre marries her
wealthy employer who is nearly twenty years her senior. Unlike Jane who innocently
attracts the romantic interest of her employer, Jean plots to marry into the family of her
employer and is able to use her false youth to her advantage because Sir John finds it
flattering that such a young woman could love such an old man. Jean lies and says, "No one ever was so kind to me as you have been. Can I help caring for you more than I can express?" (Alcott 78). Jean's passionate statement allows her to set up the final stage of her marriage plot because her profession of unexpected romantic love for Sir John gives him the opportunity to propose marriage to her. Although Jane does not plot to marry Rochester she does genuinely fall in love with him and when she finally admits her love to him their marriage shortly follows; however the end result is the same: a flattered older man wants to marry the seemingly meek governess who has no assistance in the world but himself. During this time Jane struggles to maintain her self while balancing the pressures of Rochester and society; however, Jean is able to strongly maintain her self in order to achieve her goal of marriage.

Jean lives completely outside societal expectations because she is able to fully embrace her self; however, she has an understanding of these expectations and is able to manipulate her behavior as well as the people around her in order to live as a socially acceptable Angel with established self. Jean has no desire to relinquish her self; therefore, she is able to pretend to be the woman that society expects her to be in order to find a husband and use her masks as a shield to protect her inner self. When Jean enters the Coventry household she is able to use her well developed powers of perception to manipulate each person into caring for her. Jean always knows that the docility she portrays is an act and never confuses the false for the real which is what keeps her selfhood intact. Jean Muir is a character that demonstrates the masks that all women are expected to wear in society as a means of maintaining acceptability within society.
Conclusion

Virginia Woolf in, *A Room of One’s Own*, argues that women write from a feminine voice that allows them to argue women’s issues or in the very least demonstrate women’s issues to the public through their novels. Woolf argues that women do not write books about men because men have been the primary literary focus since the beginning of literature and women are writing regarding their own issues which have never been discussed in books written by men, “Women do not write books about men—a fact that I could not help welcoming with relief, for if I had first to read all that men have written about women, then all that women have written about men” (Woolf 2105). Women like Austen, Bronte, and Alcott do not write books about men because many of the books that they grew up reading were male centered. Therefore these women find their lives and the lives of all women more interesting than the books that society has been reading for centuries. Woolf makes the argument that women are judged separately from men, “Why are women, judging from this catalogue, so much more interesting to men than men are to women” (Woolf 2105). Men look at women in literature as the other, a being that they cannot understand because women are seemingly so different and assumed inferior. It is not that men and women are so very different as authors it is simply that society has forced both sexes to view each other as separate categories which possess a problem for Woolf because women’s literature is therefore judged beneath men’s literature in a patriarchal society. Furthermore men are interested in women within male literature
because creating the ideal of femininity allow them to assert their own seeming superiority by making women seem so weak, “Possibly when the professor insisted a little too emphatically upon the inferiority of women, he was concerned not with their inferiority, but with his own superiority”(Woolf 2109). Therefore when men write so much about women it is because they are interested in asserting women’s inferiority as a means to support their arrogant superiority. This is because society created such a patriarchy in Great Britain that in essence it brainwashed men into the necessity of asserting their alleged superiority. Women do not try to make themselves seem superior to men in their literature because women are able to recognize these problems within their patriarchal society and attempt to not dwell on them in their literature because the focusing on superiority of sexes has the potential to make the social climate worse. This supports the idea that men are so infatuated with women because “Women have served all these centuries as looking-glasses possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural size”(Woolf 2110). Men’s suppression of women allowed them to find superiority in the patriarchal idea of inferiority and when that sense of superiority is taken away because women begin demanding rights and demonstrating their equality with men, then men begin to assert their superiority through their literature and suppression of women’s literature.

Woolf suggests that a home is a place that can become too chaotic for a female author to flourish; therefore, she believes that women need a room to themselves so they can lock the door and not allow anyone to disturb them while they work. Woolf argues, “a women must have…a room of her own if she is to write fiction; and that, as you will
see, leaves the great problem of the true nature of women and the true nature of fiction unsolved’(Woolf 2092). If women do not have a room to themselves while writing fiction they will be unable to truly express themselves because they will be forced to either hide what they are doing, or become distracted by the activities of a household. The lack of women’s novels compared to the literature of men Woolf believes shows, “for women, I thought, looking at the empty shelves, these difficulties were infinitely more formidable. In the first place, to have a room of her own, let alone a quiet room or a sound-proof room, was out of the question, unless her parents were exceptionally rich or very noble, even up to the beginning of the nineteenth century”(Woolf 2119). Women were not freely given rooms to themselves unless they were of the noble class and many times these rooms still permitted the excess noise of the household which could be a distraction. Since women’s literature was not encouraged women were not given much opportunity or a place of their own to compose manuscripts. Woolf argues:

Still it would be easier to write prose and fiction there than to write poetry or a play. Less concentration is required. Jane Austen wrote like that to the end of her days…‘she had no separate study to repair to, and most of the work must have been done in the general sitting-room, subject to all kinds of casual interruptions. She was careful that her occupation should not be suspected by servants or visitors of any persons beyond her own family party.’ Jane Austen hid her manuscripts or covered them with a piece of blotting-paper.(Woolf 2127)
While writing *Emma* Jane Austen was forced to endure the casual interruptions that are so common while in a home’s general sitting room along with hiding her work from servants and house guests who would frequent such a social area of the home. The living situation that Austen, Bronte, and Alcott experienced was much more opportune for writing endeavors than most women experienced. Although these women did not come from aristocratic families they were provided with just enough comfort within their living situation to give them enough leisure and surroundings to write their works. Austen, like so many female authors, attempted to keep her talent a secret from the public because many women were afraid of the public’s reaction to their works. Not only did public knowledge of their sex pose the potential risk of hindering books sales, it also had the potential to open a woman up to public scrutiny based on the appropriateness of her novels’ contents, “it is narrow-minded in their more privileged fellow-creatures to say that they ought to confine themselves to making pudding and knitting stockings, to playing on the piano and embroidering bags. It is thoughtless to condemn them, or laugh at them, if they seek to do more or learn more than custom has pronounced necessary for their sex” (Woolf 2128). Society expected women to “confine themselves to making pudding and knitting stockings” because these monotonous activities are within the domestic and do not test the gender boundaries that society and the Angel had previously placed on women. Although writing novels does reside primarily within the domestic sphere it is an intellectual endeavor that forces both men and women to question the stereotypical views that were previously prescribed to women regarding intellectual capabilities, “the world did not say to her as it said to them, Write if you choose; it makes
no difference to me. The world said with a guffaw, Write? What’s the good of your writing?”(Woolf 2119). Since women were not viewed as intellectually capable of writing novels at the caliber of traditional novels, the view that that there was very little point in a woman attempting to be an author. This questioning of typical roles and norms creates discomfort and the necessity for female authors to hide their talent with pen names like: The Authoress (Austen), Currer Bell (Bronte), and A. M. Barnard (Alcott). Although Austen, Bronte, and Alcott were not wealthy women, they came from families that experienced many more financial advantages than the average person; these financial advantages gave these three authors more resources to explore their talents.

Woolf argues that a woman must have at least five hundred pounds a year to herself if she is to have the advantage of being comfortable enough to write for leisure. Women were put in such a difficult position within society because “in the first place, to earn money was impossible for them, and in the second, had it been possible, the law denied them to right to possess what money they earned” (Woolf 2103). There were so few opportunities for women to earn money within a patriarchal society and if they were able to find a way to make a living for themselves the government would restrict their earnings because women were viewed as not responsible enough to be in possession of their own money. This made it even more difficult for women writers because paper was expensive during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and financial backing was required to publish a book by an unknown author, “Intellectual freedom depends upon material things…And women have been poor, not for two hundred years merely, but from the beginning of time…your chance of earning five hundred pounds a year,
precarious as I am afraid that it still is, would be minute in the extreme” (Woolf 2148). A woman must have financial freedom in order to have a chance at intellectual freedom and Woolf believes that five hundred pounds would be enough of a yearly income to diminish the worries that women would typically have regarding their financial situation. The lack of ability to have a well-established financial situation due to the patriarchal society embittered many women because they were forced to suppress their talents and ambitions due to societal norms.

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries women suffered under the effects of a patriarchal society which is demonstrated through much of the women’s literature. Woolf writes about Bronte and *Jane Eyre*,

“that the woman who wrote those pages had more genius in her than Jane Austen; but if one reads them over and marks that jerk in them, that indignation, one sees that she will never get her genius expressed who and entire… She will write in a rage where she should write calmly. She will write foolishly where she should write wisely. She will write of herself where she should write of her characters. She is at war with her lot. How could she help but die young, cramped and thwarted” (Woolf 2128).

Woolf believes that Bronte and other women’s authors were “cramped and thwarted” by the situation that society has forced them into. She argues that Bronte’s genius was hindered by her bitterness towards her situation in life and her inability to change that situation. If Bronte would have been given a room, a yearly living, and some freedom
within society she may have been even greater author because the bitterness that she personally experiences begins to show through her characters in her work, especially in *Jane Eyre*. Woolf is arguing her point based off of Bronte’s narrative break when the narrator says, “It is thoughtless to condemn them, or laugh at them, if they seek to do more or learn more than custom has pronounced necessary for their sex. When thus alone I not infrequently heard Grace Poole’s laugh; the same peal, the same low, slow ha! ha!”(Bronte 93). Bronte uses her narrator in *Jane Eyre* to discuss what Woolf believes are her own problems with society which is: the condemnation of women who seek education. Although Bronte’s narrator is clearly discussing a social issue of the time involving women’s inability to seek an education farther than what society deems necessary for their sex; she breaks from her topic and begins to discuss Grace Poole’s laughter. Woolf believes that if Bronte had not of been trapped within the confines of the patriarchal society of the day and the idea of the Angel she would not have make mistakes like this narrative break in order to vent her supposed frustrations.

Austen, Bronte, and Alcott all demonstrate the issue of self while living within the confines of the domestic. Emma Woodhouse embraces her self and the domestic while living with her father, but is brainwashed into believing that her self is destructive and therefore eradicates it to please Knightley. Jane Eyre fully embraces her self as a child and over time learns to find a balance between self and the Angel which allows her to marry the man that she loves while remaining true to her inner self. Jean Muir fully embraces her self throughout the novel and simply masks her self to fit into society. Although women were oppressed and encouraged to give up their self Austen, Bronte,
and Alcott are able to demonstrate the potential dangers that the Angel posed for women through their novels.


