

ABSTRACT

UNVEILED: AN EXAMINATION OF JANE AUSTEN'S BETROTHAL SCENES

This thesis examines the consistencies of the betrothal scenes in Jane Austen's novels: Pride and Prejudice, Mansfield Park, and Emma. In each, Austen contests the expectations placed on young women in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries by creating independent heroines whose choices and conduct upset the family and the patriarchal society in which she lives. Austen's heroines all decline at least one undesirable marriage proposal prior to accepting one that is intellectually and emotionally satisfying. Additionally, Austen reveals every detail of the declined proposal scenes, while protecting the privacy of the successful marital matches by concealing the intimacy shared between her heroine and their heroes. Finally, this study examines the place of each betrothal, for Austen's heroines all decline proposals that are offered in confined indoor spaces and accept those that take place outdoors. Through close textual analysis and a feminist veil, Austen's ideal reality is revealed.

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