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Exposing the "Shadow Side": Female-Female Competition in Jane Austen's Emma



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**Abstract**

Many critics have examined the shifting nature of female friendship in Jane Austen's *Emma* from cultural and historical angles. However, a comprehensive scientific analysis of female-female alliance and competition in the novel remains incomplete. The Literary Darwinist approach considers the motivations of fictional characters from an evolutionary perspective, focusing primarily on human cognition and behaviors linked to reproductive success, social control, and survival. While overt physical displays of male competition are conspicuous in the actions of the human species and those of their closest primate relatives, female aggression is often brandished psychologically and indirectly, which makes for a much more precarious study. In this paper, cultural criticism and evolutionary psychology work together to unravel the most complicated and arcane layers of intrasexual competition between women in *Emma*. Ultimately, this dual interpretation of the novel steers readers towards a deeper understanding of Emma Woodhouse's imperiled friendships, and by extension, their own.

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with a comfortable home and happy disposition, seemed to unite some of the best blessings of existence; and had lived nearly twenty-one years in the world with very little to distress or vex her. She was the youngest of the two daughters of a most affectionate, indulgent father; and had, in consequence of her sister's marriage, been mistress of his house from a very early period. Jane Austen Emma. Collection by David Law. 42. Pictures Ink Illustrations Famous Art Black And White Illustration Book Illustration Female Books Illustration Sketches Book Art. Jane Austen - Emma Volume I. Jane Austen - Emma Volume I. Jane Austen Emma - I am very sorry to hear, Miss Fairfax, of your being out this morning in the rain. Image Art Inspo Victorian Illustration Humanoid Sketch Artwork Art Inspiration Illustration Inspirational Pictures Book Art. Jane Austen Northanger Abbey – the edge of a blooming cheek is still in view. 1800s Art Drawings Vintage Humanoid Sketch Illustration Book Art. Jane Austen - Emma Volume II.