

**“I wanna be your prison wife”: Nice Blonde Ladies, Broken Rules, and
Subversive Marriage Plots in Jenji Kohan’s *Orange is the New Black***

by

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I dedicate this research to my husband, Andrew Williams. In the words of one
Alex Vause, “I heart you.”

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ABSTRACT

In a 2013 interview with the *Los Angeles Times*, Piper Kerman, author of the bestselling memoir *Orange is the New Black: My Year in a Women's Prison*, stated that books served as “complete lifelines” and the “only legitimate forms of escape” she had during the thirteen months she spent incarcerated at a federal women’s penitentiary in Danbury, Connecticut. Kerman, who was indicted on charges of money laundering and drug trafficking for a crime she had committed more than a decade previously at the age of 24, serves as the inspiration for Jenji Kohan’s hit *Netflix* series *Orange is the New Black*. It only takes viewing a few episodes of the series to see that Kohan understands how significant books were to Kerman during her time behind bars: They are everywhere. Whether shelved in the library, actively being read by inmates in their bunks, or simply alluded to in conversation, it is clear that the ladies of Litchfield take their reading material almost as seriously as the prison’s seemingly endless catalogue of social codes. Appropriately enough, many of the books most prominently featured on the show are novels of manners. These include works by Tolstoy, Dickens, and the innovator of the genre herself—Jane Austen. While it may seem odd to compare Austen’s work to Kohan’s *OITNB*, I put forth the notion that like the couples in *Emma* and *Pride and Prejudice*, Piper and her girlfriend Alex are involved in a marriage plot that engages a variation of the lover-mentor convention. Though Austen’s settings of quaint villages in

Regency era England are a far cry from the 21st century U.S. prison system, both Austen's couples and Piper and Alex follow Robert Kiely's description of the marriage plot's narrative sequence: "encounter, attraction, break, and resolution in either final reunion or separation" (*Beyond Egotism: Fiction of James Joyce*). In addition, both Austen's characters and Piper and Alex live in a world that is regulated by strict social guidelines. Despite this, Piper and Alex never conform to societal expectations in the same way that Emma, Knightley, Elizabeth, and Darcy do, and the duo consistently keeps up their status as anti-heroines throughout the series. By intentionally adhering to the structure of the marriage plot and knowingly subverting many of its most traditional tropes, Kohan provides viewers with an Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy for the 21st century. They might be felonious women with a penchant for outraging critics and fans alike with their self-involved disobedience, but as Piper tells Alex in season two, "Rules aren't any fun" anyway.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER ONE: “WE HAVE MANNERS. WE’RE POLITE.”: THE MARRIAGE BETWEEN LITCHFIELD PRISON ETIQUETTE AND AUSTENIAN SOCIAL CONVENTION	16
The Novel of Manners	16
From Parlors to Prison Cells: The Constraints of Social Decorum . . .	23
CHAPTER TWO: LOVERS, MENTORS, AND OTHER BACKSTABBERS: VAUSEMAN AND THE AUSTENIAN MARRIAGE PLOT	37
CHAPTER THREE: LILIES, DANDELIONS, AND THE PRICE OF PRIVILEGE: WHARTON’S <i>THE HOUSE OF MIRTH</i> AND KOHAN’S <i>ORANGE IS THE NEW BLACK</i>	78
CONCLUSION	100
WORKS CITED	104

INTRODUCTION

The season two premier of Jenji Kohan's hit Netflix series *Orange is the New Black* features a markedly different version of Piper Chapman, the show's yuppie protagonist, than viewers had come to know in season one. Far from being the woman whose last instructions to her fiancé upon entering prison were to "keep her website updated," this episode features a Piper who must come to terms with the fact that she brutally beat and possibly killed another inmate (S1 E1, "I Wasn't Ready"). When she is abruptly transferred from the Solitary Housing Unit (SHU) at Litchfield to a maximum security prison in Chicago, she assumes that her violent actions resulted in murder. However, Piper soon learns from her on-again-off-again girlfriend Alex Vause that the reason for her transfer had nothing to do with the physical altercation. Instead, Piper is in Chicago because of another bad decision she made ten years previously, the one that landed her in prison in the first place: As a love-struck twenty-two-year-old, Piper carried drug money for Alex, a high-ranking heroin importer in an international drug cartel. Piper soon learns that Kubra Balik, the leader of the cartel, has been extradited to stand trial in Chicago and that she must testify against him. Matters are complicated when Alex informs Piper that in order to avoid Kubra's "business model" of "sick, deep revenge," they have no choice but to lie on the stand and say that they never knew him (S2 E1, "Thirsty Bird"). Despite Alex's conviction on this point, Piper informs her on the ride to the

courthouse in the prison transport van that she will not lie and perjure herself. Frustrated, the two begin the following exchange:

Alex: “This is the only way I can keep you safe now. You have to do what I’m telling you.”

Piper: “Or what? We’re over?”

Alex: “No. I wanna be your prison wife.”

Piper: “I’m glad you can make jokes.” (S2 E1, “Thirsty Bird”)

This conversation is a prime example of Kohan’s much-admired ability to inject comedy into otherwise tense scenes. When asked about her feelings on whether *OITNB* should be officially classified as a comedy or drama at a post-screening panel discussion at the Directors Guild of America, Kohan replied:

“It’s very important to me to play in both worlds, because I don’t think anything is all serious or all funny. I remember watching dramas and thinking, when there was no humor or comic relief, that they did not reflect any sort of reality, because there’s no such thing as life without humor.” (“Emmy Drama and Body Positivity”)

While Alex’s “prison wife” comment certainly provides comic relief, I believe it deserves a more critical examination. Alex smirks sarcastically after making the statement, and Piper dryly refers to it as a joke; however, given their history and relationship trajectory, the question begs to be posed: Is it really? This project will consider this question in light of the novel of manners genre

and the conventions of the nineteenth-century marriage plot. By comparing and contrasting Piper and Alex's prison romance with the couples and more genteel settings from Jane Austen's works *Emma* and *Pride and Prejudice*, as well as Edith Wharton's *The House of Mirth*, I will argue that *OITNB* possesses the characteristics of a modern-day novel of manners and that Piper and Alex are involved in a subversion of the traditional marriage plot.

In a 2013 interview with the *Los Angeles Times*, Piper Kerman, author of the bestselling memoir *Orange is the New Black: My Year in a Women's Prison*, stated that books served as "complete lifelines" and the "only legitimate forms of escape" she had during the thirteen months she spent incarcerated at a federal women's penitentiary in Danbury, Connecticut ("Q&A: *Orange is the New Black*"). Like her fictional counterpart Piper Chapman, Kerman was indicted on charges of money laundering and drug trafficking more than a decade after carrying a suitcase full of drug money from Chicago to Brussels for her then-girlfriend Cleary Wolters. When describing her initial meeting with Kohan concerning the adaptation of her memoir for television, Kerman states: "We had a long lunch [but] Jenji didn't pitch me. [She] just asked questions, [which proved] that there is a point of inquiry at which she works creatively instead of [forcing] her point of view" ("What We Learned"). It only takes viewing a few episodes of the show to see that Kohan respects and understands how significant books were to Kerman during her time behind bars: They are everywhere. Whether shelved in the

library, actively being read by inmates in their bunks, or simply alluded to in conversation, it is clear that the ladies of Litchfield take their reading material almost as seriously as the prison's seemingly endless catalogue of social codes. Appropriately enough, many of the books most prominently featured on the show are novels of manners. These include works by Tolstoy, Dickens, and the innovator of the genre herself—Jane Austen.

Interestingly, Austen's works *Pride and Prejudice* and *Emma* are two of the earliest novels to be featured in the series. In season one, episode four, the books are included in one of Piper's care packages, and the camera blatantly zooms in on their titles. This is noteworthy for a number of reasons, one of which is that *Pride and Prejudice* was the novel Kerman read on the first night of her incarceration. She writes:

Eyeing the bookshelf crammed with James Patterson, V.C. Andrews, and romance novels, I finally found an old paperback copy of *Pride and Prejudice* and retired to my bunk . . . I fell gratefully into the much more familiar world of Hanoverian England. (Kerman 51)

While this is certainly enough justification for Austen's novels to be featured in such a prominent manner, I argue that Kohan also had other motivations. Similar to the way Austen's characters are governed by the strict social codes of early nineteenth-century polite society, the women incarcerated at

Litchfield are regulated by the spoken and unspoken rules of prison etiquette.

In a 2013 interview with NPR, Kerman explains:

“When you get to prison, if you've never been locked up before, there's this incredibly steep learning curve. First of all, you have to learn and understand all of the rules of the institution, all of the rules that are enforced by all of the guards and all of the wardens. Those include all the daily counts, when every single person within a unit is counted, and there's a host of rules, both reasonable and unreasonable. And what's confusing about that is that they're selectively enforced and frequently broken by the prison staff themselves.” (Behind ‘The New Black’)

The inconsistent displays of state mandated power that Kerman speaks of are illustrated on the show when corrupt guards like Pornstache make spectacles of searching inmate bunks for contraband despite actively working to smuggle drugs into the prison. However, while corrections officers have the power to erratically dole out punishments and break the same rules they are meant to enforce, prisoners are constantly reminded that their wellbeing depends on their strict adherence to official prison regulations. As Jeffrey E. Stephenson and Sarah Waller state in their article “Prison as Rehab? Foucault Says No, No, No,” “What prisoners learn deeply is to follow arbitrary and confusing regulations without questioning them, because the consequences for failing to do so might be even more horrendous than their

current experience.” Stephenson and Waller go on to analyze the state mandated hierarchal power structure of Litchfield, as well as the one the prisoners form among themselves. Like prison wardens, doctors, and psychologists are specialists in their domains of authority, the prisoners also specialize. For example, Red, a quick-tempered Russian mob associate, manages Litchfield’s kitchen, and Lorna Morello, a woman convicted of stalking, is the prison’s official van driver. In the same way that it is imperative for new prisoners to quickly familiarize themselves with the written rules of the institution, they must also work to gain a knowledge of the social hierarchy among the inmates. Kerman states:

"The other set of rules that you have to learn very, very quickly are the unofficial rules, and those are the rules that the community of women, the society of prisoners, set for themselves. That could be anything from not taking someone's habitual seat at the movie night — you don't want to sit in the wrong place because you'll be pretty quickly corrected on that — to not asking someone directly what their offense is, because that's considered very, very rude. You have to figure all of those things out. What you really have to figure out is where you fit in in the social ecology of the prison." (Behind ‘The New Black’)

So what do Austen's and Kohan's explorations of the codified behaviors of particular classes and groups of people have to do with prison wives? The answer lies in the lover-mentor convention of the traditional marriage plot.

In her article "Not Subordinate: Empowering Women in the Marriage Plot," Julie Shaffer writes that an author who employs the lover-mentor convention makes the "heroine's growth to maturity dependent upon learning from a male mentor" (54). Austen, who both used this convention and knowingly subverted it at times, utilized courtship and marriage plots as "variable pattern[s] for detailing the growth of successive heroines" (Magee 198). For instance, throughout the course of *Emma*, the title character is taught by Mr. Knightley to abandon her matchmaking fantasies and come to terms with her prescribed societal role as a woman who must set a moral example for the citizens of Highbury. In a similar vein, Elizabeth learns the danger of stubbornly adhering to preconceived notions from Mr. Darcy in *Pride and Prejudice*. However, unlike the one-sided mentorship that takes place between Knightley and Emma, Austen slightly tweaks the lover-mentor convention when she gives Elizabeth the opportunity to teach Darcy the importance of humility. Despite this difference, both women are rewarded with marriage at the closing of their stories because they submit to the patriarchal structure of their society and appropriate model gender behavior (Shaffer 55). While it may seem odd to compare Austen's work to Kohan's *OITNB*, I put forth the notion that like the couples in *Emma* and *Pride and*

Prejudice, Piper and Alex are involved in a marriage plot that engages a variation of the lover-mentor convention. Though Austen's settings of quaint villages in Regency era England are a far cry from the twenty-first century U.S. prison system, both Austen's couples and Piper and Alex follow Robert Kiely's description of the marriage plot's narrative sequence: "encounter, attraction, break, and resolution in either final reunion or separation" (164). In addition, both Austen's characters and Piper and Alex inhabit strictly governed social arenas. However, unlike Emma, Knightly, Elizabeth, and Darcy, Piper and Alex refuse to play by the rules.

When *OITNB* premiered in 2013, the show quickly became Netflix's most watched original series (Gelt). Nominated for twelve Emmy awards in its first season alone, the dramedy stands out for its sweeping cast of diverse female characters. As Mac McClelland writes in his *Rolling Stone* article "*Orange is the New Black: Caged Heat*," the series is full of "killing, fucking, supporting, loving, scheming, desperately masturbating ladies, living in a prison system we generally try hard to forget about, played by actresses we don't often see either." While the cast's ensemble of African American, Latina, Asian, lesbian, bisexual, and trans women has been praised by critics, fans, and academics alike, the show has also received its fair share of criticism. This is reflected in *Feminist Perspectives on Orange is the New Black*, a collection of thirteen critical essays written by scholars who analyze topics addressed on the show such as sexual assault, mental illness,

sexuality, mass incarceration, race, class, and transgenderism. In the introduction to the collection, editors April Kalogeropoulos Householder and Adrienne Trier-Bieniek note, “A consistent debate is whether *OITNB* celebrates diversity in its multiple and diverse characters, or is a story told through the lens of white privilege, featuring a cast of characters who embody some of the most racist and sexist stereotypes in the history of television” (1). This stated dichotomy of opinions extends to Piper and Alex’s characters as well. On one hand, some authors like Sarah E. Fryett argue that the couple merely provides viewers with “a voyeuristic fantasy that at once turns women into objects and also reasserts a heteronormative narrative of the male heterosexual gaze” (26). Fryett goes on to assert that Piper and Alex propagate “an image that is rooted in normative femininity, lack of commitment, and promiscuity” (26). On the other hand, authors like Zoey K. Jones take a more positive view of Piper and Alex’s romantic relationship. Jones writes that the couple “wield[s] power of a kind through sexuality” and that they aid one another in “resist[ing] the killing power” of the prison industrial complex (147).

Similar differences of opinion regarding the duo exist outside of academia as well. In an article for the website *AfterEllen*, Sofia Barrett-Ibarria argues that Piper and Alex should be written off the show because their relationship “reache[s] peak insufferability” after season two (“*OITNB* Doesn’t Need Piper and Alex”). She vehemently speculates:

Can't Alex be, like, transferred to another prison or something?
 Can't Piper do a Larry and quietly phase herself out to the big
 Litchfield in the sky where retired characters peacefully live out
 their twilight years? And wasn't one tense surprise reunion
 between Alex and Piper in Season 1 enough? HAVEN'T WE
 BEEN HERE BEFORE?? I'm losing my mind over a pair of TV
 lesbians. That's not a bad thing, I'd just rather not be driven
 batshit insane by this particular pair of TV lesbians. ("*OITNB*
 Doesn't Need Piper and Alex")

Conversely, Piper and Alex also have an exceptionally ardent base of supporters known as "Vauseman Shippers." The term "shipper" derives from the word "relationship" and describes fans who care deeply about the interpersonal connections between their favorite fictional characters (Malone-Kircher). After the first season of *OITNB*, Piper and Alex shippers began referring to the couple as "Vauseman" on Tumblr, and now there is everything from Vauseman themed Pinterest boards to an entire genre of fan fiction. In her article "Should We Give a Ship," scholar Rachel Robison-Greene addresses the concept of shipping and asserts that fans usually fail to ship a couple for what she calls "ethical reasons"—because they "think it would be morally good for two characters to get together" and instead contends that couples are usually shipped for "aesthetic reasons"—because viewers "think, artistically, that it would be fun, or beautiful, or otherwise

satisfying.” After using the categories of “long-term safety and security, capacity to satisfy emotional needs, trust, and willingness to let one another grow” to assess Piper and Alex’s romance, Robison-Greene comes to the conclusion that she would not support the fictional relationship in real life and that it “wouldn’t have a snowball’s chance in hell of working out.”

Despite this, she plans to keep supporting the couple because “flawed characters are often the best ones” and shipping “provide[s] opportunities to test our moral intuitions about relationships and behavior in general.”

Whether pro-Vauseman or anti-Vauseman, one thing is for sure: The opinions that surround Piper, Alex, and their relationship are as varied as the charges stacked against Litchfield’s inmates.

This thesis will argue that the couple provokes such impassioned responses because of their willingness to subvert societal expectations. Like Austen’s characters, Piper and Alex are involved in a marriage plot that results in a prison wedding at the closing of season six. Unlike Austen’s characters, the Vauseman women fail to conform to prescribed gender roles and unabashedly misbehave. As Chelsea Steiner asserts in her article “In Defense of Piper, Alex, and the Female Anti-Heroine on *Orange is the New Black*”:

There’s a distinct double standard that exists for fictional women and—who am I kidding?—real women for that matter. While male characters glorify “bad” behavior and revel in

transgression, female characters are forced to remain safe and likeable. This is what makes the women of *OITNB*, specifically Alex and Piper, so important: they are three-dimensional, flawed, fucked up women. And they don't apologize for it.

It is precisely this type of brazen fallibility that causes Piper and Alex's characters to be surrounded by so much controversy. While leading men like *Breaking Bad's* Walter White and *Mad Men's* Don Draper are praised by critics and fans alike for their transgressive behavior, the portrayal of women who do the same is still a largely contentious issue.

Chapter One of this study will examine scholarship on the novel of manners genre. Works by scholars such as Nancy Bentley, Kent Puckett, and Lionel Trilling will be utilized as a basis for my assertion that *OITNB* meets the requirements to be viewed as a type of modern-day novel of manners. In addition, I will draw comparisons between the various prison rules presented on the show and the strict codes of etiquette presented in Austen's novels. Piper's place in what Kerman deems the "social ecology" of Litchfield will also be explored in order to illustrate the commonalities she shares with Austen's heroines.

Chapter Two will examine what elements are needed in a work of fiction to constitute a marriage plot and focus on the Vauseman lover-mentor dynamic. Scholarship concerning Piper and Alex's characters will be analyzed, along with their roles as anti-heroines in the series. Furthermore,

I will delve into the ways Vauseman both upholds and subverts the expectations of a couple involved in a traditional marriage plot. For instance, while many classic tropes of the plot such as being involved in a love triangle directly apply to the couple, Kohan “breaks the rules” by making two women romantically attracted to one another. In addition, Piper and Alex’s relationship dynamic will be compared and contrasted with those of the couples in Austen’s *Emma* and *Pride and Prejudice*. I will argue that Alex and Knightley are positioned as types of older, wiser mentors to Piper and Emma and that the younger women eventually come to resent the control their significant others hold over them. In order to achieve a balance of power, Piper and Emma unconsciously and unsuccessfully begin to model themselves after their respective mentors. The idea that Alex and Piper’s conversations serve as types of performances will also be analyzed in conjunction with Elizabeth and Darcy’s dialogue in *Pride and Prejudice*.

Chapter Three will utilize Edith Wharton’s *House of Mirth* to analyze *OITNB* from a naturalistic perspective. While the novel is not explicitly referenced in the series, I will argue that its heroine Lily Bart shares ample personality traits and endures many of the same social trials as Piper Chapman. Despite the disparity in setting between the works, the two women become involved in parallel instances of social transaction that ultimately determine their fate. However, while it is true the characters share much in common, I will suggest that Lily is less adaptable to

environmental changes than Piper. Lily perishes at the closing of Wharton's novel because of her refusal to cash in on her social capital, while Piper survives at the end of season one of *OITNB* because of her willingness to use her assets to defend herself. In addition, I plan to explore the predetermined nature of the Vauseman relationship. The two are constantly uttering phrases to one another such as "Why do you always feel so inevitable to me?" and "[We are] doomed to be together" (S1 E11, "Tall Men with Feelings" and S4 E12, "The Animals"). The "inevitability" that surrounds the couple is intriguing when looked at in the context of the marriage plot because the ending of the plot itself is inevitable. By comparing and contrasting Piper and Alex's relationship with Lily and Selden's, I will reveal how Kohan and Wharton use concepts of naturalism to simultaneously recognize and rebel against the framework of the traditional marriage plot.

Alex's sardonic declaration that she wants to be Piper's prison wife in season two of *OITNB* serves as more than a well timed moment of comic relief: It is also a verbal indication that the two women are involved in a subversion of the traditional nineteenth-century marriage plot. Like the couples who exist in the Austen novels that Kohan is so fond of showing on camera, Piper and Alex live in a world that is regulated by strict social guidelines. Despite this, they never conform to societal expectations and consistently keep up their status as anti-heroines throughout the series. By intentionally adhering to the structure of the marriage plot and knowingly

subverting many of its most traditional tropes, *Kohan* provides viewers with an Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy for the twenty-first century. They might be felonious women with a penchant for outraging critics and fans alike with their self-involved disobedience, but as Piper tells Alex in season two, “Rules aren’t any fun” anyway.

CHAPTER ONE: “WE HAVE MANNERS. WE’RE POLITE.”: THE
MARRIAGE BETWEEN LITCHFIELD PRISON ETIQUETTE AND
AUSTENIAN SOCIAL CONVENTION

*“We say ‘thank you,’ we say ‘please,’ and ‘excuse me,’ when we sneeze. That’s
the way we do what’s right. We have manners. We’re polite.”*

- Suzanne Warren, *OITNB* (S2 E13)

The Novel of Manners

Henry James declared in 1888 that “[w]e know a man imperfectly until we know his society, and we but half know a society until we know its manners” (qtd. in Macheski 344). While James assuredly presents manners as the ultimate key to understanding individuals and their communities, the definition of the term is anything but straightforward. When asked to deliver a lecture on literature and its relation to manners at a conference held at Kenyon College in 1947, Lionel Trilling remarked on the elusiveness of the concept. After establishing that the conference organizers were not solely referring to manners in the sense of “the rules of personal intercourse” or the various “mores” and “customs” of society, Trilling expounded on his own interpretation of what he deemed a “nearly indefinable subject” (11). He stated:

What I understand by manners, then, is a culture's hum and buzz of implication. I mean the whole evanescent context of its explicit statements. It is that part of a culture which is made up of half-uttered or unuttered or unutterable expressions of value. They are hinted at by small actions, sometimes by the arts of dress or decoration, sometimes by tone, gesture, emphasis or rhythm, sometimes by the words that are used with a special frequency or a special meaning. They are the things that for good or bad draw the people of a culture together and that separate them from the people of another culture. It is the part of a culture which is not art, nor religion, nor morals, nor politics, and yet it relates to all these highly formulated departments of culture. It is modified by them; it modifies them; it is generated by them; it generates them. In this part of culture assumption rules, which is often so much stronger than reason.

(12-13)

Although Trilling's description of manners successfully captures the nuances of the term and, as Cecelia Macheski notes, "prevents readers from expecting merely rules on table settings or wedding etiquette," it has also proven to complicate the classification of one of literature's most venerated genres: the novel of manners (344). This chapter will explore *OITNB* as a novel of

manners in order to highlight the similarities between the show and Austen's *Emma* and *Pride and Prejudice*.

In his seminal book *The Novel of Manners in America*, James Tuttleton observes that the “phrase ‘novel of manners’ means so much in the criticism of the American novel that it means hardly anything” (xi). Howard Mumford Jones even goes so far as to contend in *Jeffersonianism and the American Novel* that “all novels are in some sense novels of manners” (15). Though Tuttleton and Jones focus specifically on the American literary tradition, similar comments are often made of British novels. As Barbara Brothers and Bege K. Bowers state in the introduction to *Reading and Writing Women's Lives: A Study of the Novel of Manners*, there are only two matters that scholars agree on when it comes to classifying novels of manners: “Jane Austen wrote [them], and such novels present something of the ‘social customs, manners, conventions, and habits of a definite social class at a particular time and place’” (1). Critics of the novel of manners genre have had difficulty expanding on these sole points of agreement due in large part to the rich and varied nature of Trilling's 1947 definition of manners. If manners are a “culture's hum and buzz of implication,” then what makes a novel of manners different from any other novel that deals with issues of society and human nature? Tuttleton offers the following explanation:

If we are inclusive, we may define the novel of manners as a novel in which the closeness of manners and character is of itself

interesting enough to provoke an examination of their relationship. By a novel of manners, I mean a novel in which the manners, social customs, folkways, conventions, traditions, and mores of a given social group at a given time and place play a dominant role in the lives of fictional characters, exert control over their thought and behavior, and constitute a determinant upon the actions in which they are engaged, and in which these manners and customs are detailed realistically—with, in fact, a premium upon the exactness of their representation. (10)

In other words, like Brothers and Bowers, Tuttleton believes that “a novel *about* manners is not necessarily a novel *of* manners” (Brothers and Bowers 16). In order to be considered a novel of manners, a work must not only describe the social mores and regulations of a particular group at a given time, it must also illustrate the level of control those regulations have on the lives and mindsets of individuals.

As scholar Mark Schorer notes in his introduction to *Society and Self in the Novel*, the balance between character and culture that Tuttleton speaks of is often difficult for authors to achieve. Schorer states:

The problem of the novel has always been to distinguish between these two, the self and society, and at the same time to find suitable structures that will present them together . . . The novel seems to exist at a point where we can recognize the

intersection of the stream of social history and the stream of the soul. This intersection gives the form its dialectical field, provides the source of those generic tensions that make it possible at all. (viii-ix)

While Schorer speaks of the novel in a general sense, the novel of manners, more than any other genre, exists at the crossroads between self and society. Like Schorer, Tuttleton asserts that if a text fails to pinpoint itself between these binaries, it will either result in a work “which gravitates toward autobiography or lyric and informal philosophy” or one which culminates in a “history or chronicle” (9). However, this is not to say that a novel of manners cannot have a specific issue like marriage, divorce, or class conflict as its focus. In fact, as Nancy Bentley declares in *The Ethnography of Manners: Hawthorne, James, and Wharton*, manners themselves are “deeply political” (7). She supports this assertion with the following quote from Pierre Bourdieu:

The principles embodied in this way are placed beyond the grasp of consciousness, and hence cannot be touched by voluntary, deliberate transformation, cannot even be made explicit; nothing seems more ineffable, more incommunicable than . . . the transubstantiation achieved by the hidden persuasion of an implicit pedagogy, capable of instilling a whole cosmology, an ethic, a metaphor, a political philosophy, through injunctions as

insignificant as “stand up straight” or “don’t hold your knife in your left hand” . . . The concessions of *politeness* always contain *political* concessions. (Bourdieu 94)

Although some readers may believe that novels of manners place too much emphasis on seemingly insignificant matters like posture and dining etiquette, manners actually serve as signifiers that, however unfairly, mark an individual’s moral standing and social rank. As Edmund Burke states in one of his *First Letters on a Regicide Peace*:

Manners are of more importance than laws . . . The law touches us but here and there, and now and then. Manners are what vex or soothe, corrupt or purify, exalt or debase, barbarize or refine us, by a constant, steady, uniform, insensible operation, like that of the air we breathe . . . [giving] their whole form and colour to our lives. According to their quality, they aid morals, they supply them, or they totally destroy them. (qtd. in Yoder 607)

Far from merely documenting inane social niceties, novels of manners comment on and reveal the complexities behind a culture’s gender relations, ethical standards, religious beliefs, economic organization, and political structure (Tuttleton 11 and 12).

Similar to the way it is possible for novels of manners to focus on a myriad of core issues, it is also possible for them to take on varying forms. In

Edith Wharton and the Novel of Manners, Gary H. Lindberg writes that “beyond the implied reference to narrative,” there are no “particular techniques or structures that determine the novel of manners” (3). In fact, Lindberg goes on to argue that the genre offers two types of flexibility: the specific style of manners authors choose to stress and the overall degree of emphasis they place on manners themselves. He expounds:

Jane Austen obviously finds verbal behavior far more important than any other mode of manners; for Balzac those patterns of behavior involving dress, decoration, and gesture assume relatively greater significance . . . But it does not make one more than the other a novelist of manners . . . [And] when is a novel’s reality significantly made up of manners? There is no exact measure; it is a matter of the reader’s tact. Edith Wharton’s reality is far more dependent on manners than Howells’s, and his more than Fitzgerald’s; yet I would agree with the consensus that all three are novelists of manners. (3-4)

In other words, just because two novels may examine differing facets of manners and focus on them with varying intensities, it is entirely possible for both works to be classified as novels of manners.

Following Lindberg’s line of reasoning, the remainder of this chapter will be devoted to my argument that *OITNB* exhibits the traits of a modern-day novel of manners. Though scholars hold divergent views concerning the

exact definition of the genre, most agree that in order for a work to be considered a novel of manners, social regulations must have a significant impact on characters' thoughts, behaviors, and actions. This is certainly true of the inmates at Litchfield Penitentiary who are controlled by the formal and informal statutes of prison comportment. Furthermore, despite its digital medium, the show shares ample similarities with the work of Jane Austen, who is widely known to be "*the* novelist of manners" (Brothers and Bowers 3). Though at first glance Litchfield Penitentiary may seem to share little in common with the charming locales presented in *Emma* and *Pride and Prejudice*, the fact remains that the social codes presented in all three settings fundamentally impinge on characters' lives.

From Parlors to Prison Cells: The Constraints of Social Decorum

When Austen began writing *Emma* in 1814, she declared, "I am going to take a heroine whom no one but myself will much like" (qtd. in Pinch viii). This proved to be a largely prophetic statement, not only in relation to Emma herself, but to the novel as a whole. Contemporary reviewers such as author Maria Edgeworth complained of the novel:

"There was no story in it except that Miss Emma found that the man whom she designed for Harriets lover was an admirer of her own—& he was affronted at being refused by Emma & Harriet wore the willow—*and smooth, thin water gruel* is

according to Emma's father's opinion a very good thing & it is very difficult to make a cook understand what you mean by smooth thin water gruel!" (qtd. in Pinch vii)

As Adela Pinch argues in her introduction to the Oxford World's Classics edition of *Emma*, the principle cause of Edgeworth's opinion that there was "no story" in the novel was "the nature of Emma herself" (viii). Unlike the heroines of Austen's previous novels *Sense and Sensibility*, *Pride and Prejudice*, and *Mansfield Park*, Emma Woodhouse is never forced to contemplate what Elsie B. Michie deems "the vulgar question of money" (217). In fact, readers are informed of Emma's privileged social position from the first line of the novel when Austen writes, "Emma Woodhouse, handsome, clever, and rich, 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" (Austen 5). While this description of a heroine with so few cares no doubt contributed to Edgeworth's proclamation that *Emma* failed to engage her imagination, it was shortsighted of her to say that the novel has no definite plot. Emma's story is simply not one that is wholly dependent on her ability to find a rich husband. Rather, it has more to do with her need to overcome her status of being what Devoney Looser calls "a pioneering rich bitch," a trait she shares in common with *OITNB's* Piper Chapman.

When describing her vision for Piper's character in a 2013 interview with NPR, Jenji Kohan explained:

"In a lot of ways Piper was my Trojan Horse. You're not going to go into a network and sell a show on really fascinating tales of black women, and Latina women, and old women and criminals. But if you take this white girl, this sort of fish out of water, and you follow her in, you can then expand your world and tell all of those other stories. But it's a hard sell to just go in and try to sell those stories initially. The girl next door, the cool blonde, is a very easy access point, and it's relatable for a lot of audiences and a lot of networks looking for a certain demographic. It's useful." ("Orange' Creator Jenji Kohan")

As Gordon Milne states in his book *The Sense of Society: A History of the American Novel of Manners*, Kohan's strategy of introducing a "not-quite-belonging figure" to an unfamiliar social circle is one that has long been utilized by novelists of manners (12). Having a character like Piper, a self-professed "WASP," serve as the audience's ticket into Litchfield allows viewers to learn the complexities of prison etiquette alongside a familiar protagonist (S1 E1, "I Wasn't Ready"). Like Emma, who skillfully manipulates Harriet Smith into refusing Mr. Martin's marriage proposal with the excuse that difference in societal pedigree would keep her from visiting a "Mrs. Robert Martin, of Abbey Mill Farm," Piper also knows how to

use societal statutes to her advantage (Austen 91). This is illustrated in scenes that take place outside of Litchfield when Piper employs what Alex calls her “cute little sad face” to bend Larry to her will (S1 E8, “Moscow Mule”). In fact, Piper’s status in her normal life as an entitled “nice blonde lady” has made her so aware of the importance of social codes that she “studies for prison” by reading material about proper prison conduct (S1 E1, “I Wasn’t Ready”). Just before self-surrendering, she panics about her disheveled appearance and has the following exchange with Larry:

Piper: I look like shit. My eyes are all puffy.

Larry: You’re worried about how you look?

Piper: Well, they’re gonna know that I was crying. It’s a sign of weakness. You can’t show any weakness. That’s what all of the books said. (S1 E1, “I Wasn’t Ready”)

Because of Piper’s “debutante” upbringing, she realizes that having an awareness of social convention is paramount to success (S1 E6, “WAC Pack”). However, as Taylor Schilling, the actress who plays Piper, states: “Piper really quickly realizes that the rules that worked on the outside, that she was quite adept at playing within, don’t mean anything in prison. And in fact, will get her fucked up in prison. So she has to adapt pretty quickly” (“Behind the Bars with Piper”). While Piper does eventually adjust to prison life, the process is far from smooth.

In order to successfully grasp the conventions of a given society, it is first important to become familiar with its members. In *The Cambridge Companion to Jane Austen*, John Wiltshire remarks:

One of the achievements of [*Emma*] is to populate ‘the Highbury world’ and give it apparent depth. The loose ends and superfluous names that figure so much in Mrs. Bates’ gossip do not just serve to camouflage the essential bits of information that she is feeding into the plot, they are a technically adroit means of conveying . . . [the] sense of a social commonwealth.
(68)

Though *Emma* only focuses on a handful of major characters, references to people like Mrs. Goddard, the Coxes, and the Coles who are rarely seen or, in Perry’s case, never seen at all are so frequent that the individuals eventually “acquire a kind of familiarity by proxy” (Wiltshire 68). This is a common technique used in novels of manners because, as Edwin M. Yoder suggests in his article “Otelia’s Umbrella: Jane Austen and Manners in a Small World,” “there is a law of inverse proportion between the scale of the novelistic scene and the delicacy and fineness of manners and their observation” (606). Keeping the setting of *Emma* limited to Highbury, a village that only “almost amount[s] to a town,” allows Austen to create a contained universe where manners and the characters who practice them are painted with exacting detail. For instance, Mr. Woodhouse’s frequent references to Perry

accomplish the dual purposes of establishing a wider sense of community beyond the novel's central characters while also disclosing the true extent of his own hypochondria. In addition, Highbury's insular nature allows Austen to expound on several social rules specific to the village itself. For example, the Coles, "who were of low origin, in trade, and only moderately genteel," show their respect for Mr. Woodhouse's prominent social position by purchasing a "folding screen from London" that "they hoped might keep [him] from any draught of air, and therefore induce him the more readily to give them the honour of his company" at their dinner party (Austen 358). Furthermore, everyone of any consequence in the village knows to send small gifts such as hindquarters of pork and baskets of apples to the economically disadvantaged Bates family, and Frank Churchill's failure to visit Mrs. Weston upon her marriage to his father is considered a moral failing by Mr. Knightley, who informs Emma, "There is one thing . . . which a man can always do if he chooses, and that is his duty" (253). Similar to the way Highbury's contained nature assists Austen in capturing the nuances of its citizens' manners, Kohan uses the isolation of Litchfield Penitentiary to make it a breeding ground for specialized social interaction.

Like the physical absence of Perry in *Emma*, there are several characters in *OITNB* who are often mentioned by name but never actually seen on screen. Examples include the infamous hairstylist Danita, who Piper is warned will "burn the shit out of her scalp," and White Cindy, Black

Cindy's Caucasian counterpart (S1 E1, "I Wasn't Ready"). Comparable to the manner in which Austen populates *Highbury* with characters who never make concrete appearances in the narrative, *Kohan* does the same with inmates like Danita and White Cindy in order to add depth to the Litchfield community. Moreover, Litchfield also has a host of institution specific social decrees that its residents must follow. For example, Piper learns in the first episode alone that it is customary for inmates to call one another by their surnames, that the women clean everything in their dorms with Maxi Pads, and that the prisoners organize themselves into tribes based on race. Failure to abide by these rules could result in being socially ostracized, as illustrated when Piper moves into her temporary dorm. In a conversation with her new roommate DeMarco concerning the proper way to make a prison bed, Piper begins:

Piper: So, we make our beds in the morning before they . . .

DeMarco: No. You sleep on top of the bed. With a blanket over you.

Piper: What if I want to sleep in the bed?

DeMarco: Look, you can do what you want, but you will be the only one in this entire prison that does. You want that? Be my guest. (S1 E1, "I Wasn't Ready")

In addition to the multitude of official prison rules that Piper is expected to obey, she must also follow the unofficial ones set by the inmates themselves in order to avoid social exile.

Comparable to the way viewers initially learn prison rules alongside Piper, one of the most unique aspects of *Emma* is that while the novel is written from a third person omniscient perspective, almost everything that takes place in the narrative is shown through Emma's own eyes. As Wiltshire points out, this allows the narrator to occasionally go so far as to assume Emma's viewpoint in order to "deliberately trick the reader" (67). One instance of this occurs in Chapter IV when Mrs. Weston speaks to Mr. Elton about a likeness Emma paints of Harriet Smith. The narrator relates that Mrs. Weston was "not in the least suspecting she was addressing a lover" when interacting with the young clergyman (79-80). Emma's own opinion that Mr. Elton is romantically interested in Harriet bleeds into the novel's narration, and "Emma's view of motives is allowed to tease the reader, to appear as if it is the book's" (Wiltshire 67). First time readers of *Emma* are often thrown by the revelations that Mr. Elton is actually interested in courting Emma herself and that Frank Churchill and Jane Fairfax are involved in a secret engagement. Though these details may seem obvious after the fact, Emma's tunnel vision causes many readers to view the novel's characters in the same limited way that she does. However, as Brothers and Bowers assert, it is important to remember that "the novel of manners

narrates the actions of *characters*, not . . . character types” (3). The individuals in *Emma* turn out to be more complex than Emma gives them credit for, a detail that the novel shares in common with *OITNB*.

Because Piper’s view of the prison system is based solely on depictions she has seen on television shows or read about in books, she initially judges her fellow inmates solely in terms of their appearance and level of criminality. This results in her inadvertently stereotyping some of the show’s most complex characters. For instance, after Larry uses the platform of a public radio show to describe Suzanne Warren, an inmate widely known as “Crazy Eyes” in the prison, as an “insane girl” who “belongs in a psychiatric hospital,” Piper feels remorse for her prejudicial characterization of the woman (S1 E12, “Fool Me Once”). She attempts to apologize by offering: “Suzanne, listen. Those things that Larry said on the radio? They sounded a lot worse than they really were. And when I said those things to him, it was before I knew you. Before I knew what a nice person you are” (S1 E12, “Fool Me Once”). Like Emma, it takes Piper time to realize that the people around her are more complicated than what they originally seem. In an interview with Netflix, Uzo Aduba, the actress who plays Suzanne, describes the situation in the following manner:

I think what’s been really exciting to watch through Season 1, we come in seeing the funhouse mirror version of these people, because we are being brought in through Piper’s lens of life.

And then, as the show begins to go further into the story, we start to see that these people are more than what they appear on the surface. (“Behind the Bars with Crazy Eyes”)

Aduba is ultimately describing the success behind Kohan’s Trojan Horse strategy.

As Piper becomes familiar with the show’s major characters, she successfully eases audiences into becoming more comfortable with them as well. For example, in her article “*Orange is the New Black: The Popularization of Lesbian Sexuality and Heterosexual Modes of Viewing*,” Katerina Symes puts forth the notion that *OITNB* “invites female viewers who identify as heterosexual to interact with forms of queer media that they would not normally seek out otherwise” (29). She writes that Piper’s “queering has the potential to constitute her as a safely ambiguous place from which straight-identified women can experiment with same-sex desire through more homo-voyeuristic or heteroflexible modes of viewing” (33). Aware that the blatant depiction of queer sexualities on *OITNB* could be potentially off-putting to straight-identified women, Kohan uses Piper and her traditionally feminine presentation as a way to gently challenge viewers’ conceptions of LGBTQ+ individuals. This, in turn, encourages the audience to become invested in the story arcs of queer characters other than Piper and relate to them as people instead of mere constructs. Similarly, the article “*If Orange is the New Black, I Must Be Color Blind: Comic Framing of Post-*

Racism in the Prison-Industrial Complex” by Suzanne M. Enck and Megan E. Morrissey discusses how *OITNB* represents many women of different races who are normally excluded from mainstream television. Enck and Morrissey analyze the way Piper must navigate the tribal structure of Litchfield by “deploying a Burkean understanding of the comic frame” (303). They argue that it is through the “laughter that Piper’s foibles inspire—and the affection this causes white audiences (especially) to have for all the characters—[that] calls viewers into a critique of post-racial structures” (314). Ultimately, Piper serves as a gateway to the stories of Litchfield’s other characters, and like Emma, she must come to the understanding that people do not always adhere to stereotypes.

In his book *Bad Form: Social Mistakes in the Nineteenth-Century Novel*, Kent Puckett explores the significance of “minor infractions against convention” in nineteenth-century novels of manners (24). Instead of focusing on mistakes of “scene-shattering intensity,” (6) Puckett argues that it is seemingly insignificant blunders such as “spilled drinks, poor timing, [and] slips of the tongue” (6) that “produce a range of coherent effects within the novel at the related levels of character, plot, and narration” (24). Nowhere is this concept more exemplified than in Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice*. Originally titled *First Impressions*, the novel’s major conflict is set into motion by just that: a bad first impression. After being implored by Mr.

Bingley to dance with Elizabeth Bennet at a ball where there was already a “scarcity of gentleman,” Darcy responds:

“Which do you mean?” and turning round he looked for a moment at Elizabeth, till catching her eye, he withdrew his own and coldly said, “She is tolerable; but not handsome enough to tempt *me*; and I am in no humour at present to give consequence to young ladies who are slighted by other men. You had better return to your partner and enjoy her smiles, for you are wasting your time with me.”

Mr. Bingley followed his advice. Mr. Darcy walked off, and Elizabeth remained with no very cordial feelings towards him. (Austen 9)

It is Darcy’s rejection of Elizabeth at the beginning of the narrative that solidifies her ill opinion of him for the majority of it. In fact, Darcy’s less than chivalrous behavior at the ball causes everyone present to view him as the “proudest, most disagreeable man in the world” (Austen 8). Though Darcy’s decision not to dance with Elizabeth is far from earth-shattering, it comes to drive the plot of the entire novel as Elizabeth must work to overcome her prejudice against him.

Piper’s first day at Litchfield is defined by a social blunder of her own. Though she has the wherewithal to “study for prison” in hopes of fitting into her new environment, the inmates make it abundantly clear that they know

Piper is not one of them (S1 E1, “I Wasn’t Ready”). In the pilot episode alone, she is referred to by names such as “Blondie,” “Princess,” and “Fancy” that set her apart from the rest of the inmate population (S1 E1, “I Wasn’t Ready”). To make matters worse, after unwittingly referring to the cafeteria food as “disgusting” in front of Red, Litchfield’s quick-tempered chef, the kitchen staff is ordered “to starve [Piper] out” (S1 E2, “Tit Punch”). When Piper tries to apologize for her actions, Red replies: “You seem sweet. You really do, Honey. But I can’t do shit with ‘I’m sorry.’ Not in here. Might not look like it, but there’s rules in this place. The most important of which is the second you’re perceived as weak you already are” (S1 E2, “Tit Punch”). The only way that Piper is able gain access to food again is by gathering materials she finds around the prison to make a homemade jalapeño rub lotion that relieves Red’s back pain. This baptism by fire initiates Piper into prison life and provides opportunities for character development in a way similar to that of Darcy’s slight at the ball in *Pride and Prejudice*. Though the mistake Piper makes with Red is a simple slip of the tongue, it becomes a catalyst for major plot events.

While it initially might be tempting to conclude that *OITNB* shares nothing in common with *Emma* and *Pride and Prejudice*, it is important to remember the detailed manner in which social codes are presented in each work. Not only are these regulations realistically portrayed, but they also influence the actions, thoughts, and behaviors of each piece’s characters.

Although there are dramatic differences in setting and format between *OITNB* and Austen's novels, Kohan and Austen should both be viewed as novelists of manners. In addition to their focus on the complex relationship between manners and character, they each employ one of the most consistently and commonly used structural devices in novels of manners: the marriage plot. The following chapter will explore scholarship on the marriage plot in order to reveal how Kohan comically contrasts tropes of the plot against the harsh reality of prison in order to highlight how Piper and Alex both conform to and deviate from the trajectory of Austen's couples from *Emma* and *Pride and Prejudice*.

CHAPTER TWO: LOVERS, MENTORS, AND OTHER BACKSTABBERS:
VAUSEMAN AND THE AUSTENIAN MARRIAGE PLOT

In his article “*Orange is the New Black: 20 Things That Make No Sense About Alex and Piper’s Relationship*,” Eric McAdams writes that season three of the series functions “like something of a cul-de-sac for Piper’s relationship with Alex.” Following Piper’s “bold move” of declaring her love for Alex and officially asking her to be her girlfriend, Piper pulls a complete about-face and cheats on Alex with Stella Carlin, a newly introduced inmate known for her Australian accent and myriad tattoos who comes to aid Piper in running her used panty fetish distribution company, Felonious Spunk (S3 E4, “Finger in the Dyke”). This extreme shift in behavior from devoted girlfriend to two-timing “panty kingpin” (S4 E8, “Friends in Low Places”) led many fans and critics alike to question the plausibility of such a transformation, with *Vice*’s Drew Millard complaining that Piper’s “unlikely road trip to Walter Whitesville” was an “encroachment upon shark-jumping” (“Will Someone Please, for the Love of God, Kill Piper on *Orange is the New Black?*”). While it may be true that by the end of season three Piper cares more about the profits from her illegal business than whether or not her prison issue shoes “look like Toms,” (S1 E1 “I Wasn’t Ready”) this chapter will argue that her evolution is not a result of nonsensical character progression, but is instead due to her role in what in Toby Benis deems “that mainstay of the novel of manners”: the marriage plot (184). Specifically,

Piper and Alex's involvement in the lover-mentor convention of the plot will be analyzed in conjunction with Emma and Knightley's relationship from *Emma* in order to illustrate how Vauseman both conforms to and deviates from Austen's lover-mentor model. While, after many failed attempts to emulate Knightley and achieve a balance of power, Emma ultimately reforms her imprudent behavior and abandons her matchmaking schemes in order to be rewarded with marriage, Piper still enjoys a prison wedding with Alex despite "morphing from [nice blonde lady] to angry thug" (Aftab). In addition, Alex and Piper's conversations, which are often referred to in performative terms, will be compared and contrasted with Elizabeth and Darcy's discourse from *Pride and Prejudice*. Aware that Litchfield's inmate population is substantially more economically and racially diverse than *Pride and Prejudice's* Longbourn, Kohan highlights Piper and Alex's privilege by having the show's other characters frequently criticize the duo for their egocentrism in ways that Elizabeth and Darcy fail to be by their own peers. Far from season three serving as an illogical "cul-de-sac" or dead end for Piper and Alex's romance, it is simply the midpoint in Kohan's perversion of the classic marriage plot's trajectory of lovers being forced to undergo a "violent shift from innocence to self knowledge" before entering the state of matrimony (Hinnant 294).

In her article "Where Does the Pleasure Come from? The Marriage Plot and its Discontents in Jane Austen's *Emma*," Deanna K. Kreisel writes:

For most classic, nineteenth-century novels, the initiatory excitement, the desire that brings narrative into being, is either ambition (. . . the “male” narrative) or the desire to marry (what we can call the “female” narrative, the “master plot” of Jane Austen’s novels). In the courtship model, the narrative opens upon a situation in which someone clearly needs to wed (“it is a truth universally acknowledged”). The unbound erotic energies of the eligible bachelor(ette), and thus of the plot itself, are discharged in the end in a proper marriage that channels sexual desire *and fortune* in an appropriate way, ensuring dynastic continuation, gender hierarchy, and the triumph of the narrator’s epistemological perspective. (220)

While this is certainly an apt description of the plots of both *Emma* and *Pride and Prejudice*, the same framework can also be applied to the progression of Alex and Piper’s narrative arc in *OITNB*, barring a few key variances. In the pilot episode of the series, one of the first details that viewers learn about Piper is that she has recently entered into an engagement with her long term boyfriend, Larry Bloom. However, doubt is cast on Piper’s ability to maintain the relationship almost immediately when she has the following interaction with Wanda Bell, a Litchfield corrections officer, upon self-surrendering with Larry by her side:

Bell: Who’s this?

Piper: My fiancé.

Bell: Yeah? Good luck with that.

Piper: Excuse me? (S1 E1, “I Wasn’t Ready”)

This is a trend that continues throughout the show’s first two seasons, with Piper’s best friend’s husband telling her he assumed she and Larry “wouldn’t make it two months” together, Alex blatantly rolling her eyes at one of Piper’s more adamant declarations that she is engaged, and Larry going so far as to warn Piper on her first night at Litchfield not to “let anyone into her [prison issue] granny panties” (S1 E2 “Tit Punch” and S1 E1 “I Wasn’t Ready”).

Everyone’s apprehension concerning the relationship proves to be warranted when Piper begins reconnecting with Alex behind bars. The more the two interact, viewers find that the differences between Alex and Larry could hardly be more pronounced, with Piper herself describing Alex as her “manipulative, gorgeous, psychopath ex” and Larry as her “sweet, kind, unfocused fiancé” (S2 E6 “You Also Have a Pizza”). Similar to many nineteenth-century narratives that hinge on marriage plots, *Kohan* quickly establishes that Piper is involved in a love triangle “a bit like the typical Austen novel where the heroine . . . has two suitors, one virtuous . . . and one less so” (Benis 184). *Kohan* playfully acknowledges this detail after Piper and Alex rekindle their romance in prison, with Alex dryly asking Piper: “Are you cheating on me and Larry with Crazy Eyes? ‘Cause there is not room for the four of us” (S1 E11, “Tall Men with Feelings”). Though the

Piper/Alex/Larry triangle bucks heterosexual tradition by containing two women who are romantically attracted to one another, the interplay between the trio mirrors Emma's flirtations with both Knightley and Frank Churchill, as well as Elizabeth Bennet's with Darcy and Mr. Wickham. However, instead of choosing Larry, the more "virtuous," if decidedly less remarkable of her suitors, Piper ultimately embraces Alex in a move that would mark one of Austen's nineteenth-century heroines as a disgraced woman.

Viewers' introduction to Piper and Alex's relationship takes place in the form of a flashback in which a twenty-two-year-old Piper performs a strip tease for Alex in her posh apartment financed with money from her drug smuggling enterprise. This clip is notable because it is the first of many scenes that depict Alex manipulating Piper with the promise of sex. After Piper inquires whether Alex will miss her when she travels to Bali on cartel business, Alex stops Piper mid-dance and asks her to accompany her there. Alex begins:

Alex: Come to Bali. Come with me. I mean it. I'll buy you a plane ticket.

Piper: Are you serious?

Alex: Yes. Come with me. Quit your job. Come with me.

Piper: Well I'd . . . I'd have to give notice.

Alex: You're a fucking waitress. You don't need to give a notice.

Piper: Will I get in trouble?

Alex: God, I hope so.

Piper: You know what I mean.

Alex: You don't have to do anything. You're just there to keep me company, all right? Come on, babe. I want you to come. And I want you to come. Yes? Is that a yes?

Piper: Yes. Yes. (S1 E1, "I Wasn't Ready")

This scene is crucial to viewers' initial understanding of Piper and Alex's relationship because it exemplifies the level of control that Alex holds over Piper and solidifies Alex's status as a *femme fatale* and "lesbian vamp type," a character that Michaela Weiss describes as a "fatal woman with a hypnotic gaze who has the power to lure her victim to sexual excesses" (49). When describing this early dynamic between Piper and Alex, Laura Prepon, the actress who plays Alex, reveals:

When we first started doing season one, when we were talking about the power that Alex has over Piper, one of our main directors, Michael Trim, said that I'm the spider and Piper's the fly. [. . .] We did this specific scene where Piper had to do a strip dance for me and it was very prevalent in that scene, because it was like the whole thing was I don't move from the bed . . . she comes to me. ("Behind the Bars with Alex")

Comparing Alex's behavior to that of a spider is a fitting analogy not only for her interactions with Piper, but also for her role in the drug trade. In another flashback scene from season one that focuses on Alex's childhood, it is revealed that she originated from a low socio-economic background with a mother who had to work four jobs just to dress her in battered secondhand clothing. After a distraught Alex complains to her mom about being teased by a circle of girls for her off-brand Adidas, her mother simply responds by telling Alex to "fuck Jessica Wedge," the ring leader of the group (S1 E9, "Fucksgiving"). It is advice that Alex takes quite literally, using her sex appeal to recruit wealthy young women to act as mules in her drug operation. Though Alex insists to Nicky Nichols that "Piper was different" than the other girls she lured into the trade, the fact remains that Alex still used her sexuality to manipulate an affluent woman almost a decade younger than her into illegally transporting drug money over international borders (S1 E9, "Fucksgiving"). Her approach is made abundantly clear in a clip from season one that shows Alex helping Piper disguise herself in order to board a plane to Brussels and transport the illegal money. Though Piper begins to voice doubts about her ability to go through with the plan, Alex quells her concerns by playing on Piper's sexual fantasies. The exchange begins:

Piper: Alex, I don't, I don't know if I can . . .

Alex: Hey. Hey, hey, hey. Shh! You are a nice blonde lady, aren't you? A proper young lady. Just picking up her sensible

bag in the baggage claim before heading off to her mid-range hotel to go over her schedules. Museum visits and fancy dinners. It's all fine. It's all good. And I will meet you in Brussels, and everything will work out perfectly, babe. I promise. It's all gonna be ok. (S1 E1, "I Wasn't Ready")

The true extent of Alex's influence over Piper is revealed eight years later when she attempts to explain her past criminal activity to Larry. She declares: "I was twenty-two. I thought that I was in love. I was in love. And it was all crazy. And then it got scary, and I ran away, and I became the nice blonde lady that I was supposed to be. I knew that she wasn't a good person, but fuck her!" (S1 E1, "I Wasn't Ready"). Though Piper has long severed all ties with Alex at this point in her life, she still endeavors to be the "nice blonde lady" that Alex told her to impersonate on her ill-fated trip to Brussels. While Alex may be female, the role she occupies in Piper's life is similar to the one that Knightly plays in Emma's: that of the older, more knowledgeable mentor.

According to Julie Shaffer, heroines involved in the lover-mentor convention of the marriage plot are "quite literally taught by a guardian whom [they] later marry" (54). It is imperative that these women "recognize that their [male lovers'] values and approach to the social world constitute those which [they] must accept to be considered mature and marriageable," thereby "portray[ing] women as less naturally aligned with correct behaviors

and attitudes than men” (Shaffer 54). Austen introduces this dynamic in the first chapter of *Emma* when Knightley, described by the narrator as “a sensible man about seven or eight-and-thirty,” discusses Miss Taylor’s recent wedding to Mr. Weston with Emma (Austen 8). After joking that Knightley thinks of her as a “fanciful, troublesome creature,” Emma informs her father: “Mr. Knightley loves to find fault with me, you know—in a joke—it is all a joke. We always say what we like to one another” (Austen 9). However, the narrator goes on to inform readers:

Mr. Knightley, in fact, was one of the few people who could see faults in Emma Woodhouse, and the only one who ever told her of them: and though this was not particularly agreeable to Emma herself, she knew it would be so much less so to her father, that she would not have him really suspect such a circumstance as her not being thought perfect by everybody.

(Austen 14-15)

Although Emma is well aware of Knightley’s penchant for criticizing her, she pretends that his denunciations are said in jest, both for her father’s sake and her own. Despite her blasé attitude concerning Knightley’s treatment of her, she, like Piper does with Alex, internalizes Knightley’s reprimands and yearns for his approval. This is illustrated early in the novel when Knightley scolds Emma for encouraging Harriet Smith to reject Robert Martin’s

marriage proposal. Following Knightley's condemnation, the narrator relates:

Emma made no answer and tried to look cheerfully unconcerned, but was really feeling uncomfortable and wanting him very much to be gone. She did not repent what she had done; she still thought herself a better judge of such a point of female right and refinement than he could be; but yet she had a sort of habitual respect for his judgment in general, which made her dislike having it so loudly against her; and to have him sitting just opposite to her in angry state, was very disagreeable.

(Austen 52)

While part of Knightley's ability to incite this sort of guilt in Emma has to do with the fact that he is sixteen years her senior and has "watched over her from a girl, with an endeavor to improve her," it is also important to note that Knightley has a distinct knack for what Emma calls "bending little minds" to his will (Austen 326 and 116). When ranting about Frank Churchill's failure to visit his father and Miss Taylor upon the occasion of their wedding, Knightley declares to Emma, "There is one thing . . . which a man can always do, if he chooses, and this is, his duty" (Austen 115). Emma, who is aware that Churchill is influenced by his financial reliance on his controlling aunt, responds by saying:

“I can imagine, that if you, as you are, Mr. Knightley, were to be transported and placed all at once in Mr. Frank Churchill’s situation, you would be able to say and do just what you have been recommending for him; and it might have a very good effect. The Churchills might not have a word to say in return; but then, you would have no habits of early obedience and long subservience to break through.” (Austen 116)

Accustomed to having his own way, Knightley does not even consider the difficulties that a young and dependent man like Churchill could face for defying his adoptive parents.

Interestingly, Knightley’s criticism of Churchill is not the only time Emma acknowledges her mentor’s ability to get away with certain behaviors that others around him cannot. When speaking to Harriet about the difference in manner between Mr. Elton, Mr. Weston, and Mr. Knightley, Emma explains that Knightley carries himself off in a way that others should not attempt to duplicate. She states:

“Neither would Mr. Knightley's downright, decided, commanding sort of manner, though it suits *him* very well; his figure, and look, and situation in life seem to allow it; but if any young man were to set about copying him, he would not be sufferable.” (28)

Knightley, true to the chivalrous connotations of his name, is seen by the citizens of Highbury as a sort of “general friend and advisor” (Austen 47). Associated with “agrarian capitalism and the improvement of land,” Knightley is a respected business man and is consistently praised by others as a pillar of the community (Garofalo 230). Despite this, it is important to note that Knightley’s behavior often straddles the line between forthrightness and churlishness, as demonstrated early in the novel when he speaks to the newly married Mrs. Weston about Emma’s friendship with Harriet. The conversation quickly devolves from Knightley voicing his worries about the potential perils of Emma associating with a girl so far beneath her in social stature into a criticism of Mrs. Weston’s ability as a governess. He states, “You might not give Emma such a complete education as your powers would seem to promise; but you were receiving a very good education from *her*, on the very material matrimonial point of submitting your own will, and doing as you were bid” (Austen 30). While a man with a lesser bearing and inferior social status may have been looked down upon for making such a statement, Mr. Knightley fails to be criticized and maintains an amiable relationship with Mrs. Weston throughout the remainder of the novel. Emma ultimately proves correct in her assertion that anyone endeavoring to emulate Knightley “would not be sufferable,” as she soon finds when she nearly destroys Harriet’s chance to improve her life by marrying Robert Martin. Similarly, Piper also finds that Alex’s “Machiavellian” actions

(Sered 128) and sultry demeanor are impossible for her to copy without serious repercussions.

Like Knightley, Alex's surname is loaded with implication. However, instead of those associations being honorable in nature, they are decidedly less positive: the Middle English origin of the name Vause, "faus," literally means "false" or "untrustworthy" (Vause Family History). Considering Alex's less than ethical profession and the fact that she originally lied to Piper about turning her into federal agents, the name is exceptionally fitting and adds even more irony to Alex's early declaration to Piper that she does not consider herself "a shady person" (S2 E10, "Little Mustachioed Shit"). However, despite Alex's duplicitous conduct, she shares Knightley's ability to behave in ways that would not be considered permissible for others. For instance, in season one, Alex begins a feud with Christian meth-head Tiffany "Pennsatucky" Doggett after the woman becomes inordinately jealous of the various privileges Piper is granted by her counselor, Sam Healy. After Pennsatucky announces to Alex during their laundry assignment that Piper must think "suckin' dick's a little easier than honest hard work," Alex prowls across the room, slams Pennsatucky against a dryer, and takes advantage of her extreme homophobia (S1 E7, "Blood Donut"). As she caresses the crucifix around Pennsatucky's neck, Alex begins:

“. . . I will fuck you. Literally. I will sneak into your bunk in the middle of the night, and I'll lick your pussy. And I will do it so

good and so soft that you're gonna be on the edge of coming by the time you wake up . . . and then I'll stop. And you'll be half asleep and you'll beg for it. Oh, you will beg for it. And maybe I'll be nice, and maybe I won't . . . but if I am nice, the things you feel . . . they will ruin you forever. So, you know choose." (S1 E7, "Blood Donut")

Though this could certainly be considered a form of sexual harassment, the inmates surrounding Alex merely view the interaction as a creative way for Alex to gain the upper hand with an individual who never hesitates to condemn others on the basis of her religion. In fact, after advising Piper that if "you wanna get to someone . . . you gotta have a long game," Alex goes on to lead an elaborate gas lighting scheme against Pennsatucky that involves recruiting other inmates to convince the woman that God blessed her with healing powers (S1 E10, "Bora Bora Bora"). Piper eventually takes the game too far and inadvertently gets Pennsatucky temporarily admitted to the prison's psychiatric ward, but nonetheless, most of the inmates are all too happy to follow Alex's lead. This is a phenomenon that seems to extend even to a portion of the *OITNB* fan community, with diehard enthusiast Zara Barrie writing, "We are a fierce cult, led by our fearless, vixen leader, Alex Vause." Of course, for every Alex fan, there is someone who is annoyed by her status as a "take-no-prisoners, fiercely unrepentant, warrior woman," but the fact remains that like Knightley, Alex Vause is figure who holds sway

over those who surround her (Osterndorf). While it is true that this influence often manifests itself in troubling ways as in the aforementioned gas lighting scheme involving Pennsatucky, by season five of the series, Alex grows into a person who refuses to sit in the chapel and watch Maria Ruiz, the leader of the prison riot, torture captured guards. Though Piper warns Alex that it would be dangerous to call attention to herself, Alex stands up in the middle of the chapel's auditorium and voices her displeasure with Ruiz's actions anyway. The exchange begins:

Alex: I don't wanna be a part of this. Most of us have done nothing wrong yet, so why should we all go down because Diaz shot a guard?

Ruiz: "Lot's of us did shit we're guilty for. Not just Daya.

Alex: Good luck with your Rumsfeld dinner theater. I'm out.

(S5 E2, "Fuck, Marry, Frieda")

Alex is the only person brave enough to leave the chapel and risk angering Ruiz and making enemies of the riot's other leaders. While a different person who performed the same actions would most likely have been punished, Alex inadvertently becomes a "symbol of the resistance" to the riot, complete with what Piper calls "an army of lemmings" who dress like her and set up camp around the abandoned bulldozer where Piper and Alex build their temporary "dirt home" (S5 E5, "Sing it, White Effie"). Impressively, even Ruiz leaves her headquarters inside the prison to join Alex's resistance by the end of the

season. Though Alex is a far cry from a nineteenth-century English gentleman and her bulldozer is hardly as impressive as Donwell Abbey, she still holds great influence over the Litchfield community and has the ability to get by with certain actions that others, especially Piper, would do well to not even attempt.

Knightley and Alex begin making directive statements to Emma and Piper early in their respective narratives when Knightley instructs Emma to “help [Mr. Elton] to the best of the fish and chicken, but leave him to choose his own wife” at the dinner party she plans in chapter one (Austen 12), and Alex informs Piper that she “needs a lesson in fudging a resume” upon first meeting her at the bar where she attempts to apply for a job (S1 E3, “Lesbian Request Denied”). Knightley and Alex’s instructions achieve the dual purpose of setting up the student/teacher dynamic between the couples and making Emma and Piper’s eventual need to rebel against their significant others understandable to readers. Emma begins her dissent almost immediately when she voices her intentions to find a suitable wife for Mr. Elton. However, while it is true that this endeavor stands in direct opposition to Knightley’s instructions to leave the man to manage his own love life, it is also important to consider a key conversation Emma and Knightley have at the beginning of the novel concerning the marriage between Mr. Weston and Ms. Taylor. After Emma boasts of her success in making the match between the two newlyweds, Knightley replies:

“I do not understand what you mean by 'success,'" . . . “Success supposes endeavor. Your time has been properly and delicately spent, if you have been endeavoring for the last four years to bring about this marriage. A worthy employment for a young lady's mind! But if, which I rather imagine, your making the match, as you call it, means only your planning it, your saying to yourself one idle day, 'I think it would be a very good thing for Miss Taylor if Mr. Weston were to marry her,' and saying it again to yourself every now and then afterwards, why do you talk of success? Where is your merit? What are you proud of? You made a lucky guess; and *that* is all that can be said.”

(Austen 11)

Though Emma highly enjoys the fact that her subsequent matchmaking ventures ultimately go against Knightley's wishes, she still takes his above judgment to heart. Instead of passively hoping for Mr. Elton to wed, she assiduously works to ensure that he notices Harriet, even going so far as to convince the girl to sit for a portrait in order to give the two “lovers” more time to interact with one another. Despite Emma's attempts to defy Knightley, she nevertheless unconsciously adheres to his recommendations. However, as Denise Kohn asserts in her article “Reading *Emma* as a Lesson on Ladyhood: A Study in the Domestic *Bildungsroman*,” Emma overreaches her influence and “exchanges her role as social facilitator to become a social

manipulator,” a change that Knightley did not have in mind (51-52). In the same vein, Emma works to achieve a more equal footing with Knightley, who speaks of being unable to see her “acting wrong, without a remonstrance,” by becoming a similar type of mentor to Harriet (Austen 294). Just as Knightley is involved in an ongoing process to “improve” Emma’s character, Emma begins the undertaking of advancing Harriet’s mind. Austen writes of Emma’s thoughts concerning Harriet:

She would notice her; she would improve her; she would detach her from her bad acquaintance, and introduce her into good society; she would form her opinions and her manners. It would be an interesting, and certainly a very kind undertaking; highly becoming her own situation in life, her leisure, her powers.

(Austen 19-20)

Unfortunately, Emma finds that her mentoring skills are no match for Knightley’s, with Harriet eventually setting her romantic sights on the object of Emma’s own eye: Knightley himself. This, along with Emma’s guilt over her less than courteous treatment of Mrs. Bates at Box Hill and her realization that she has served as a “persecutory figure” (McInnes 81) to Jane Fairfax, sets what Kreisel deems Austen’s “chastening process” into motion (220). In order for Emma to become marriageable, she must first feel shame over her past actions and recognize that she is the “eponymous anti-heroine” of her own story (McInnes 75-76). As Garofalo contends:

As a result of Harriet's desire for Knightley, Emma learns to identify herself with the very narrative of improvement to which she has subjected Harriet and to place Knightley as the chivalric figure who can make up for Emma's lack. She has learned her place. Her place is to be first with the man who has been improving her, the way he might improve his lands. Emma, who has endeavored throughout the novel to occupy the position of the knight errant, discovers herself in the place of the improvable object and places Knightley in the position she has meant to occupy. She sees him now engaged in a narrative to make up for women's lack and for her own. (233)

Emma, who fails to appropriate model gender behavior throughout the majority of the novel and even goes so far as to declare at one point that "if she were to marry, [she] must expect to repent it," (Austen 68) comes to acknowledge Knightley's superior judgment, "control her exuberant eroticism," and "marry the boy next door" (Kreisel 221). As a result, Kreisel notes that the "beginning of *Emma* gives us an instructive example of what we can expect after the end of *Emma*" (221). By abandoning her matchmaking schemes and conforming to the patriarchal ideology of her society, it is reasonable to assume that most of Emma's time will be spent in an all too familiar drawing room with a hypochondriac father who "[can]not meet her in conversation" and a husband who prides himself on "never

flatter[ing] her” (Austen 6 and 10). Conversely, Piper and Alex resist societal convention to achieve an ending for themselves that is profoundly different from their beginning.

In her article “Hell is Other People, but Mostly You Too,” Courtney Neal writes that being confined to Litchfield with Alex is Piper’s version of a “perfectly calibrated hell” because she “wants redemption with Alex, but needs to punish her as well.” This intensity of feeling is captured at the end of the first season when Piper learns that Alex lied to her about revealing her involvement in the drug ring to authorities. Skilled in the WASPy art of “compartmentalizing everything to make [herself] feel better,” Piper initially pretends that she is not angry with Alex (S1 E11, “Tall Men with Feelings”). However, after Alex corners her in the kitchen and feigns that she wants to have sex in order to “celebrate how totally fine [Piper is] with everything,” Piper snaps (S1 E12, “Fool Me Once”). Their argument commences:

Piper: We are not okay! This is not fine!

Alex: Good. Now we can talk about it.

Piper: Is that what this is about?

Alex: Yeah that’s what this is about. You find out that I personally got you thrown in here at the exact moment your manicured fingers were, like, closing on the yuppie brass ring, and somehow you don’t have a problem with it? You are so full of shit.

Piper: Fuck you! Fuck you, Alex! You want me to be angry?

Well, guess what, I'm really fucking angry, because I love you, Alex. I love you and I fucking hate you! (S1 E12, "Fool Me Once")

These competing sentiments of love and hate feed into Piper's desire to correct the power imbalance that has always been present in her relationship with Alex. This issue starts to become apparent in season two after Alex "fucks [Piper] over in Chicago" by inadvertently causing her to commit perjury at Kubra Balik's trial (S2 E10, "Little Mustachioed Shit"). Believing Alex's betrayal was calculated, Piper adopts a more hardened and detached persona upon her return to Litchfield. After updating Nicky on the details of her time in Chicago's maximum security prison, Piper declares to her: "Alex Vause was never a lamb. She is the wolf that eats the lamb" (S2 S3, "Hugs Can Be Deceiving"). This is a critical statement because later in the same episode, Piper trades her own metaphorical role of "lamb" for that of Alex's "wolf." When talkative new inmate Brook SoSo makes the mistake of sitting on Piper's bed and comparing her to her best friend Meadow, Piper coldly responds by threatening:

"No one has a fucking clue what you are talking about, ever, and I definitely do not need your advice. Ever. We are not friends, I am not your new safety blanket, and I am definitely not going to be your new Meadow. I am a lone wolf, Brook. And a vicious

one. Don't make me rip your throat out with my teeth." (S2 E3, "Hugs Can Be Deceiving")

Piper's antagonistic relationship with SoSo eventually escalates further when Big Boo, a butch lesbian who Householder and Trier-Bieniek argue is problematically portrayed as "aggressive and sex-obsessed," targets SoSo in a game of "girl-on-girl misogyny and objectification" that she and Nicky create in order to see who can sleep with the most inmates (7). Piper, who wants to reclaim a handmade blanket that Big Boo stole from her bunk when she was away in Chicago, agrees to a trade in which Boo promises to return the blanket in exchange for the opportunity to sleep with SoSo. After working to convince SoSo that she will be "a target" for "rape, assault, [and] battery" because of her status as a "pretty girl," Piper tells the new inmate that she needs to find a prison wife who can protect her (S2 E4, "A Whole Other Hole"). At this point in the conversation, Boo conveniently walks up to join the two women. However, SoSo finds her timing suspicious and begins asking if Piper and Boo are playing "some kind of game," prompting the following exchange:

Piper: Clearly this is not working, so can I just have my blanket back?

Boo: No! You didn't deliver.

SoSo: Deliver what? Me?

Piper: I did my part.

SoSo: Were you trying to pimp me out?

Piper: She took my blanket. It belonged to my roommate, it meant a lot to me. Plus, it is very fucking cold in the dormitories.

SoSo: You tried to sell me for a blanket?

Piper: Well, when you put it that way . . .

SoSo: You are sick, you know that? You are seriously fucked up.

Boo: You know, she's right, Chapman. You're a horrible person.

(S2 E4, "A Whole Other Hole")

In his article "*Orange is the New Black Can Change Your Life*," Christopher Hoyt writes that in this scene, "Piper's blindness to SoSo's humanity has everything to do with the particular stresses of prison, where the women seem to constantly bargain and scheme and double-cross for the most basic of comforts." He goes on to assert that the "point of the scene is to show that Piper is becoming one of them, a woman as morally bankrupt as her context." While I agree with Hoyt's statement that the stresses of prison have a profound impact on Piper's behavior, I argue that her callous actions are less a reflection of a group of women and more an imitation of one: Alex Vause. In season one of the series, Alex has a conversation with Nicky in the laundry room that is eerily similar to the exchange between Piper, Boo, and SoSo. When describing how she became successful in the drug trade, Alex states:

Alex: My business was built on sniffing out girls like you and turning ‘em into drug mules.

Nicky: I knew it. You’re a pimp.

Alex: Man, you would’ve been perfect. Little Nicky at nineteen?

Mmm! I would’ve turned you out in two seconds. (S1 E9, “Fucksgiving”)

In a woefully inept attempt to compete with Alex who appears to be deceiving her at every turn, Piper begins to emulate Alex’s exploitative practices.

While a crochet blanket is hardly the same as illicit drug money, she still tries to manipulate an unsuspecting young woman in order to get what she wants. However, when Piper learns from her interaction with SoSo that she will never quite be the “pimp” Alex was, she settles for the next best thing: informing Alex’s parole officer that she violated her probation in order to get her resentenced on new charges. After all, as Alex taught her when they first began dating, “Sometimes you gotta rage in order to move on” (S2 E10, “Little Mustachioed Shit”).

Soon after Alex is reincarcerated at Litchfield, the woman that directors once compared to a spider admits to Piper that she has been reduced to nothing more than “a fly in the web of the prison industrial complex” (S3 E1, “Mother’s Day”). Her outlook becomes even more bleak when she discerns that Piper is the person responsible for getting her sent back to prison in the first place. Aware that Piper has engaged her in a type

of revenge-oriented power play, Alex once again attempts to use sex as a way to solve her problems. However, as Fryett asserts, these encounters “border on sadomasochistic iconography” in a way that is unlike previous sex scenes featuring the couple (30). Though Alex believes that this more violent form of sex will aid her in regaining control of Piper, she only manages to arouse Piper and make herself look even more pathetic and unstable in the process. Alex’s spiral is illustrated during a conversation the couple has concerning a hickey that Piper leaves on Alex’s neck. After angrily storming into the cafeteria, Alex begins:

Alex: Really? A hickey? What are you, twelve?

Piper: It was an accident.

Alex: You’re trying to brand me, but I am not your fucking sex cow. You’re mine.

Piper: What does that mean?

Alex: It means that I am gonna hurt you the next chance I get and take my power back.

Piper: You’re acting insane. (S3 E3, “Empathy is a Boner Killer”)

Though Alex forgives Piper soon after this scene and realizes that she would rather “love-fuck” than “hate-fuck,” she still harbors an extreme paranoia that Kubra placed a hit on her life for testifying against him in Chicago (S3 E4, “Finger in the Dyke”). This causes Piper to lose patience with her

throughout the remainder of the season and take her mimicry of Alex's past actions to a more extreme level. Similar to the way Emma aims to be the same type of mentor to Harriet as Knightley is to her, Piper strives to be a "scary, professional felon" like Alex was in her cartel days (S3 E11, "We Can Be Heroes"). However, considering that the product Piper moves is used panties instead of heroin, her attempts at this are largely laughable until she begins using MoneyPak cards to wire cash into her "panty girls[]" outside accounts (S3 E11, "We Can Be Heroes"). Alex responds to Piper's explanation of this process in the following manner:

Alex: I don't like this version of you.

Piper: Well, maybe I don't like this version of you.

Alex: What version is that?

Piper: The paranoid, needy version. The judge-y version. I mean fuck, Alex, what is your problem?

Alex: You have no idea what you're getting into. You don't know who these people are, you don't know who they're connected to, and you're on some weird little power trip.

Piper: I am doing exactly what you did, and you cannot handle it because you're afraid I might be better at it than you are.

Alex: You probably are better at it now. You're a natural. (S3 E11, "We Can Be Heroes")

Despite Alex's biting comment that Piper is "a natural" at being a duplicitous criminal, the truth is that the logistics of running the panty business quickly overwhelm Piper. Just as Alex cheated on her girlfriend Sylvie with an unknowing Piper before the two began officially dating, Piper pulls the same stunt on Alex when she becomes romantically involved with Stella. However, Piper proves that she does not possess the same business acumen as Alex when Stella takes advantage of Piper's trust and steals the entirety of her profits.

Stella's betrayal causes Piper to progressively spiral out of control until she frames the woman for having possession of contraband items, turns Maria Ruiz into the prison's new head corrections officer for starting a rival panty business, and accidentally becomes the leader of a white supremacist group in the process. In order to exact revenge on Piper for getting her sentence increased, Ruiz and other members of her Spanish tribe overpower Piper and forcefully brand her arm with a swastika. Soon after this, Piper hits rock bottom and finds herself smoking crack in the prison's vegetable garden with Alex and Nicky. When Piper shows them the brand and Alex disbelievingly asks if she is "a Nazi now," Piper responds:

"Not a Nazi. I think I'm a Nazi sympathizer. I think that was the message. I brought this on myself. This is what I've become. This is what I've become. This is what I've fucking become, you guys. How do I come back from this? I sent Stella down the hill.

Why did I have to do that? [. . .] My parents didn't teach me to be like this. What I did to Maria, I didn't feel bad. I didn't think twice. I just went too far. I always go too far. I always go too fucking far. And I can't fucking stop it. [. . .] I think that I've been trying to win prison. And I've destroyed people's lives." (S4 E8, "Friends in Low Places")

Piper's drug-fueled lamentations in this scene are extremely similar to the chastening process that Emma endures after her failed matchmaking schemes. As Ashly Bennett writes in her article "Shame and Sensibility: Jane Austen's Humiliated Heroines," Austen consistently uses her novels to "introduce a heroine—a 'young lady'—who might negotiate the extremes of overwhelming absorption and 'affected indifference' through 'momentary shame' and this negotiation of sensibility's extremes is vivified by Austen's formal experimentation with a structure of variously condemning and absolving voices that keep shame present but in play" (380). When describing Emma's feelings of shame after realizing that her actions contributed to Harriet's inappropriately amorous emotions for Mr. Knightley, the narrator of the novel relates:

With insufferable vanity had she believed herself in the secret of everybody's feelings; with unpardonable arrogance proposed to arrange every body's destiny. She was proved to have been universally mistaken; and she had not quite done nothing—for

she had done mischief. She had brought evil on Harriet, on herself, and she too much feared, on Mr. Knightley. (Austen 324)

Both Piper and Emma must experience humiliation and recognize their selfish behavior before finding happiness with Alex and Knightley. However, while Emma is a “humiliated heroine” who ultimately conforms to the lover-mentor convention’s tradition of submitting to her male lover’s better judgment, Piper fails to do the same with Alex.

Far from adhering to the marriage plot’s every tradition, Piper and Alex, who make it known throughout the series that societal edicts evade them by uttering lines such as “I don’t know the rules” and “I don’t think it’s against the rules,” never completely reform their unseemly behavior and end season six on a more equal footing with one another than Emma and Knightley do at the closing of their own narrative (S2 E10, “Little Mustachioed Shit” and S1 E11, “Tall Men with Feelings”). In fact, though Piper does recognize that Alex was correct in criticizing her *Godfather*-esque behavior in season three, she does not allow Alex to convince her that she should not aid Taystee in leading the Litchfield Prison Riot. She explains to Alex:

Piper: Look, I know how I am with a cause. I know that I’m like a dog with a bone.

Alex: Or an angry dragon on its lonely mountain of gold.

Piper: That, too. I know she freaks you out. Worthy Cause Piper.

And she freaks me out, too.

Alex: But you're not sorry.

Piper: No, I'm not sorry. Because I believe in my side. And you believe in yours.

Alex: Fuck. Are we one of those romance novel, red state, blue state couples? (S5 E9, "The Tightening")

Instead of submitting to her established mentor, Piper holds true to her own convictions, and she and Alex accept that they can support each other even if their opinions differ. Never a couple to follow rules set by others, Piper and Alex do not adhere to the classic trajectory of couples involved in the lover-mentor convention of the marriage plot. While Piper does learn from and eventually marry Alex in a covert ceremony performed in the maximum security facility at the closing of season six, she does not completely adopt Alex's values and world outlook as is expected of heroines in the lover-mentor convention. Alternatively, the couple makes their own rules, as illustrated when they sardonically tell a woman who they have been trying to teach how to lie effectively that she has "officially graduated the Vauseman finishing school" and when Alex declares that their "first family rule" is that the "Vause-Chapmans will deal with the shit head-on" (S5 E3, "Pissters!" and S6 E6, "State of the Uterus"). Kohan allows Piper and Alex a level of autonomy

that is not typical in the lover-mentor convention, and as a result, the two enjoy a more equal relationship than they did at the beginning of the series.

Just as Piper and Alex's relationship dynamic is similar to Emma and Knightley's, it also shares much in common with Elizabeth and Darcy's from *Pride and Prejudice*. Specifically, both couples' conversations serve as types of performances in their respective narratives. After Darcy wounds her pride at the Meryton ball, Elizabeth becomes determined not only to dislike him, but also to prove that she is indifferent and superior to him. In order to achieve this goal, she turns to the medium of performance. Simply stated, the meaning of the word "performance" can range from "a show, an exhibition, to an act that is expressive of one's entire nature and integrated with it" (Babb 204). Elizabeth, not being particularly adept at any of the activities such as "music, singing, drawing, dancing, and the modern languages" that Miss Bingley deems appropriate for women, instead chooses to showcase her quick wit (Austen 29). Priding herself on her individuality, she attempts to illustrate her singularity through her clever remarks to Darcy. However, she is so blinded by her prejudice and so consumed with the quality of her performance that she fails to notice when Darcy falls in love with her. One such incident occurs at the Netherfield Ball when Elizabeth declares to Darcy:

"I remember hearing you once say, Mr. Darcy, that you hardly ever forgave, that your resentment once created was

unappeasable. You are very cautious, I suppose, as to its *being created.*”

“I am,” said he, with a firm voice.

“And never allow yourself to be blinded by prejudice?”

“I hope not.”

“It is particularly incumbent on those who never change their opinion, to be secure of judging properly at first.” (Austen 67)

As exemplified above, Elizabeth is so consumed with finding faults in Darcy’s character that she fails to realize she is describing her own shortcomings. In the same conversation, she goes on to muse about the intricacies of Darcy’s personality. Darcy, aware that she is “performing” with her wit, archly replies:

“I can readily believe,” answered he gravely, “that report may vary greatly with respect to me; and I could wish, Miss Bennet, that you were not to sketch my character at the present moment, as there is reason to fear that the performance would reflect no credit on either.” (Austen 68)

Through his deliberate use of the word “sketch,” Darcy equates Elizabeth to an artist who is endeavoring to reproduce his likeness. He thinks that her performance will fail to reflect well on either of them because in order for artists to create accurate portraits, they must be objective and unbiased

towards their subjects. Well aware that this is not the case with Elizabeth, he quickly puts an end to their conversation.

Like Elizabeth is initially oblivious to both Darcy's true feelings and her own character deficiencies, Piper and Alex fail to recognize that their own performances are generally perceived in a negative light by their fellow inmates at Litchfield. Beginning in the second episode of the first season of the series, Nicky Nichols calls out Piper and Alex's tendency to engage in "dyke drama" (S1 E2, "Tit Punch"). A few episodes later, Nicky expounds on her earlier statement by declaring to Alex: "Look, I've been in here almost three years. I thought I saw all the permutations of runcher theater, but you two are in a whole new play" (S1 E4, "Imaginary Enemies"). A representative example of one of Piper and Alex's many dramatic performances takes place during Alex's first Narcotics Anonymous meetings in prison. After volunteering to share her experiences with dealing and briefly using heroin, Alex delivers a speech in front of a room filled with both her fellow NA members and Piper's yoga class. She begins:

Alex: I don't have a great rock bottom story because my rock bottom is happening right now. Not that you're not all great, but I guess . . . I guess I just thought I'd never be here. You know, I thought . . . I thought I was someone who was in control. And I was in control for awhile when I only dealt heroin. Not even dealt. I mean, I was an importer. But, um yeah, I was

going through a break-up, and it was around. Actually, I think it's more accurate to say that I was abandoned. But anyway, I started using. [. . .] Heroin was the best girlfriend that I ever had. You know, she always made me feel better, and she was always available. But even the best girls will fuck you over, you know?

Piper: Yeah, you would fucking know, wouldn't you? (S1 E5, "The Chickening")

Though Piper and Alex are in a room full of people who are significantly less privileged than them, they do not hesitate to broadcast their relationship drama.

This trend continues throughout the entirety of the series, with many of the characters openly criticizing the duo's self-centered displays. For instance, after obsessing over her relationship with Alex to Nicky soon after Red is seriously injured in season two, Nicky responds:

Nicky: Jesus, Chapman. You need to figure out what the fuck you want. You know, 'cause if it really is to stay here in this shithole so you can get occasional visits from your demented girlfriend, I mean, then, man, it sounds like you're living the dream. But if you want my advice, then get out of your own goddamn drama for a minute, you know? And, maybe, spend

some of that energy praying that your roommate makes it out of medical with all of her brain cells intact.

Piper: I'm sorry, Nicky, I didn't mean to make this about me.

(S2 E13, "We Have Manners. We're Polite")

Similarly, when Lolly witnesses an argument Piper and Alex have over the panty business in season four, she remarks, "Okay, that was like watching a really bad play" (S4 E6, "Piece of Shit"). In addition, while speaking to a severely injured Daya through a vent between their administrative segregation units in season six, Piper asks:

Piper: Do you think that Alex got shipped out?

Daya: Jesus! You're like a broken record. I don't know where your freakin' girlfriend is. Is that all you can think about?

Piper: Yeah, it's pretty much top of my mind these days. (S6 E1, "Who Knows Better Than I")

Unlike the performances between Elizabeth and Darcy that characters like Charlotte Lucas encourage by advising Elizabeth at the Netherfield Ball "not to be a simpleton, and allow her fancy for Wickham to make her appear unpleasant in the eyes of a man ten times his consequence," Piper and Alex's fellow inmates show pronounced contempt for the couple's theatrics (Austen 182). As Barak notes, "In addition to narrative progression, reaction shots show audiences how other characters read Piper [and Alex]: out of touch, entitled, oblivious, and/or monstrous depending on the situation" (54). Many

fans share this opinion, with various individuals on an *OITNB* subreddit arguing that Piper and Alex “are just a big cycle of suckage” and that the other characters’ storylines are “just so much more compelling” (Why do a lot of fans dislike Piper?). Because Piper and Alex are “financially secure and physically attractive in a traditional (white) sense,” their romantic turbulence seems inconsequential and melodramatic to Litchfield’s other inmates (Fryett).

When Elizabeth finds herself dancing with Darcy at the Netherfield Ball, she becomes irritated with the man’s silence and obliges him to speak by instigating the following exchange:

“It is *your* turn to say something now, Mr. Darcy.—*I* talked about the dance, and *you* ought to make some sort of remark on the size of the room, or the number of couples.”

He smiled, and assured her that whatever she wished him to say should be said.

"Very well.—That reply will do for the present.—Perhaps by and by I may observe that private balls are much pleasanter than public ones.—But now we may be silent."

"Do you talk by rule then, while you are dancing?"

“Sometimes. One must speak a little, you know. It would look odd to be entirely silent for half an hour together, and yet for the advantage of *some*, conversation ought to be so arranged,

as that they may have the trouble of saying as little as possible."

(Austen 66)

Elizabeth, angry with Darcy for his purported ill treatment of Mr. Wickham, "parodies decorum to make [Darcy's] stubbornness clear" (Babb 208). By doing so, she is momentarily able to keep up a veneer of polite detachment that allows her to criticize Darcy's "unsocial" and "taciturn disposition" without committing a blatant social error (Austen 66). In addition, Darcy's willingness to play along with Elizabeth's performance reveals his change of heart regarding his romantic feelings towards her. Ultimately, however, this performance of social propriety serves as a vehicle that aids Elizabeth in underhandedly criticizing Darcy's character before going on to address the much more conspicuous topic of Darcy's relationship with Mr. Wickham.

Similarly, Piper and Alex also use performance as a way to lead up to the subject of marriage. During the prison riot in season five when the couple claim Alex's bulldozer as their campsite, Piper speculates aloud on the best way to assemble comfortable outdoor bedding. Alex responds:

Alex: Whoa. I didn't even ask you to move in, Pipes. That's, uh, that's pretty presumptuous.

Piper: Alex Vause, may I put my prison-issue mattress next to your bulldozer scoopie thingy, and ride out a nightmare with you?

Alex: You may. (S5 E5, "Sing it, White Effie")

This scene mirrors Piper's actual marriage proposal to Alex at the end of the season. Piper jokingly kneeling before Alex to ask her if she can share her campsite previews Kohan's plan to subvert audience expectations when she has Piper propose instead of Alex. Throughout the season, Piper behaves in a more "masculine" manner than Alex, a detail that is not lost on Piper's mother Carol Chapman when she expresses her surprise that Piper would deviate from being "the girl" in the relationship (S5 E12, "Tattoo You").

Though Kohan establishes in season one that the Vauseman romance departs from the traditional marriage plot simply because it is made up of two women, she strays from it again in season five when she has the show's protagonist propose. Unlike heroines from the long eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Piper has the freedom and power to brazenly pursue Alex, a woman who once claimed that she would rather "do X on a beach in Cambodia with three strangers in drag" than ever settle down, while also still being allowed to enjoy the perks of domesticity in the midst of a prison riot (S1 E12, "Fool Me Once"). For example, despite the ramshackle setup of their outdoor residence, Piper and Alex "play house" together and speak as if they are living in an expensive New York apartment complete with a reading nook and a guest room. After working to decorate their bulldozer with discarded items she finds around the prison, Alex announces to Piper:

Alex: Voila. Your reading nook.

Piper: Oh. Huh.

Alex: What's 'Oh, huh' about it?

Piper: Well, I thought we talked about the reading nook being a bit more about reading and less about . . . clutter.

Alex: I like having things around, Piper. It comforts me. I'm a collector.

Piper: Why don't you go over there and sit on your dirty yoga mat and admire your . . . collections?

Alex: Do you not want me to be comfortable in our dirt home?
(S5 E5, "Sing it White Effie")

Like Elizabeth and Darcy's satiric performance of social niceties keeps the duo safe from social censure while also revealing Darcy's evolving perceptions of Elizabeth, acting out domestic scenes such as the one above serves as practice for when Piper and Alex enter into a genuine engagement and marriage.

Though it is certainly true that Piper and Alex change dramatically throughout the course of *OITNB's* six seasons, it is shortsighted to argue that their transformations "make no sense" (McAdams). As is traditional of couples involved in Austenian marriage plots, Piper and Alex simply have to endure "conflicts, misunderstandings, and tensions" before they can "correctly understand and express their love for each other" (Harrison 113). While the modern prison setting of the series causes the consequences of these conflicts and misunderstandings to be more catastrophic than Emma's

ill-advised matchmaking schemes or Elizabeth's prejudice against Darcy, the central couples from all three works are involved in marriage plots. Like Emma and Knightley, Alex and Piper are embroiled in a variation of the plot's lover-mentor convention, and like Elizabeth and Darcy, Vauseman's interactions are often performative. However, Alex and Piper deviate from the Austenian model in several key ways, namely when Piper fails to completely submit to Alex's mentorship. Kohan goes to great lengths to adhere to the recognizable frame of the traditional marriage plot while modernizing it and subverting it in order to fit the ruthless environment of the modern prison industrial complex. Alex describes this dynamic best in the following conversation with Yoga Jones concerning her breakup with Piper in season four:

Yoga Jones: I heard you called it off with Chapman.

Alex: Yeah. I don't know what it means. You ever have a thing with someone that never seems to really be over even when it is?

Yoga Jones: Rumi says, "Lovers never meet. They're in each other all along."

Alex: Yeah it's kind of like that, only with drugs and backstabbing. (S3 E12, "Don't Make Me Come Back There")

While Piper and Alex's relationship shares much in common with Austen's romances, Kohan's additions of "drugs and backstabbing" to the classic marriage plot ensure that viewers never lose sight of the fact that Piper and

Alex are convicted felons incarcerated in a contemporary prison. The next chapter will continue to explore Piper and Alex's involvement in the marriage plot by using Edith Wharton's *The House of Mirth* to examine *OITNB* from a naturalistic perspective and analyze the predetermined nature of the Vauseman relationship.

CHAPTER THREE: LILIES, DANDELIONS, AND THE PRICE OF
PRIVILEGE: WHARTON'S *THE HOUSE OF MIRTH* AND KOHAN'S
ORANGE IS THE NEW BLACK

In her article “Women in Revolt” from *ARTFORUM* magazine, Melissa Anderson asserts that *OITNB* stands out for its “novel-of-manners-like attention to detail” and “suggests Edith Wharton had she written not *The House of Mirth* but *The House of Meth*.” Though there are no overt allusions to *The House of Mirth* in *OITNB*, I agree with Anderson that the novel and television series share much in common. Specifically, this chapter will explore *HoM* and *OITNB* as naturalist texts and argue that the novel’s heroine Lily Bart and *OITNB*’s protagonist Piper Chapman (who is sometimes referred to as “Dandelion” by fellow inmate Suzanne Warren) share similar dispositions and experience many of the same social hardships. While on the surface *HoM* and *OITNB* seem to share little in common, Lily and Piper each become involved in analogous patterns of social transaction that fundamentally influence the outcomes of their narratives. However, despite these parallels, Piper proves to be more capable of adapting to the extremes of her environment than Lily. Piper expertly wields her social capital in order to protect herself and survive the first season of *OITNB*, while Lily dies at the closing of *HoM* because of her aversion to profiting from her social resources. In addition to examining the differences and similarities between Piper and Lily as individuals, this chapter will also compare and

contrast Piper and Alex's relationship with Lily and Selden's in order to analyze the ways in which Wharton and Kohan each utilize naturalistic themes in order to both acknowledge and renounce the traditional precepts of the marriage plot. Ultimately, like Lily is unwilling to invest her social capital in herself, Selden is reluctant to invest his time and love in Lily and treats her according to the delicate connotations of her name: like a flower that can only flourish in carefully cultivated gardens. Alex, on the other hand, never hesitates to emotionally invest in Piper and understands that dandelions are weeds that can survive almost anywhere—even prison.

Eric Carl Link suggests in his book *The Vast and Terrible Drama: American Literary Naturalism in the Late Nineteenth Century* that “the defining characteristic of ‘naturalistic’ narrative ... [is] the artistic integration of naturalist theory as theme” (20). This can include “plots that highlight [a work’s] engagement with the concept of determinism, characters and settings that illustrate the determining forces of heredity and environment, and symbolism that announces naturalism’s consistent themes of economic instability, the ‘brute within,’ and imprisonment” (353). However, as Donna Campbell notes, naturalistic characters rarely number among the rich and powerful (353). Wharton’s *HoM* is a unique naturalistic novel because of its depiction of Lily’s “internaliz[ation] of external forces such as manners, social customs, [and] gender expectations” in her elitist society (Campbell 353). Though *OITNB* is set in a prison environment, it, like *HoM*, features a

privileged protagonist who must navigate the mindsets and codified behaviors of a particular class and group of people. For instance, Lily Bart, a woman described as “radiant” and someone who “must have cost a great deal to make,” knows that it is “shocking for a married woman to borrow money” in her society (Wharton 5 and 7). Similarly, Piper Chapman, who is characterized as a “WASPy,” “nice blond lady,” learns that it is a social *faux pas* to use a differing cell block’s bathroom (S1 E1, “I Wasn’t Ready” and S1 E7, “Blood Donut”). The strict adherence to these types of regulations is what fuels the social marketplace in the two works, a concept that is illustrated in *HoM* when Lily is forced to play cards in exchange for invitations to her friends’ lavish homes. Wharton writes, “It was one of the taxes she had to pay for their prolonged hospitality, and for the dresses and trinkets which occasionally replenished her insufficient wardrobe” (24). Likewise, in order for Piper to procure the shea butter she needs to make Red’s jalapeño rub lotion and regain access to food following what Nicky Nichols deems her “epic fuck-up” in the series premier, she is forced to give her fellow inmate Taystee a lock of her own blonde hair (S1 E1, “I Wasn’t Ready”). Piper initially tries to barter with Sophia Bursett, Litchfield’s most sought after hairstylist, for the supplies by promising to buy her “three shower caps or a round brush” when her commissary money comes in but is quickly informed that “‘please’ is for commissary hoes and Oliver Twist” (S1 E2, “Tit Punch”). However, Taystee overhears the exchange and offers to pay

for the butter herself if Piper will contribute some of her own hair to Taystee's weave. As Dimock asserts in "Debasing Exchange: Edith Wharton's *The House of Mirth*," "everything has a price" and "anything can be made to 'count' as money, to be dealt out and accepted in lieu of cash" (784). Aware that their beauty and social stature can be viewed as a type of currency, Lily and Piper leverage these assets in order to manipulate those around them and survive in their highly specialized environments.

Lily displays her powers of manipulation early in *HoM* when she finds that she and the hopelessly dull Percy Gryce are on the same train to Bellomont. Knowing that a marriage to him would prove profitable and that she could expertly fulfill her womanly role of "legitimiz[ing]" his resources, she immediately "organize[s] a method of attack" to bait Gryce into conversation (Benert 27 and Wharton 17). After he is successfully seated next to her, she reflects that "some girls would not have been able to manage" such a timid man and rightly discerns that instead of dramatizing the novelty of the situation, she should "impart a gently domestic air to the scene" (Wharton 18). Likewise, Piper is just as successful at manipulating her yuppie fiancé Larry. In the first episode of season one, Larry becomes indignant when he learns that Piper hid her criminal past from him ("I Wasn't Ready"). As his anger begins to escalate, Piper melodramatically bursts into tears and declares that he should break up with her. Immediately following this outburst, Larry embraces Piper, pledges his

loyalty to her, and even offers to engage his father as her lawyer. Both scenes illustrate Lily and Piper's awareness that romantic love often serves as "an idealized mask for a social game in which female beauty is exchanged for the attention of men and the reward of marriage, with its conferral of economic security and prestige on the woman" (Weisser 98). However, while both Lily and Piper exhibit impressive social management skills early in their narratives, they underestimate the consequences of their social transactions with Gus Trenor and Sam Healy. They each garner favor with the powerful men, despite being unaware of the true price of their privilege.

In chapter 5, book 2 of *HoM*, Lily is said to possess an affinity for "adapting herself to others without suffering her own outline to be blurred" (Wharton 186). She displays this talent several times throughout the novel, but never more so than in her initial dealings with Gus Trenor. After making the decision to manipulate Trenor into investing her money on the stock market, Lily skillfully plays on the man's desires and insecurities. Wharton writes:

She looked so plaintively lovely as she proffered the request, so trustfully sure of his sympathy and understanding, that Trenor felt himself wishing that his wife could see how other women treated him—not battered wire-pullers like Mrs. Fischer, but a girl that most men would have given their boots to get such a look from. (66)

Though Lily is aware that her arrangement with Trenor would be considered scandalous in society, she uses her skills of adaptability to “drape [the] crudity” of the situation and convince herself that she and the married man share an “almost fraternal intimacy” (Wharton 65). As Cynthia Griffin Wolff argues in her article “Lily Bart and the Beautiful Death,” Lily “permits the pleasing aesthetic appearance that she can give a situation to substitute for its reality” (326). Even when she briefly considers the sexual implications of their deal, she concludes that Trenor is “a coarse dull man who, under all his show of authority, was a mere supernumerary in the costly show for which his money paid” and that “surely, to a clever girl, it would be easy to hold him by his vanity, and so keep the obligation on his side” (Wharton 68). Piper shares a similar opinion of her counselor, Sam Healy. While there is no exchange of money between the two, Piper utilizes her skills of adaptability to manipulate her counselor into giving her special privileges, such as overlooking her infraction of chasing the prison’s elusive chicken in episode five of season one (S1 E5, “The Chickening”). This process begins when Piper has her first required meeting with Healy. Though viewers quickly recognize that Piper pegs her counselor as being socially inferior when she disdainfully explains to him that Barney’s is “a nice store,” Healy does not pick up on her condescension (S1 E1, “I Wasn’t Ready”). Seeing an opportunity to earn favor with a prison official who can be easily handled, Piper uses Healy’s homophobia to her own advantage. Healy solemnly warns her, “And there

are lesbians. They're not going to bother you. They'll try to be your friend, just stay away from them. I want you to understand you do not have to have lesbian sex." Piper pauses contemplatively before responding with the simple statement, "I have a fiancé" (S1 E1, "I Wasn't Ready"). Healy's approving smile signals that her heteronormative performance was successful and illustrates that Piper's adaptability extends even to her own sexuality.

Because of her traditionally feminine appearance, Piper has the ability to choose when and where to disclose her bisexual orientation. As scholar Katie Sullivan Barak notes, this "privilege of choice is a point of power" ("Jenji Kohan's Trojan Horse"). By withholding details of her past relationship with Alex from Healy, Piper also uses the traditional marriage plot's intended function of "contain[ing] sexuality . . . within heterosexual marriage" to her advantage in order to appear as unthreatening as possible (Harrison 118). Like Lily, Piper feels that Healy is no match for her superior intelligence.

Despite Lily's quick wit and versatility, Wharton writes that her "presence of mind forsook her" when faced with the revelation that the \$10,000 from her stock market investments had actually come from Gus Trenor's own pocket (114). Under the impression that she had been invited to Trenor's home to spend time with her friend Judy, Lily soon finds that Trenor lured her there for the sole purpose of forcing her to compensate him for his efforts. However, instead of "payment in kind," Trenor makes it clear

that he is more interested in sexual favors (Wharton 116). He proclaims to Lily:

“I don’t want to insult you. But a man’s got his feelings—and you’ve played with mine too long. I didn’t begin this business—kept out of the way, and left the track clear for the other chaps, till you rummaged me out and set to work to make an ass of me—and an easy job you had of it, too. That’s the trouble—it was too easy for you—you got reckless—thought you could turn me inside out, and chuck me in the gutter like an empty purse. But, by gad, that ain’t playing fair: that’s dodging the rules of the game. Of course I know now what you wanted—it wasn’t my beautiful eyes you were after—but I tell you what Miss Lily, you’ve got to pay up for making me think so—” (Wharton 114)

Because Trenor is the source of Lily’s recent infusion of cash, he feels as if he has a right to her body. While Lily knows that there are servants in the house who could help her, she chooses to “fight her way out alone” because of the “hideous mustering of tongues” she knows will ensue if word of her being alone with Trenor spreads (Wharton 116). Impressively, she is able to bring Trenor to his senses by pointing out that she is alone with him and asking him the simple question, “What more do you have to say?” (Wharton 116). It is not until she is safely installed in her carriage that she begins to devolve.

A similar type of male entitlement is exhibited in *OITNB* when Healy throws Piper in the SHU (an acronym for Solitary Housing Unit) for dancing with Alex at an inmate's going away party. Like Trenor, he feels the need to trap Piper in an enclosed space before expressing his opinion about her so-called provocative behavior. After leaving her alone for a few hours, Healy visits Piper and tells her that she "needed a little time out to think about her behavior" and that she should be "thanking" him for his intervention. He goes on to say that Alex Vause is "sick" and that he tried to be nice to Piper because he "understand[s] where [she] come[s] from." "I get you," he declares (S1 E9, "Fucksgiving"). Piper responds by proclaiming:

"The only sicko here is you. And under different circumstances, what? I'd be your girlfriend? Is that it? Did I make you jealous? You put me in this hellhole for no reason. Wake up, Healy! Girls like me? We don't fuck ignorant, pretentious old men with weird lesbian obsessions! We go for tall, hot girls . . . and . . . and we fucking love it! So that leaves you on the outside living your sad, sad little life. You don't get me! Ever! So go fuck yourself!" (S1 E9, "Fucksgiving")

Like Lily, Piper exhibits great strength when responding to Healy's misogynist comments. While Piper's response is certainly more direct than Lily's, both women assert their independence and refuse to give Trenor and

Healy the satisfaction they desire. Despite this, both Lily and Piper experience significant psychological distress from the episodes.

When Lily leaves Trenor's house, all she can think is that she does not wish to return to her dreary, impersonal room at Mrs. Peniston's. Instead, she runs to Gerty Farish who, in the words of scholar Lori Harrison-Kahan, "compose[s] an erotic love triangle" with Lily and Selden (35). As Harrison-Kahan notes, Selden fails to ask Lily to spend her life with him, and instead proposes that she "form a union" with Gerty (35). Selden displaces the marriage proposal he fails to make to Lily onto the idea that she and his cousin should live together, and he never graduates from being a spectator who "remains cynically amused by Lily" to an investor who "seeks to acquire her hand" (Dimock 786). In fact, after explaining that he is a member of "the republic of the spirit" where freedom is the very definition of success, Selden proves just how unwilling he is to take a risk on Lily when he turns an inquiry she has concerning marriage into a joke. The exchange begins:

It was her turn to look at him with surprise; and after a moment—"Do you want to marry me?" she asked.

He broke into a laugh. "No, I don't want to—but perhaps I should if you did!" (Wharton 58)

Ultimately, Selden serves as a vehicle for Wharton to "mock the implausibility of Austen's romantic plots" (Hann 2). Far from an English nobleman who desires to sweep Lily off of her feet and make her mistress of a

grand home like Pemberly, Selden is what Johanna M. Wagner calls a “milquetoast lover—if a lover at all—” who is “not only a passive do-nothing,” but an “active do-nothing” who calls Lily a coward and tries to pawn her off onto his cousin (Wagner 126 and 129). While Lily does not share Selden’s vision that she should live with Gerty and become a New Woman, she does desire her comfort after the incident with Trenor. Upon her arrival at Gerty’s apartment, Lily fearfully declares, “Oh, Gerty, the furies . . . you know the noise of their wings—alone, at night, in the dark? But you don’t know—there is nothing to make the dark dreadful to you—” (Wharton 130-131). After this hallucinatory comment, she goes on to exclaim:

“How long the night is! And I know I shan’t sleep tomorrow. Someone told me my father used to lie sleepless and think of horrors. And he was not wicked, only unfortunate—and I see now how he must have suffered, lying alone with his thoughts! But I am bad—a bad girl—all my thoughts are bad—I have always had bad people about me. Is that any excuse? I thought I could manage my own life—I was proud—proud! but now I’m on their level—” (Wharton 131)

Lily is so traumatized by Trenor’s aggressive advances towards her that she has an emotional breakdown. Completely exhausted by the end of the night, she falls asleep in Gerty’s arms.

Piper experiences similar mental anguish after her bold rebellion against Healy. Like Lily hears the “noise” of the furies’ wings, Piper hears the voice of an inmate in the next cell speaking to her. While Piper and the audience never get a definitive answer concerning whether the voice is real or just a figment of her imagination, the voice itself tells Piper that being in solitary can make a person “start to see shit that ain’t there,” as well as “hear voices” (S1 E9, “Fucksgiving”). After realizing the potential consequences of her words to Healy, Piper crumbles and begins making promises in exchange for her freedom. She rambles:

“Why did I do that? Why did I say those things? He’s never going to let me out of here. I am so fucking stupid. I am so fucking stupid! What’s wrong with me? I swear to God that if they let me out of here, I will shut up. I will shut up and I will put my head down and I will do my time and I’ll smile at Healy and I . . . I won’t go near her. I won’t even look at her. I can do that. I can do that. I can. Please. Please don’t leave me here. Please.” (S1 E9, “Fucksgiving”)

Despite promising never to go near Alex again, Piper seeks her out as soon as she is released from the SHU. Initially, Piper’s eyes are downcast and her gait is slow as she makes her way back to the bunks. However, there is a distinct moment when she raises her eyes and looks directly at the camera, before adopting a more purposeful stride and pulling Alex into the chapel

where they consummate their renewed relationship. This confidence in approaching Alex is reflective of the many instances in Piper's past when Alex unhesitatingly invested in her and their relationship. These episodes include scenes where Alex readily invites Piper to travel with her to Bali, when Alex risks Red's wrath to sneak Piper a square of cornbread during her involuntary fast, and the time Alex attempts to help Piper repair the prison's rundown dryers in spite of the danger of being reprimanded by corrections officers. However, the incident that most directly parallels Lily's conversation concerning marriage with Selden in *HoM* takes place in a flashback scene from season two. Soon after beginning a romantic relationship with Alex, Piper becomes the victim of a vengeful practical joke involving "poop in a bag" that Alex's ex-girlfriend Sylvie lights on fire for Piper to find on her front porch (S2 E10, "Little Mustachioed Shit"). Following this incident, Piper asks Alex whether she was ever in love with Sylvie. Their exchange begins:

Piper: Did you love her?

Alex: No. But I love you.

Piper: You do?

Alex: I don't say that to everyone. You have to say it back.

Piper: I love you, too. (S2 E10, "Little Mustachioed Shit")

Unlike Selden, Alex answers Piper's question directly and does not make light of her feelings for the other woman. In fact, like the marriage plot itself

“runs inevitably” (Magee 201), both Piper and Alex openly acknowledge multiple times throughout the series that their romance is also “inevitable” (S1 E11, “Tall Men With Feelings”). Alex even goes so far as to declare that “it didn’t matter what choices [she and Piper] made” because they always would have ended up “sitting next to each other in prison,” and Piper calls the fish tattoo she got to remind Alex of beauty a “tattoo fish of destiny” (S4 E12, “The Animals” and S5 E12 “Tattoo You”). Like Wharton utilizes Selden’s indifferent and “bluntly contractual” (Dimock 786) dialogue about marriage to recognize and rebel against the expectations of the traditional courtship plot, Kohan uses the naturalistic concept of determinism and Alex’s willingness to invest her love in Piper as a way to emphasize the plot’s structure. In addition, Kohan subverts audience expectations for such a couple simply by making them a same-sex pairing. While, like Lily, Piper also seeks comfort in the arms of another woman after her emotional breakdown in the SHU, her liaison with Alex is more defiant of Healy’s misogynistic influence because her sexuality cannot be contained within the heteronormative bounds of the traditional marriage plot.

Unfortunately, the consequences of Lily’s association with Trenor extend well beyond her \$10,000 debt: Her dealings with him also make her more susceptible to Bertha Dorset’s vindictive falsehoods. The day after her traumatic confrontation with Trenor, Lily receives an invitation to accompany the Dorsets on a cruise to the Mediterranean. Though aware that

her role on the trip will be to distract George Dorset from his wife and her affair with Ned Silverton, Lily accepts the invitation as a way to escape the difficulties she faces at home. Wharton writes that placating George was “the price [Lily] had chosen to pay for three months of luxury and freedom from care” (177). However, as Patrick Mullen states in his article “The Aesthetics of Self-Management: Intelligence, Capital, and *The House of Mirth*,” Lily’s management skills “do not secure a knowledge beyond the economics of success” (41). Because of this, Lily fails to see past the beauty and luxury the Dorsets offer her and is blindsided when Bertha publicly ruins her reputation. Though Lily kept her relationship with George strictly platonic, Bertha uses her superior economic status and the rumors surrounding Lily’s relationship with Trenor to cover up her own affair with Ned Silverton. As Simon Rosedale later states to Lily:

“It isn't exactly as if you'd started in with a clean bill of health. Now we're talking let's call things by their right names, and clear the whole business up. You know well enough that Bertha Dorset couldn't have touched you if there hadn't been—well—questions asked before—little points of interrogation, eh? Bound to happen to a good-looking girl with stingy relatives, I suppose; anyhow, they DID happen, and she found the ground prepared for her.” (Wharton 202)

It is ultimately Lily's association with Trenor that paves the way for Bertha Dorset to save her own reputation and ruin Lily's. Once again, by assuming that she could pay for her place on the yacht by merely entertaining George Dorset, Lily misjudges the true cost of the luxury she is granted.

Similar to the way that Trenor's advances leave Lily defenseless against social attacks, Piper's relationship with Healy makes her vulnerable to the other inmates. Specifically, it serves as the catalyst for Pennsatucky's hatred of her. When Healy chooses Piper to be on the Women's Advisory Council (WAC) despite the fact that she did not even run in the election, Pennsatucky becomes enraged that her own votes were not counted and sanctimoniously declares:

“Can you believe her? That college bitch thinks she can come up in here and take charge of shit with her nice teeth and her pinky stuck up in the air. She's got a surprise coming . . . Chapman is the Judas Iscariot, cozied on up to the High Priest Healy. And he throws out my votes, my votes that were bestowed upon me from my Lord, and gives her all the silver? I've been betrayed.”

(S1 E7, “Blood Donut”)

Later, when Piper is on her way to Healy's office to turn in fellow inmate Blanca Flores' illegal cell phone in hopes of getting the prison's track reopened, Pennsatucky tries to convince Piper to use her position in WAC to help her. Specifically, she wants Piper to convince Healy to replace her meth-

ravaged teeth, a feature that Susan Sered deems the “ultimate marker of class in America.” When Piper says that she will be unable to help, Pennsatucky responds by proclaiming: “Let me tell you something, College. They’re gonna treat you nice, and they’re gonna use you. Then when you’re all used up, you ain’t gonna be nothin’! You sellin’ us out? For what? (S1 E7, “Blood Donut). Pennsatucky’s declaration foreshadows what happens to Piper by the end of season one. Her alliance with Healy ruined and her romantic relationships with Larry and Alex seemingly damaged beyond repair, Piper is left alone to defend herself against Pennsatucky. Like Lily, she no longer has the backing of those who were once closest to her.

While Lily has the power to exact revenge on Bertha Dorset by blackmailing her with the letters she purchased from the charwoman, she instead chooses to try her hand at working in a millinery store. However, it does not take her long to realize that she is “forgetful, awkward, and slow to learn” (Wharton 232). Wharton writes:

It was bitter to acknowledge her inferiority even to herself, but the fact had been brought home to her that as a bread-winner she could never compete with professional ability. Since she had been brought up to be ornamental, she could hardly blame herself for failing to serve any practical purpose; but the discovery put an end to her consoling sense of universal efficiency. (232)

Sadly, by the end of the novel, even the steadfastly optimistic Gerty agrees with Lily's assessment of herself. When imploring Selden to offer Lily his aid, Gerty states: "You know how dependent she has always been on ease and luxury—how she has hated what was shabby and ugly and uncomfortable. She can't help it—she was brought up with those ideas, and has never been able to find her way out of them" (Wharton 211). In other words, as Elizabeth Ammons notes, Lily "has utility only so long as she remains in good standing with the class that produced her" (350). Though Lily quickly grasps that she is not suited to be a working woman and that her best hope for success lies in blackmailing Bertha Dorset and marrying Simon Rosedale, she decides to take the moral high-ground. Much like the way she seeks uncomplicated sleep after the incident with Trenor, she ingests an overdose of chloral instead of using Bertha Dorset's letters to restore her position in society. As Lily tells Selden on the evening of her death, when a woman finds that she "only fits into one hole," she must "get back to it or be thrown out into the rubbish heap" (Wharton 240).

Piper first learns of Pennsatucky's intent to kill her when she finds a dead rat on her locker with the message "Your Gonna Die, Amalekite" (S1 E13, "Can't Fix Crazy"). Piper's first reaction is to seek help from a corrections officer, but after her bunkmate Taystee informs her that she would only be put in solitary for her "own protection," she decides to stay quiet. When speaking to Taystee and fellow inmates Watson, Black Cindy,

and Poussey in the cafeteria about what course of action she should take, they advise Piper:

Watson: You know that tweakhead is coming for you. You better prepare.

Black Cindy: All right, listen, chick steps up, kick her straight in the cooch. Hurts just as much on girls as it do on guys.

Taystee: Yeah, yeah, but you punchin', you go for the nose. Biff! Swap! You know what I mean?

Poussey: Yo! Then, when she doubled over, elbow straight to the back. Bitch out! (S1 E13, "Can't Fix Crazy")

Even after this conversation, Piper still believes she can find a "creative solution" to end the conflict until Pennsatucky corners her in a shower stall. After cutting her own hand with a shiv and declaring, "I want you to feel the same pain on your body as you have made me feel in my heart," Pennsatucky rubs her own blood over Piper's bare chest (S1 E13, "Can't Fix Crazy"). Fortunately, Taystee arrives with a CO before any real damage can be inflicted, but Piper is still badly shaken. "I'm not equipped to deal with this," she fearfully declares to Taystee. However, in contrast to the way everyone surrounding Lily agrees with her defeatist attitude, Taystee responds to Piper by stating: "Please, she is a bitty thing. You can take her. Easy. And when you do, score is settled. Girl, stop being a bitch-ass bitch" (S1 E13, "Can't Fix Crazy"). In fact, earlier in the season, Pennsatucky even owns the

fact that Piper would “probably kick [her] ass” in a fight, and Alex tells Piper that she is “brave” despite her belief that no one “has ever used that word to describe [her] in the history of the universe” (S1 E12, “Fool Me Once” and S1 E11, “Tall Men with Feelings”). While Piper is not initially able to recognize that she is capable of violently defending herself, those around her do.

Though she spends the entirety of season one endeavoring to hold fast to her idealized views of herself, she breaks when Pennsatucky corners her in the prison yard at the end of the season. Piper’s last hope is Mr. Healy, who is also present in the yard, but he does not hesitate before looking her directly in the eye and abandoning her to her fate. Truly alone for the first time in her life, Piper brutally attacks Pennsatucky in the exact way that Taystee, Watson, Black Cindy, and Poussey taught her: a kick to the crotch, an elbow to the back, and repeated blows to the nose and face. Unlike Lily, she settles her score and uses revenge as a form of exchange (Dimock 788). While Piper’s actions are less ethically commendable than Lily’s, she survives while Lily perishes. By the end of season one, Piper is anything but a “bitch-ass bitch.”

While Lily Bart and Piper Chapman share several personality traits and instances of social transaction in common, the endings of their stories differ greatly. Because of her inability to function outside the confines of her opulent society, Lily dies from a chloral overdose. Conversely, Piper saves her own life when she savagely defends herself against Pennsatucky and

settles the score she has against her. While Piper's morality is questionable at times, she is more capable than Lily, who cannot "figure herself as anywhere but in a drawing-room, diffusing elegance as a flower sheds perfume" (Wharton 79). Though it is true that she has lost her polished exterior by the end of season one, and Suzanne Warren aptly observes that instead of "a yellow dandelion" Piper is "all dried up with the puff blown off," Piper is still one thing that Lily is not: alive (S1 E12, "Fool Me Once").

Wharton writes at the closing of *HoM* that "it is so easy for a woman to become what the man she loves believes her to be," and Selden proves throughout the novel that he views Lily as a materialistic coward and an unwise romantic investment (249). Alex, on the other hand, recognizes Piper's capacity for bravery and sees her as a risk worth taking. Through their use of naturalistic concepts, Wharton and Kohan highlight their engagement with the traditional marriage plot and subvert its original framework in order to influence the outcomes of their heroine's narratives.

Whereas Lily never moves past viewing her 19th-century "gilt cage" as a place of privilege, Piper views her 21st-century iron one as a death trap (Wharton 45). Once Lily is ousted from her social group and their opulent way of life, which Selden believes is integral to her survival, the "dinginess" of her new surroundings drains her will to live (Wharton 30). In contrast, though Piper was also removed from her preferred environment when sentenced to prison, she is more accustomed to others believing in her than Lily and uses all of the

tools at her disposal to survive until her release date. Unlike wilted lilies, dandelions have the power to regenerate and come back from even the most traumatic of circumstances.

CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I have attempted to illustrate that *OITNB*, despite taking place in a radically different setting than most traditional novels of manners, utilizes the conventions of the genre as well as those of the nineteenth-century marriage plot. By comparing and contrasting the series with *Emma*, *Pride and Prejudice*, and *The House of Mirth*, I argue that *OITNB* can be classified as a modern-day novel of manners and that Piper and Alex are involved in a subversion of the classic marriage plot that appropriates a variation of the lover-mentor convention. Like the couples in both Austen and Wharton's novels, Piper and Alex inhabit a world where social mandates prevail. However, unlike Austen's couples, the Vauseman duo never fully submits to societal decrees and uses their romance and eventual prison marriage as a means to resolve their personal power struggles and survive the "necropolitical death world" that is Litchfield Penitentiary (Jones 149). Nevertheless, the question of why Kohan chose to make what is arguably *OITNB's* central romance between two relatively well-off and self-centered white women still remains. I contend that similar to the way the show creator utilized Piper's character as a type of Trojan Horse, Kohan also used Vauseman as a method of appealing to what was initially her targeted demographic: Caucasian females with enough disposable income to pay for *Netflix* accounts.

In her article “Lesbian, Bisexual and Trans Identities in *Orange is the New Black*,” Michaela Weiss analyzes the various portrayals of sexual identities on the show. While she writes that the show’s writers succeed in “creating a complex view of what the term ‘woman’ signifies,” she goes on to argue that “there are still some limitations in their representation, namely those concerning age and bodies” (59). She states that the “lesbian and other gender nonconforming identities are portrayed within a narrow age span of people in their thirties or early forties” and that of the three characters she analyzes (Sophia, Big Boo and Piper), “only femme Piper is presented in openly erotic scenes with Alex” (59). This extends even to *OITNB*’s promotional campaigns, with revealing photos of Taylor Schilling and Laura Prepon often being used to advertise the show even though their characters are far from representative of the series’ sweeping cast of women from diverse racial and economic backgrounds. For example, the June 2015 cover of *Rolling Stone* features Schilling and Prepon on the cover posing seductively with the prominent headline “Girls Gone Wrong.” The main article features several other actresses from the show, but Schilling and Prepon are the only two on the cover. While this may seem like just another irritating display of white privilege, I contend that it is also part of a strategy to appeal to the show’s initial targeted demographic. Though Vauseman is a queer relationship, this type of campaign is recognizable to heterosexual white women who are used to seeing their favorite male/female pairings advertised

in the same way on various magazine covers. This audience would also be familiar with Jane Austen's novels and recognize the strict social codes of the world Piper enters, as well as the type of love triangle she is involved in with Alex and Larry. Framing Piper's narrative in this way makes the racial and economic issues depicted in the series more digestible for privileged viewers while emphasizing the importance of setting to novel of manners couples. Dropping an Austenian pairing into the middle of a prison that houses women with more pressing issues to contemplate than the meaning behind their ex's smoldering gaze illuminates how obnoxious these couples would be outside of their intended narratives. This, in turn, raises an awareness in Kohan's original demographic that their problems, like Piper and Alex's, pale in comparison to the women on screen.

Support for Vauseman began to dwindle after the first two seasons, though it wasn't because the duo started behaving any differently: It was because they did not. Like the couples involved in traditional marriage plots, they remain astoundingly oblivious to everything other than their own romance. While this brand of tunnel vision is accepted in classic novels of manners, the women's prison setting of *OITNB* only serves to highlight Piper and Alex's privilege, which is actually beneficial to the depiction of the show's other characters. Kohan often positions Piper's behavior as comically entitled and problematic, yet still manages to warn white audiences against surrendering completely to humor. As Christopher Hoyt asserts in "*Orange*

is the New Black Can Change Your Life,” the show “excels at inducing the sort of aspect shifts that come when we get in touch with ourselves more fully, when we acknowledge those lingering doubts and vague intuitions that haunt our cozy worldviews.” Piper and Alex, a couple whose relationship trajectory is recognizable even if their queerness and status as convicted felons significantly deviate from established norms, must break both social and state mandated rules in order to confront their own misconceptions about themselves, each other, and society at large. Though their often selfish behavior has stirred controversy both in academic circles and the show’s vast fandom alike, watching Piper and Alex become more forthright throughout their journey from antagonistic ex-girlfriends in season one to devoted prison wives in season six has the potential to help viewers regard their own feelings and circumstances more honestly as well. While the upcoming seventh and final season of *OITNB* will undoubtedly introduce new hardships to the Vauseman relationship with Piper’s unanticipated early release from prison separating her indefinitely from Alex, I believe it is safe to assume that audiences can count on the duo to rebel against both social convention and the bars of the prison industrial complex that separate them.

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